**November 27, 1932**

Dear fellow countrymen and countrywomen, I greet you with the words: Praised be Jesus Christ!

From the first Sunday of this month I have been receiving many letters. This makes me very happy. However, many of these letters, too many of them, contain painful complaints, after reading which, man, if he does not outright lose faith in the nobleness and justice of men, at least begins to doubt them! Sad, very sad, that such a thing happens among our people. The links of the chains of marital and parental love are broken. Husbands abandon their wives – fathers abandon their children – leaving them in the hands of fate; wives reject their husbands, mothers disown their children and with their eyes wide open, they go to waste. Sons and daughters forget about the fourth Divine Commandment: “'Honor your father and your mother.”[[1]](#footnote-1), - listening to the urging of envious neighbors or the instigation of their equals in age and wisdom, they abandon their family homes, and go out into the world! Wherever we look, we see sad and mournful figures! Traitorous husbands – heartless fathers – unfaithful wives – unmerciful mothers – disrespectful sons – disobedient daughters. In the wake of this great army go hunger and poverty, anger and envy, revenge and curses. Violent men meet their end! It is not surprising!

The conscience is an insect that there is no running away or hiding from. It bites night and die, never relenting. The guilty man then looks for solace, first in drunkenness, then in all sorts of indulgence, often in tomfoolery, finally, tired and yet unhappy and unsatisfied, he looks for the solution to this incredibly complicated mystery of human life. There is one thought that immediately comes to mind. To free himself, and end everything. By water or poison; a noose or a revolver. Countless victims in this way put an end, a sad end to broken lives, to wasted lives, bringing shame and disgrace to their families, and especially to innocent children. Little or nothing would I care about this, if it happened somewhere among pagan people or among barbarians; but when we think that this happens every day among our fellow countrymen, among the descendants of a nation famous throughout the world for its piety and chivalry! Ah, this is a sad, a very sad image which I present to my listeners under the title:

**The Prodigal Ones!**

Listen to this letter, written in Chicago:

“Reverend Father:

I am sixteen years old. There are eight children in my family. Our mother, although she is ill, must work. Five years ago, my father, who earned a lot, left us and went off with another woman, who also abandoned her home. Our father lost in card games and drank through anything he earned. We are poor, and we pray every day for our mother to be healthy, because what would we do?”

Another letter also from Chicago:

“I am the mother of four children. I have lost my health as a result of worries and hard work. Since two weeks ago, I am bed-ridden, maybe also because I frequently didn’t eat enough, so that the children would have more to eat, and even so we don’t have enough money to buy a piece of meat. My husband, won over by others, abandoned me and the children; at the moment he has shacked up with another woman. It seems to me sometimes that I will lose my senses when I think about how my husband behaved towards me. Please pray so that God will have mercy on us!”

The third letter, from Pittsburgh:

“I am ten years old, I am writing to you, Father Justin, with an appeal for help. So that you will know how our father was vile. He was always drunk. Mother received help from an association. Our father, whenever Mother received a check, kicked, hit and pulled her by her hair until she would give him the check. He would go somewhere to our neighbors, and would come back drunk. He drank through all our money which was supposed to be for food. Three weeks ago he left the house; he said we would never see him again. We don’t know what has happened to him.”

The fourth letter from East Pittsburgh:

“What am I supposed to do? Has God abandoned me and my children? My wife, 37 years old, left her home, me and our two children and went off with another man, and not a Polish man. I never criticized her, although she never cared for the house, but would go off every evening to card parties or theaters. I thought she would improve. Two months ago she took all my savings out of the bank, seven hundred dollars, and ran away.”

The fifth letter from Detroit:

“I know that Reverend Father doesn’t have time, but please read my letter; we don’t have anybody to complain to, and we are ashamed for our father, who has abandoned us. He never went to church. He belonged to some society, and every time he came from a meeting, he would bring a few friends with him. They would sit around drinking moonshine, cursing, blaspheming, and making fun of religion. When our Mother asked them to stop, then he would yell at her and beat her! Can we respect such a father? Yesterday he threatened that he would kill us, he went off and we don’t know what happened to him.”

The sixth letter from Cleveland:

“I don’t know what to do anymore with my two daughters. One is seventeen years old, the other fifteen. They both have left the house, because our neighbor’s daughters convinced them to. There wasn’t an evening in the week when they were at home! Every evening they went out somewhere. Especially to dances somewhere in some halls or such. They would come back at four or five in the morning, when I asked and admonished them, they would make fun of me. As God is my witness, I only wanted them not to knock about, and they left me for good! Today they don’t even look at me, and my heart breaks of sadness.”

The seventh letter from Buffalo:

“Please advise me; I had only two sons! Neither of them ever wanted to work, only day and night they would stand on Broadway street corners or in pool-rooms! In the morning they would come back drunk. Twice they beat me up for not wanting to let them in. A week ago, they took everything they could, even the tablecloths from the table, and left the house. They live at their partners’ in an attic.”

The eighth letter also from Buffalo:

”At this moment we have no bread in the house; the children are shivering from cold; not long ago, my husband took the rest of the money from the bank, left the city with another woman, and left me without a cent. I’m ashamed to ask for help. My husband hasn’t gone to Confession for more than 20 years. We had hell in the house. He was never satisfied! The children ran from him. For others he was nice, for his own he was like the worst tyrant.”

The last letter from Hamtramck, Michigan:

“My seventeen-year old daughter ran away from home, because she said that I was too “old-fashioned” for her. Three and four times a week she would bring home a man of a different nationality and different faith. When I admonished her, she told me: “Mother, you are satisfied with bread and coffee, because in the old country, you didn’t have anything more, but I need more, both money and entertainment. He is rich, he can give me everything, you won’t give me anything. Big deal, that he is not Polish and not a Catholic. It doesn’t matter. Money is everything.” Reverend Father, I have my own house, clean and well-furnished. This daughter was a good child until she went to work in a hotel. From that time she changed in everything beyond recognition. I pray for her to come to her senses before it is too late.”

Do these letters which I have read for you not show, that even those who are the descendants of a nation famous the world over for virtues which no other nation can boast of, that even among these, immorality and corruption let down longer and longer roots, and give out similar fruit? How many tears and sobs, how many complaints, how many fulminations, how much poverty and destitution, how many broken hearts, how many beings warped in mind and body stand by the road of life, or rather fall on the road of life? We don’t know. Only God knows. At this moment, before me stands the figure of the Prodigal Son. Listen to part of the description of this historical figure, given by Christ himself. At home he was watched over by a good and loving father; by his side stood his older brother, always willing to advise and help. However, he did not feel well under his father’s roof. He felt he was a slave. He wanted to go out into the world and enjoy the world. He had probably heard from others. So he left for a far-away country. He led a debauched life; he squandered his fortune; he fell into poverty and destitution. So as not to die from hunger, he gladly accepted the job of a swineherd!

Sitting by the trough, dying from hunger, he started to think about his misery. He realized his offence. He admitted his guilt. He said to himself: “How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers."”[[2]](#footnote-2) Without further ado and not putting it off, at that very moment he put his resolution into action. The result and the happy ending are well known to all of you! Let me speak to you, dear radio listeners, with images from daily life. These are examples which must leave their mark on you!

On a farm near the town of Buffalo there lived a Pole, who for important reasons changed his last name. The reason was such that he had abandoned his wife and two small children, so he had changed not only his last name but also his faith. He had to. Because he ran off with a young girl and got married in court, which our faith does not allow. On the farm which he bought using the money stolen from his lawful wife and poor children, this dishonest husband and unscrupulous father lived like a hermit. Without God and without friends. After years of a prison-like life, it seemed that the world had forgotten about him. Maybe so! But God remembered! He never forgets. The hour of God’s justice was approaching. One summer evening, the farmer walked around his farmstead and made sure everything was secure for the night. He was somewhat insecure and restless. He returned to his house, where his wife was putting the three children to bed and going to sleep herself. He lay down to sleep himself. Sleep was not coming. He got up and sat by the table. He was thinking. Already after midnight. Dark black clouds covered the moon. From time to time, a lightning bolt pierced the heavens, and the ominous rumble of thunder augured a storm. Coming closer and closer. Then suddenly, with a great boom, the sizzling thunder bolt fell on the room of the unhappy man, who always had thought that he was safe from God’s justice. Firemen came, but it was already too late. The fire was raging! In the morning they found the corpses of the man, the woman and the three children, burned to a cinder! This was the end of this prodigal husband and son!

During the world war, still here in Buffalo, the following happened. In one of the local parishes there was a wedding. Apparently everything was all right, but only on the surface. It was already the fourth time an old man played the part of the groom. He had married his first wife in a schismatic church; the second in court; the third before a minister, and finally he tried marriage in the Roman Catholic Church. I myself went to the parents of the fourth bride and told them the whole sad story. No reaction! I asked for the daughter to be called. She came. Up until that time I had not imaged what the tongue of an angered and insolent women means and can do. To my justified warnings – from her lips flew a stream of lava of fury and rage. She well knew the history of her husband. But she carried naught for it. Three years later this supposed husband of hers, in a drunken rage, reached for the revolver which he always carried with him, pumped a few bullets into her, shot their child in the head, and then killed himself. This was the end of a prodigal husband!

Now we are in the hospital. A twenty-year old Polish girl lies at death’s threshold. She dies alone, abandoned by everyone. Two years ago she lived with her parents and siblings. Healthy, pious and hard-working. She fell into bad company. Theaters, dance halls, parties and road-houses, this sad story ended with a shotgun marriage in court. Mocked, manhandled, out of despair she swallowed some arsenic. Now where is her so-called husband? Where are her friends? Where are her father and mother? Where are her beloved siblings? – Poor child! Her eyes are bloodshot; her cheeks are parched by the flush of evil-boding fever and soaked by bitter tears. The lips are barely moving. Just one more deep and plaintive sigh, and this is the end of – the prodigal daughter.

If we could only tear down the curtain before similar scenes, constantly taking place behind the walls of the Good Shepherd Home, of detention centers, various shelters and hospitals, we would see how it is not worth it to play only the first part of the role of tragic prodigal daughters and sons!!

One more image. In the dark prison cell sits a grim young man. This prisoner is a criminal, thief and murderer. His eyes shine malevolently. His brow is furrowed, his face twisted. He will never know freedom again. Pensive. Before his eyes he sees his family home, his noble father and pious mother. Why had he not listened to them when they asked him to abandon the company he kept and stay away from them? He sees in court how his old father looked at him with eyes filled with suffering and pity, and his mother fainted from fear. Too late. Today the heavy prison doors have closed behind him, never to open again. This is the sad end of – the prodigal son.

Now I turn to those prodigal husbands and fathers; wives and mothers; sons and daughters, asking them one short and plain question: Does such a life pay off? I repeat once more: Does it pay to live in such a way? – Let your conscience tell you, because God will judge you! You prodigal husband remind yourself of the day when once you knelt at the foot of the altar and made solemn vows: “I promise you love, fidelity and marital honesty, and that I will never leave you until death do us part”. Look what you have done? You have broken the vow, you have broken the promise you made to God! Maybe at this very moment your lawful wife is shedding bitter tears, is praying for you! Do you not think that it is better to come back home? You, prodigal father, what have you done? You behaved worse than an unthinking animal. You have left the flesh of your flesh, the blood of your blood, and you went off into the world. Your child, or even children, looked up to you as a hero, a protector, a benefactor. You became a traitor, a tyrant and a wicked Judas. Do you not hear how children’s lips, every morning and evening, whisper prayers to the Infant Jesus, for your improvement, for your conversion, for your return? Do you not think sometimes to come home? You, prodigal wife, why did you, oblivious to your promises, so brutally trample the vow of love and fidelity and marital honesty? Does not feminine honor mean anything to you? Why, it is a jewel, the most costly stone, in the crown of honor, glory, respect and adoration, with which the Catholic Church adorned the brow of the Catholic wife! Prodigal daughter, do you not think that it is better to return home? You, prodigal mother, what can you say in self-defense? Can you justify yourself before God – before your conscience, and before your children? Did your maternal heart, once so warm and loving, turn to stone to such an extent that even the cries and sobs of your abandoned children do not move you? Do you remember how you once hugged them close to your heart? Did you forget how many sleepless nights you spent over the cradle? You cried with your children, you rejoiced with them! Today! Why the change? Maybe at this moment your children are in an orphanage, maybe with merciful people, or maybe abandoned, in the corner, on their knees they ask God for pity and mercy for their unscrupulous mother! Is it not better, prodigal mother, to return home? – Prodigal son, what can you say for yourself? And you, prodigal daughter, what can you say to justify yourself? You left your father and mother, brothers and sisters, you went to other people, who under cover of friendliness will make use of you, and later? Crushed and trodden on, bent and broken, rejected, you will end up among unknown and unfriendly people, in the hospital or in a shelter! Today, even today, the hearts of your father and mother feel for you; your parents will take you back with open arms, hug you to them, holding your worried and tired heads close to their parental breasts, and today you will find peace and comfort, rest and solace there! Yes, prodigal son and prodigal daughter, is it not better to return home?

Finally, dear radio listeners, should we not all ask ourselves if it is not time to turn back on the road of life and think about returning to the house of our God, Father, Creator and Redeemer? Because where else, in other people’s houses, can we find what only He can give us? Where will we find comfort in our sorrows? Where can we find solace in our sufferings? Where relief in the carrying of our cross? Where help in our poverty? Where? Only at the feet of Him, who Himself was touched and went through sufferings such as no other man has gone through, even unto hanging on the cross and in great suffering, when He complained: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” [[3]](#footnote-3) Only by the side of Him, who cried out: “Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head.”[[4]](#footnote-4) - Only next to the heart of Him, who said: “My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, for they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, for fear they may collapse on the way.” [[5]](#footnote-5) So all of us, let us come back to the home of our Father! There and only there, happiness and peace, which the world does not know and cannot give us!

1. Deuteronomy 5: 16. New American Bible. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Luke 15: 17-19. New American Bible. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Mark 15: 34. New American Bible. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Matthew 8:20. New American Bible. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Matthew 15: 32. New American Bible. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)