November 25, 1934

I greet you all, noble countrymen and countrywomen, with the words: Let Jesus Christ be praised

A few years ago, a worried and tearful mother came to me complaining that a certain proprietor of a so-called "Blind Pig", was keeping youth of both sexes permitting them all kinds of entertainment. Her daughter was frequenting the establishment in the evening an even entire nights. She asked me to help her with the situation. At first I had in mind to seek the police or personally visit this dishonest dealer with human beings. I wouldn't trust the police in this matter, so I decided to meet with him personally. I took a coat instead of my habit and a can, blessed myself and was on my way. The clock on St. Stan's tower rang nine as I came to the address given me. I entered without hesitation but with some trepidation. A gangster type stood behind the bar. He wore an old hat; in his mouth: chewing tobacco; large faced, red; small eyes, scanning the gathering, like a spark from lightning. The guests sat at tables, playing cards or leaning at the bar drinking a shot and a beer. Evidently they recognized me because they all turned their eyes toward me as if by command. The all expected a scene. I calmly went to the proprietor and said in a voice hearable by all: "Sir, a while ago a poor mother came to me and was complaining to me that you permitted an under-aged girl into your establishment. Do you not have a conscience or do you not fear God. I am warning you. I had not finished when some guy came closer and shouted with a hissing voice: "You wish to rule us; if you wish to talk, talk in your church and not here." I saw that I would not prevail and left. I noted that there were about thirty guests most close to the ages between sixteen and twenty five year old. From this day until today, as far as I am aware, one went to the electric chair for murder; another after some monetary fines and jail, he hung himself; another got two years for theft, and two are in jail for drug trafficking. All of this was on my mind as I made my way to the studio to speak on the Rosary Hour Program. Despite the cold weather I noticed a group of Polish your shooting dice. They were under-age but candidates for criminals; a bit further on my way there were three boys, none older than 18 yrs old, drunk to the extent that they barely could walk; finally a group hanging out on the street. All this within the scope of four blocks. My eyes teared at the heart rending sights thinking about what the future will be like. And so to the title of today's talk.

FOLLOW THEM

I speak to you young people of Polish descent, I speak to you plainly and honestly from the heart. I am not presenting you holy persons from long ago; I put before your eyes images of Polish character from the times of Bolshevik occupations. It is worth, very much worth to become acquainted with them. Listen to the description of Anthony Ossendowski: "Through the village of Paskowice came occasional troops. The villages looked upon the soldiers with caution and when they were going away they consulted one another. A wise old man, Steven Gresiak, said to his neighbors: "What's happening now? We saw these Moskal dogs. This soldier was dressed well and fed well, and ours: girlish and lugging their rifles in ragged clothes, hungry yet happy. Smiles, joking, games and here we have a war. How will the likes of these be able to defend Warsaw? We are in for some bad times. The Bulszewik will not be so gracious now to us. Perhaps it is time to gather our goods, load them and head into the world. Be advised!" The men stood deep in thought, eyes downcast unwilling to leave his land. No one responded, because everyone was thinking the situation over. Suddenly beyond the village came a bugle call, and then the happy soldiers' song. The men looked into the distance. A new regiments was seen, led by a young officer, merely a boy, but some kind of concern reflected in his countenance and wearing a battle symbol.. After the officer marched the regiment, composed of children - boys, 14 to 17 years old. Their faces were ashen and their cloths tattered singing their songs. Some had wreaths of flowers in their hats. Their eyes beamed with rays of joy. The regiment paused and the officer saluted the Villagers and spoke to them: Sirs, We have been marching for a long time and the soldiers need homes to stay at. We need nothing else, just a roof over our heads and some water from the local well. We have food in our back packs. The men, seeing a cross on the chest of the officer, took off their hats in respect and said, "We invite you into our homes." Nightfall is near and the women will find something to eat. In a little while, all the men were located in the homes. The soldiers washed themselves and cleaned their clothes and shoes and their happiness spread throughout the atmosphere. The village boys looked upon the soldiers - boys with real guns and listened to their conversations. Others crowded around the officer who with seriousness on his young face said that he was headed to the war front where there will be a big fight whose outcome will affect the loss of Warsaw or even the downfall of the whole nation. A stern soldier - this Bolshevik - looked at the officer, one of the villagers, and switched his gaze to the place where the soldiers were chasing each other, gesturing, and laughing.. The officer was quiet, so the householder invited him in to the house. Have something to eat and tell us what is going on because we look upon these child soldiers. The officer straightened up and raised his proud head with a hard look, gazed upon the rag tag regiment.: These children with carbines journey Poland from end to end. The rescue of Lwow was a work of their hands, dozens of battles they have wages, almost all of them went through a hospital. After receiving wounds, they swan rivers, walked barefoot through the hills in the winter, wearing medals of honor. Nothing and no one will astound them for they have experienced all kinds of difficulties, went to face death for their nation and fear not death. I saw, at Lwów, how three of these little ones, dispersed the enemy to all sides. I saw them with loss of limbs, dying, yet asking how it was going on the fields of battle and dying with a joyful grunt. A terrible soldier he was to the enemy because he sacrificed his life in victory and goes to fight for victory or death.

Meanwhile, they entered into the house where the woman hostess put out a hearty fare, as if for the most important guests. This was repeated every day because the mother villagers fed the retreating solders with care, feeding them and giving them drink and sewing their tattered clothes at night. And so it continued, now, and at the various homes the women hurried, cheering up the soldiers with jest and laughter. In one home, five soldiers sat at the table. The oldest was seventeen, a small, stocky brown-haired boy with a chubby face and cheerful, bold eyes. Yet there was something reflected in the boyish face that attracted others. Some kind of peace, full of strength, protectiveness, and wisdom. On his breast over a dirty green shirt he had s ribbon with a circular pendant from a lost cross, Virtuti Militari. Grzesiak noted all of this and saw that when the young man spoke, his comrades were quiet and listened gripped by his gaze as looking upon a rainbow. Two of Grzesiak's sons the eighteen year old Bolesław and the sixteen year old Peter, sat at the table with eyes riveted on the soldier and on his medal of honor. The villager gestured to his older son and they went outside. "Why is everyone so engaged with this young soldier," he asked. He is a corporal, the soldiers told me that he threw himself on a carbine, shot the Bolsheviks and brought the gun to our side. Later he carried two wounded on his shoulders to safety, while receiving a bullet in his chest and after two weeks returned and fought and now he goes on with an open wound. One of the motherly women saw blood on his chest when he washed. The wound had apparently opened. She gave him Peter's shirt without his objections. He entered the house and sat quietly. He grabbed the corporal by the sleeve and said, "My dear corporal, what happened? You are so young - aided us by shooting the Bolsheviks and was wounded. How did this occur? The corporal looked down, and then looked up at the questioner, and was very serious. He guessed what was going on in the questioner. The young soldier smiled happily almost jokingly and replied: "A gun fires the same in young or old hands with good aim. It is easy to steal in when not protected. It is easy to retrieve when there are only few around. Grzesiak turned his head - but...there are bullets whizzing everywhere? - Not every bullet kills, smiled the corporal. Terrible, the man said. And no fear when death looms? Grzesiak cut off his question. The Corporal put a piece of bread on the table and put his head in his hands. He was silent for a while and then asked, "You do the same thing on the farm? In the Spring, a large field lied before you. It is full of stubble, weeds overgrown, and hardened after the winter thaw. It is difficult to handle it for growing. One person can hardly succeed. So much work and difficulty. But...no sleep, no food, just work and plow. - When necessary, why talk about it. One works because there is nothing else to do. The man revived. I need to praise the lord, a big filed, and so work on it. Our nation has a greater undertaking - all of Poland! And so we work! We work because otherwise we will not succeed. When it is necessary there is no used to just talk. You have said it yourself. Grzesiak said no more. He held his head low and fell into deep thought. When the soldiers went to rest, the man spoke at length to his wife, and later visited neighbors and spoke widely. convinced them. Outdoors activity was buzzing and the soldiers began exiting the homes where they were staying. They were chewing salt pork and shaking hands with the house-holders. The regiment stood ready to go while Grzesiak went to the officer and noted: - In you backpacks you have no nourishing food but sugar. The soldiers carry heavy packs and the war machinery must be dragged. We have decided to give you two wagons for you our protectors. The Officer thanked the householder with an emotional voice. The contingent left pulling the two wagons. Grzesiak sat in one and Peter on the other. We will take you as far as Lublin, where we have some business to take care of at the first opportunity. However the roads of life are unknown to us. The regiment of the officer did not get to Lublin and Grzesiak did not get to do his business. The Polish armies were leaving Lublin under the stronger might of the Bolsheviks. That same day in the evening, the regiment was forced to do battle. Bosheviks often attacked. The Poles defended themselves with counter attacks. Shortly the regiment took place near a stream where they were to launch an attack when the enemy advanced. GrzesiaK with the wagon stood at the edge of the stream in order to keep watch at the fields of soldiers. They waited a long time for the enemy. At last the enemy ranks appeared. The officer and his men waited quietly hidden in the wooded area. When they were about a thousand steps away the regiment exploded. The enemy disbanded and fled in different direction. The soldiers shouting went after them and caught up fighting with gun and mostly bayonet. Grzesiak saw how this one or that one fell. Some lay motionless some lifted themselves up. More and more Bolsheviks appeared. Grzesiak saw the corporal who felled a Bolshevik but two large enemy soldiers came at them. He saw the wagon, went to it and took out an ex hidden by hay. Hold the fort, he yelled to Peter. and sped to the place of the corporal. As in a dream he heard the whistling of bullets and the cries of the soldiers but nothing would stop him. He came to the corporal who was repelling sever Bolsheviks. Grzesiak fell upon a huge powerful Moskal. The ax fell upon the enemy and body fell to earth. A bulshevik officer and shot Grzesiak in the chest. He fell and briefly say the sky and sun. Next thing he knew we has in the moving wagon. He groaned. A Red Cross nurse was bending over him. Where am I, he asked. You were wounded in battle. We are taking you to the hospital. Be quiet, it is not good for you to talk, said the Mercy Nun propping up his pillow. So I fell. The nurse: You and your son were brought out of battle on a stretcher. Where is Peter? He went into the fray to have vengeance on the enemy. In the moment, someone came running to the wagon and shouted, this young soldier is dying. She left hurriedly. Gresiak made the sign of the cross. and spoke with ashen lips: - He need not avenge me but for Poland and for her pained children. Evidently, death followed the convoy of health vehicles because it met the first young fighter, and toward the open eyes of Grzesiak looking out over the terrain where death knew no boundaries.

Let this one example of soldier-children be sufficient. How many were the similar scenes in the area of Lwow and Warsaw. Listen American youth of Polish extraction. Polish hearts beat within you and Polish blood courses through your veins. You are destined to be candidates for working and good citizens or maybe candidates for correctional institutions or the nations prisons? Let me tell you one thing...that the street of drugs, billiard halls, as well as dance halls and public taverns are not the places for virtue for they have taken your brothers and sisters. Card games and dice invite to be gamblers and billiard parlors teach you disregard of the law and police; taverns and dance halls maim, sometimes in a deadly why your minds and hearts. And so instead of enlisting you into the halls of heroes, sooner of later they lead you to law-breaking at the shame of your families and the shame of the social structure, and dues to be paid to society. At the moment, my mind's eye sees lines of prisoners in the courts of Buffalo. Elders look at me with eyes of indifference and youth disregard me with their cynicism. Some of them are well-known to me. These passed entire evenings in disregard of prior examples of goodness. The street was more beloved than the home. The street educated you to the point where your upkeep is not honorable. At home father and mot hers cry because their son became a thorn in their side and a crown of thorns for their old age. They are ashamed to be seen by their neighbors. This was the reward for their sacrifice and caring. True, I admit that the greater part of our y3233outh is healthy. But quit a few are ill and crippled. It is not worth to abandon them but still take the road of dedication, honesty. I gave you an example of our young soldiers who, although in their youthful age, turned into great heroes of the virtuous life. I call upon our youth: "They are worthy of imitation because they gave you a good example without a hassle -Follow them.