**November 6, 1932**

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

With a feeling of true and affectionate joy I cross your thresholds today, greeting all of you, both young and old, regardless of your religious or political views, with the words of our lovely old Polish greeting: Praised be Jesus Christ!”

My intention in today’s program will be to teach you the truth and only the truth, according to the principles of Christ’s love. I will speak to your reason and to your hearts, not by grandiloquent words and lovely phrases, but simply and sincerely and affectionately; I will speak of our virtues and our vices, our checks and balances; about our rights and duties. I do not wish to offend or insult anyone; but my task will be to join all the Poles by one bond of affectionate friendship, so that we will be able to be one large family; to feel ourselves the sons and daughters of the resurrected and glorious although faraway Mother; at the same time, model citizens of this noble country; so that we will learn to love and respect each other; together rejoice in happiness; together suffer in trouble; together in poverty and suffering cry over each other… well, to help each other.

To avoid certain misunderstandings, I would like to state the following:

1. I am a Roman Catholic priest and I speak with the permission of the Buffalo bishop.

2. At the same time I am a Franciscan friar, of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual of the Polish province of Saint Anthony, with the main seat in Buffalo, NY.

3. I am the son of a poor Pennsylvania miner, and because of this as long as my strength allows, always and everywhere I will stand up for the workers, for the widow and the orphan, the poor and the oppressed; based on the principles of Christ, given to us by the infallible Catholic Church, to “renew everything in Christ” (Eph. 1-10).

4. The difficulties which I have met with while broadcasting the Rosary Hour do not discourage me from further work. I don’t pay much attention to them. Because we have thousands of letters from Poles from all over the US, and in every letter there is a heartfelt request for me not to forgo directing the Rosary Hour. I was especially touched by the requests of those who live far away from towns, amidst foreigners, and for a good many years they haven’t heard the Polish language or Polish hymns, and who find consolation and inexpressible joy in the Rosary Hour! The needs of my fellow citizens have become my needs; your pains and cares, my pains and cares; so to bring you comfort and spiritual help, to defend you and your rights, to fight for them – this is my task! For this I am ready to sacrifice my strength, my health, my everything. So trusting in God’s help and entrusting myself to your good will, we will begin in God’s name these Rosary Hour programs, and God permit that they will spread His glory, and will bring you, dear radio listeners, all sorts of benefits. And now the title of today’s talk:

**Mene – Tekel – Peres**

The King Belshazzar, the powerful ruler of Babylon, organized an elegant feast in the opulent royal palace. At the tables, bending under the weight of gold and silver plates, sat a thousand outstanding men and the highest-ranking officials. A feast such as eye had not seen ever before. In a frenzy of arrogance and drunkenness, Belshazzar ordered for the chalices and cups which his father, the unlucky Nebuchadnezzar, had stolen from the Jerusalem temple, to be brought forth. The servants brought them from the royal treasury. “And while the king, his lords, his wives and his entertainers were drinking wine from them, they praised their gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone. Suddenly, opposite the lampstand, the fingers of a human hand appeared, writing on the plaster of the wall in the king's palace.” At the sight of this hand and the mysterious writing, the king’s face darkened, and his thoughts terrified him. Therefore he summoned his wise men and wise magicians to come in, so that they could explain to him the meaning of the words. They were unable to. Finally before the gloomy face of the ruler comes the prophet Daniel.

Listen to his explanation: “Belshazzar, you have rebelled against the Lord of heaven. You had the vessels of his temple brought before you, so that you and your nobles, your wives and your entertainers, might drink wine from them; and you praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, that neither see nor hear nor have intelligence. But the God in whose hand is your life breath and the whole course of your life, you did not glorify. By him were the wrist and hand sent, and the writing set down. This is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, TEKEL, and PERES. These words mean: MENE, God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it; TEKEL, you have been weighed on the scales and found wanting; PERES, your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians." – The Biblical story ends with one very short phrase. It is the execution of God’s sentence: “The same night Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was slain.” [[1]](#footnote-1)

Dear radio listeners! – The history of the world and of humanity from the times of the proud and unwise Belshazzar frequently, very frequently shows the repetition of those three short but so meaningful words: Mene, Tekel, Peres! We do not need to reach back in time so far as ancient history. Poland and her cumbersome royal reign with the arrogant and conceited noblemen from the times of Jan Kazimierz carried on their foreheads the stigma of Belshazzar: Mene, Tekel, Peres. Oh how wistfully does the immortal Henryk Sienkiewicz describe for us the royal vow in “The Deluge”: “He stopped again and sank to his knees so that a sudden murmur swept through the cathedral. But it died at once when he spoke again. The King’s voice trembled with compassion and remorse but it carried even farther than before. “And since I recognize with pain in my heart the sufferings of the humble who bend their backs behind the plow, taking the brunt of God’s just punishments that have been ravaging my kingdom for seven long years, I take upon myself the blame for their distress and hereby undertake to do my utmost, when peace is restored, so that the Estates-General of this Commonwealth will free our oppressed masses of their cruel burdens.” “To which,” he added ‘I beg your help, Mother of Justice and Queen of us all. Since it was Your forgiving mercy that inspired me to make this solemn oath, so may Your intercession with Your son, our God and our Savior, help me to keep my promise.”

Everyone - clergy, senators, gentry and the people - heard these words and gave way before a tide of feeling. A vast sob rose out of every chest, starting with the overjoyed, weeping peasantry, and tears burst out through the congregation. Hundreds of open arms lifted towards the rafters and the sky beyond. Sobbing voices cried out "Amen! Amen! Amen!" to show that here too the feelings of the nation went  
hand-in-hand with those of the King, and making a heartfelt and unshakable pledge of their own to remake themselves through humanity and justice. A sense of holy mission fell on everyone in that exalting moment and each man and woman knew themselves united in their  
love and dedication to the Commonwealth and her Patroness.” [[2]](#footnote-2) – On Poland’s wall the ominous “Mene, Tekel, Peres” began to shrink, to efface itself until it disappeared completely, and on its place a new word was traced: “Victory!”

Again at the end of the 18th century above Poland’s boundaries appeared this sentence: Mene, Tekel, Peres! Then people lived according to a saying as sad as it was stupid: “Under the reign of the Sas king, eat, drink and let your belt loose.” The kings and officials enjoyed themselves and reveled; the noblemen and magnates imitated them with abandon. God wanted the rulers to come to their senses. Famine, contagious diseases came, the enemies approached. Nothing helped. The sins of kings, lords and nobles brought upon us “Mene, Tekel, Peres” as earlier Skarga had foretold: “You will be not only without a king of your blood and without the possibility of electing him, but without your fatherland and your kingdom, poor exiles, scorned, needy, tramps who will drag their feet there where you were earlier respected.” The Polish nation through almost one hundred fifty years felt this painfully on her own skin! “Mene, Tekel, Peres” was not written by a mysterious hand, but by politics, diplomacy, factiousness, hatred, discord, suspicion, luxury, progress and education without God, a godless culture and civilization, not only over the nation, but over the whole world. In 1914 the war burst out, the horror and ravages of which were incomparable with anything before. A frenzy of thoughtless and false patriotism enveloped the nations. Human blood flowed in rivers; death from hunger reached out its ossified hand to the furthest corner of the earth! Corpses as far as the eye could see; invalids without hands or legs; blind men and madmen every step of the way. The whole world became a cemetery and a hospital. The weeping and complaints of the living mixed with the moans and curses of the dying. And when in 1919 the ominous boom of the last cannon shot died down, it seemed as if peace and rest would come to the oppressed and downtrodden people. But no, far from it! From the time of the world war, what has been happening in the enormous country of inhuman tsars and bloodsucking bureaucrats of the Russian aristocracy and officials? Sins and centuries-old abuses take revenge on innocent, defenseless and helpless Russian peasants. “Mene, Tekel, Peres!”

Take a look at the country of Attila and the Huns, at the fatherland of the iron Bismarcks, at the nest of treacherous Teutonic Knights, at the palaces of the emperor’s family, whose motto was: “We and God!” Revolts, revolutions, the shedding of blood, unrest and dissatisfaction. “Mene, Tekel, Peres!”

Turn your eyes to Vienna, Vienna which was once known for centuries as the city of fun and entertainment without end; where poverty and destitution were unknown, where the city dwellers lived their lives without fear and terror. And today? Death from hunger walks the streets of the proud capital of Austria. “Mene, Tekel, Peres!”

Look at Spain; at Portugal; at countries of Central and South America; at faraway China and India. What does this mean? Everywhere there is commotion, everywhere disturbances. Oh yes! “Mene, Tekel, Peres.” But why should we reach for the examples of faraway or nearby countries? We do not have to cross the borders of our own adopted Country. Let us look not only superficially, but a little more profoundly at our situation. Our country, known for years as a land flowing with milk and honey; the mother of judicious liberty, who cares for the happiness of her adopted children, in a word, an earthly heaven for all those who are persecuted and political and religious martyrs, has changed into something strange. Today streams of human tears, hot and bitter, flow! Now flow streams of resentment, of more or less justified reproaches of the just; we hear words of pleas and threats, which change into a murmuring which does not bode well. Over our country looms a threatening sentence, which is composed of three short words: “Mene, Tekel, Peres.” – Whose fault is this? Not God’s or God’s Providence! Oh, no – America is generously equipped with natural gifts; it is one of the richest countries of the word. And yet here at the very mention, a shiver like an electric spark goes through the body and soul.

At this moment through the streets of cities and towns walked over ten million citizens, healthy and strong, virtuous and sober, model and hard-working, with anxiety on their faces and uncertainty in their minds. Without employment, some for years already, they look with pity on their families, sick and hungry, who await a better future! And here, no perspectives of a better future. Fabrics close not only their doors, but nail shut their windows. A few thousand live carefree lives, and millions lose their minds. Let some one tell me that it is worse in other countries. This is not true. In other countries it is bad, but here it is even worse. And to top it all off, thousands of banks closed their doors, freezing billions of dollars of assets– the many years’ savings of poor widows and orphans. This is a crime which cries to heaven for vengeance. Yes – in addition, who can count the houses and property taken from poor workers for their unpaid taxes, interests and the like? Who can describe the sad and critical situation of an American farmer who is threatened by impending doom from all sides? And those poor men who today still cling to a job by their teeth, hands and feet, how much do they earn? Hurried, watched over, almost chained to their machines, they do the work of three men each, earning a dollar and a half per day. This is the royal remuneration for their slave labor. We are surprised when we read that these poor men go mad from despair and take their own or other people’s lives.

I will give the example of such a case from Mattoon, Ill.: - Mrs. Inez Carroll, a young widow from Chicago, on October 23 after putting her three children to sleep, drowned them in the bathtub of the hotel bathroom. Overwhelmed by despair due to financial losses and lack of a job, she lies under guard here in the hospital where she slowly recovers. She refuses to take medicine and eat, and continually begs the doctors and nurses to let her die. She had lost all of her own and her late husband’s savings due to the crash of the public use shares, and to make things worse, she also lost her job as a secretary. “I was afraid that my children would die from hunger!” This is how Mrs. Carroll explains her terrible deed!

“Mene, Tekel, Peres” above us… Our laws, especially those which regard chastity moderation and sobriety are below zero. We are indebted to them for overflowing prisons, hospitals and lunatic asylums. There are more and more new and financially powerful bands of bootleggers and gangsters, those gangs of murderers, grafters and racketeer. In spite of thousands of federal, state and local laws, maybe even thanks to these laws, statistics show that America takes the lead in crime out of all the civilized countries of the worlds. So our laws condemn a poor man for life imprisonment for the sale of a bottle of vodka, and the rich man who wronged a widow and orphan and stole millions from shareholders is let free on probation. Oh, today as never before the poor American citizen is stifled. He was promised that prohibition would make him happy – he believed. He was promised that a high tariff level would bring prosperity – he believed. He was promised “two cars in each garage” – he believed. He was promised a full lunch-box for every day and a chicken for Sunday dinner – he believed. He was promised lower taxes – he believed. He was promised that, to tell the truth, he would be happier than Adam in paradise – he believed. Today, too late, he rubs his eyes and opens them, surprised, to realize that “fine words butter no parsnips”.

Today he walks by closed and abandoned factories; by emptied garages; he looks at empty plates and takes refuse from barrels and eats moldy bread. Who would have thought that something like this could take place in America; that in this America, which not so long ago was smothered in gold and so quickly turned and revolved around the omnipotent dollar? Who would have imagined that this country, so rich in resources, would wallow in overproduction, unemployment, in destitution? I ask once again, whose fault is it? There was no natural disaster. There was no inundation which flooded the country; there was no rain of fire and sulfur; the Egyptian plagues did not repeat themselves – nothing of the kind! The last solar eclipse did not harm or hurt us.

There is one and only one conclusion: evil, poverty, destitution, injustice and privation are the work of human hands. “Mene, Tekel, Peres” was not written over our country by an invisible, Biblical hand. This ominous sentence was the work, the sad work of human hands, visible hands, the hands of the rulers and the ruled. In other words, it is a sentence written by the authorities and the subjects, by the government and the citizens. However the fault is not equal. For the most part the fault rests on the shoulders of authority. The governments were under the impression that citizens are only there for the government, not the government for the citizens. Those in authority cared more for mindless animals than they thought about the defense of the worker and his family. The fate of a working family was of less interest for them than the fate of slaves in Africa or in India. Our government reached out a helping hand to the citizens of foreign countries, gave credits, saved the hungry, and forgot and forgets about its own citizens. It wanted to clean and still does clean the backyards of others, and neglected to clean and bring to order its own backyards! Negligence on the part of those called to attend to its citizens and guarantee them conscientious care and fatherly concern. The fault is also large on the side of the citizens. Sluggishness and idleness in fulfilling the duties and using the privileges and taking advantage of civic rights. Only now, when the wolf of hunger and poverty looks not only into the door, but shoves himself through the window; when the up to now incomprehensible “Mene, Tekel, Peres” becomes clear and obvious, only now do they wake up and start to interest themselves in civic matters. With certain mistrust and with certain disbelief they look at the ruling party and their artificially built systems, which promise much, but deliver little or nothing!

“Mene, Tekel, Peres”, the first scenes of this tragedy on the scene of American life have been played for the last three years. Who can – who should stop them? The government and only and the government! Federal reform of the systems, that is the social system: economic, trade, financial and legislative. The government should abandon all particular interests, should abandon those useless, already obsolete and even harmful rules. Return while there is still time to the principles of Christ’s justice, because only justice is the base and foundation of powerful and happy states and countries. Saint Augustine wrote: - “Whichever kingdom lacks it cannot be called a kingdom, but a robber band!” Return to God’s laws, “For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures through all generations. All who live on the earth are counted as nothing; he does as he pleases with the powers of heaven as well as with those who live on the earth. There is no one who can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?" [[3]](#footnote-3) Whereupon “Mene, Tekel, Peres” will disappear, and on its place the cross will shine with resplendent brightness, with the historical inscription: “In hoc signo vinces” – “In this, be victorious”.

1. Daniel, 5. New American Bible. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Henryk Sienkiewicz “The Deluge” Volume 2, chapter 87. Translated by W. S. Kuniczak, USA 1991. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Daniel 4, 32. New American Bible. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)