**October 29, 193**3

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

I do not need to explain to the listeners of Rosary Hour that I never was a friend of the Prohibition; in public and in private I have pointed out the sad effects of the government support, so expensive and so ineffective, of this freak of nature and product of narrow, “reformative” minds. After so many years of seeming Biblical drought, which in reality was a flood of poisonous drinks, our citizens have found enough honesty and courage in themselves to hold onto the platform and follow the guidelines of the president. They have grasped the noble experiment by its bony shoulders, throwing it far away, and giving it a strong and hearty kick in parting. Thank God! We have gotten rid of the source of the epidemic of misdemeanors and crimes. The only thing that remains, and which will be visible for a long time yet, are not only the deep marks, but also the painful effects of the rule of Prohibition, which came to the national and constitutional throne on January 16, 1920.

For years to come, hospitals and mental institutions will be full of lost blind, paralyzed or insane people, the unhappy victims of the official prohibition. But this is not the whole tragedy. In these last thirteen years not only elderly people and men learned how to abuse poisonous intoxicant drinks; all of American society got used to this. Maidens, young people, boys, girls, and sometimes even underage children. At first glance it seems not to be that bad. But appearances are misleading. Our society is similar to a leper, vested in fashionable tasteful clothes, which cover a sick and ulcerated body. These illnesses are not only the lack of fraternal charity, but outward hatred; lack of mercy, pity and empathy. It is really today that ‘man is becoming a wolf to his fellow man.’ These sores are pride, indifference and racing after glittering and sometimes evil and deceiving comforts and entertainments, which promise everything and in reality give nothing.

Let us leave this all aside. We Americans of Polish descent, shame to say, have on our social body one sore which is growing bigger by the day and poisons the moral air around us with its stench. It brings on suffering and complaints; sows discord; wrecks homes; ruins families; undermines health; brings reckless victims to the premature grave, so that looking at all this, we often wring our hands and loudly, very loudly cry out: “Things are going badly among us!” You ask me, what can this be? I reply: abuse of alcohol. And here is the title of today’s talk:

**The Traitor of Happiness**

Because nothing speaks to human reason as much as events taken from everyday life, let me give you a few such sad examples. This was a few years back, when I was a boy. We lived in the tiny village of McClure in Pennsylvania, in the basin of soft coal mines near Pittsburgh. In the whole village, there were at most fifty company palaces. The palaces, without proper roofs, without firm foundations, were built of thick and rough boards. Between the cracks peered in the curious rays of the lively sun, often invigorating drops of rain also fell, as well as cold snowflakes crept in. The walls of these company palaces had been the mute witnesses to various events, moving and heartfelt; sad and distressing. The people were noble and good; peaceful and welcoming, but uncouth and uneducated. This is no surprise. It was the result of slavery in the old country, where the brutal occupants and heartless oppressors took as their slogan: keep the remains of the Polish nation in darkness, because when a man is uneducated, he is as a mindless creature, which is guided and directed by the first-come! This Polish countryman was taught that he had come into world in darkness and that darkness was his kingdom, that vodka was the best doctor for all physical and spiritual sufferings, that it was a savior from bad luck, that it was the creator of all happiness and prosperity.

Meantime this good-meaning but short-sighted peasant, the more he drank, the lower he sank, the deeper he became enslaved, the tighter he drew the loop around his neck and the greater unhappiness and poverty he brought to himself and to his family! It is true, day after day, from midnight to midday, he worked like an ox; often bloody sweat poured from him; he fell exhausted onto the ground amid mockery and curses which flew from the lips of the heartless foremen and bosses. This was from Monday to Saturday. But from Saturday to Monday, these miners spent time on drunkenness and fights. In almost every house, men drank to their death. Shipcards weren’t paid for, even the most necessary household items were lacking, poverty and destitution not only cried out, but screamed through the boards of the workers’ homes. Too bad – Saturday and Sunday were days to drink not just a little, but to put yourself to sleep and forget about everything. Barefoot and half-naked children – whatever. Crying wives who curse the day when they left Poland – who cares. It was necessary to drink to forget about everything. Oh, the poor lot of those poor peasants, who five days a week fell down exhausted from tough work, and for two days lay unconscious from excessive drink. Here

I summon up only two incidents from those times, both sad and painful. The victims were innocent children, the children of drunkards. Late one Saturday, a miner returns home. Saturday is payday. It was supposed to be a day of happiness for the whole family. It became a day of tears and unhappiness. Here comes the drunkard-father, and brute-husband – without a cent. Four small children are already in bed. I don’t know if they are sleeping. I doubt it. Probably they are whispering prayers for their father to come to his senses. By the table sits a woman in full bloom. Her forehead is overcast with sorrow; in her hands she holds an old shirt and sews on buttons; sometimes she casts uneasy, tearful glances at the children. She feels that today evening the same sad scene with the drunkard husband will repeat itself. Cries, noise and curses. Suddenly the door opens, and in stumbles the one who should be the model and example, and is the depraver and traitor of his own flesh and blood! Apparently something is not to his liking, because he starts an argument. He responds to the requests and persuasive attempts of his wife by brutal insults and curses. As an answer to her bitter lament, he finds only insults and the fist. He grasps his wife by her hair, throws her to the floor, beating her. The frightened children run to save their mother. But how can they help her? They kneel by her, crying abundantly and kissing her hands. The husband, oppressor and drunkard, tired by his drunkenness and the fight, tries to lift himself up from the floor and seeks some kind of support. At last, he grabs the table, and losing balance, he turns over the table on which scissors lie. He heard a painful cry from the lips of his little daughter Rose, who knelt by her mother. The long blade of the scissors pierced the girl’s eye, and it flowed out. Then, in an instant, the drunkard became completely sober. But it was too late. The eyes could not be restored to the innocent child by any human means. The disabled child is a living monument to a drunkard father.

You surely remember what saloons looked like, don’t you? If they could speak, what would they not tell us? Sad and heart-rending scenes often took place there. I will try to describe to you one of them.

It is crowded and hot in the saloon. It is impossible to breathe due to the toxic fumes emitted by the guests. Some sit by tables, playing cards. Others lean against the bar, giving each other drinks. It is warm here, and they feel comfortable. It is calmer than at home. And anyway, what do they care about wives or children? Nothing. Their drunkard companions, cards, bottles and glasses – this is true life! At home, the wife complains and children cry. They fearfully await the return of husband and father! They can wait, he is in no hurry. Poverty and hunger do not impress him. Children without pants and clothing, a wife worn down with problems, this is all a joke to him. To drench his head – to blunt his reason – to mute his conscience is the goal of a drunkard’s life. Here is one of those who is an everyday guest. He hasn’t worked for years. He’s not that stupid. Society has duties towards him. So when his weekly welfare benefit from the town comes, he takes the bigger half and spends it on drink. And so day after day goes by. He would spend whole nights here, if not for his twelve-year old daughter. Evening after evening, summer and winter, she left the house and walked from bar to bar until she found her father, and tearfully saying, “Daddy, come home with me,” she would take her drunken father by the hand and lead him home. One evening, when this small Guardian Angel was looking for her brutal father in the midst of a snowstorm, something which should have been expected finally happened.

A tragedy. The drunkards were fighting. When the little girl was opening the door, her father threw a glass at his enemy, who had enough time to move out of the way. The huge, heavy glass hit the small girl in the forehead, covering her pale and terrified face with a bloody flush. The poor girl fell to the ground, mortally injured. The drunkard father was paralyzed with fear. Then with one leap he was by her side; he fell to his knees, crying abundantly. The little girl said calmly, “Go home – I will lead you no more. I offered my life for you. Dad, stop drinking, because Mom cries every evening and prays for you.” This request of the little girl touched this drunken brute. Hot tears streamed down his cheeks, he trembled once and again until finally he burst out into tears; he kissed the bloody face and washed it clean with his tears. A calm smile flitted across the small martyr’s face; her lips started to murmur a prayer and request, and the old sinner caught the imploring whisper, “Dad, do not get drunk any more, no, no!” The innocent body stretched out one more time, the hands fell down lifelessly, the gashed head bent down. The old drunkard had become the murderer of his daughter. But the sacrifice had its effect. From a lazy drunkard he turned into a sober, hard-working and pious man.

Do you think that today the nation is more sober than before? Once, one distillery created clean and healthy drink; now, in its place, hundreds of private distilleries make different kinds of stinkers. They pour out this disgusting stuff, drowning health and happiness. Baptisms – weddings – funerals – even the day of First Holy Communion are the occasion for, or the pretexts and justification behind excessive drinking. To get drunk today is a fashionable thing. The mind, the will, the memory and conscience of an alcoholic testify to who he is – a living corpse! The whole world is looking today for changes and reform. We are the witnesses of change in every area, in every field. We demand the end of unemployment, of poverty, we call for insurance of our old age, etc. Do we ourselves get to work? Do we sit around doing nothing? We philosophize and criticize over our quarts and our glasses. Vodka and alcoholism will not give us work – will not get rid of poverty – will not let us reach our old age. Let us return to sobriety, to moderation; fathers and mothers; husbands and wives, sons and daughters, this will be “a new deal” for everyone! Listen now to a few letters from which you will get to know the painful consequences of alcoholism; you will see that unfortunately it cut unawares into the lives of not only the older generation, but also the younger; it controls not only men, but also women. Here is what I am speaking of:

Buffalo, NY

Dear Father,

Please help me with your advice. I am thirty years old. I am single and I live with a mother I not only love, but adore. I work in an office, and from my savings I bought a house in a non-Polish district. Our neighbors are Italian and Irish. My mother is 72 years old. You will find it hard to believe that my mother has taken to drink. When I go to work, I have to make breakfast myself! My mother sleeps till noon after a day spent at our neighbors. When I come home in the evening, the house is cold and empty. My mother is not there. I have to look for her at our neighbors. I am so embarrassed that I have to bring her home drunk. Our neighbors prepared their own moonshine whiskey and they often treat my mother. I don’t know what to do. I am uneasy and nervous. I wanted my mother to be happy, and what did I get? Whatever should I do?

There are not many such good and model sons in the world today, but there are more and more such alcoholic mothers. First, you must move out of that house into another neighborhood. Remove the occasion and the depraving environment. This will help. Then, if you gave your mother money, from now on, you must keep your wallet firmly closed. Not a cent more. If this doesn’t help either, seek advice of some trusted Polish doctor. He will find medicine and the right cure. In this whole affair, you must follow your reason more than your heart.

Chicago, Illinois

Reverend Father,

Why do you not speak out about the behavior of our wives and the mothers of our children? We have three children, a house without debt, and I work every day. But so what, when my life is miserable. My wife is the reason. I never would have expected it. Right after our marriage she started with theatres. Then she added card-parties. For the last five years, she has been in love with alcohol. She doesn’t care for the children, nor for me. Thank God my old mother is still alive. Whenever I say anything to my wife, she replies that she is not a slave. They bring her home frequently, often in such a condition that it is shameful to look at her. Our neighbors know about everything and mock us openly. How long do I have to suffer like this?

The famous prohibition, the current fashion, theatres, dances and various kinds of entertainment have wrecked more than one family; more than one young wife has been ruined and more than one mother has been turned into a drunkard. Alcoholic – that is a disgusting picture, and a drunken mother and wife? I lack the words to describe this noble being, created in the image and likeness of God. Take her to your pastor, let him give her such a “Pater Noster” that she will burn from shame and come back to her senses!

Detroit, Michigan

Dear Father,

Please do not be angry at me for describing my shameful problem. I have a daughter who is eighteen years old. I can’t seem to deal with her, or keep her at home! I plead and I prophesy, I have also beaten her, but nothing helps. She leaves home every evening and returns in the morning. She is never sober. Last Monday she was brought in from a car and thrown onto the porch. When she went to school she was good and obedient, and now whenever I say anything, she retorts that she is not from the old country, but that she is an American. Am I supposed to throw her out of the house or what?

Dear Mother,

I must admit, with an aching heart, that such cases are more and more frequent. You know what causes this? Schools without God, company which is corrupt to the bone; reading materials which poison young people; theatres and badly-understood liberty. How many of our girls here in Buffalo go out into town late at night? And what for? And how many go to out-of-the-way, suspicious-looking “speakeasies” and “roadhouses”? What for? And who do they go with? Newspapers often show us very sad events. It is a shame, a great shame that these are our children; these children who were once so good and so noble, who were models for children of other nationalities! I would still wait and patiently scold. Later there is an effective cure: The Good Shepherd’s Home!

Buffalo, NY

Reverend Father,

After the death of my husband, I gave my son twenty dollars so he could buy clothes for the departed. He went and spent those twenty dollars to buy himself ten gallons of moonshine. The whole period from my husband’s death until the funeral he lay around drunk. Am I wrong to keep him at home?

What do you think, dear radio listeners, when I read you these letters? Am I not right to cry that things are going badly for us? Does an alcoholic, an addicted alcoholic deserve any kind of pity, when he has none for himself, his father, his mother, his wife and children? Do you not understand that these sad people pay not only in money, but also with their health and their happiness, as well as that of their loved ones; what is worse, they pay with their virtue and their soul! If there is any nation that has been hurt by excessive drinking, it is Poland. Even long ago our national hymn almost was: “Under a Saxon king, eat, drink and be merry.” We have eyes and we see what our Polish boy sang about:

“Look, brothers, at drunkards.

They are no better than evil men.

Night and day they drink

They hit their wives and children!

Made into beggars

These hot-headed drunkards

Now they cry and lament

Curse themselves

Wasted households

Put land and fields into debt

Along with the people

And left our people in poverty

Some are made ugly by leprosy

Others had their brains burned out

Still others their necks broken

Everybody had their reason taken away.

Let us give up, abandon our addiction.

It is abominable to people, to God.

Let us abandon the addiction of alcoholism

Which condemns homes and nations.

At the end I repeat: We will soon see the end of the prohibition, but the effects of the prohibition, especially growing alcoholism, will stay with us, who knows how long. We need to work and proclaim and popularize among our people the principles of abstinence, because:

Abstinence will give us strength

Return peace to the heart

Motivate us to noble deeds

In the eyes of God and our neighbors.