

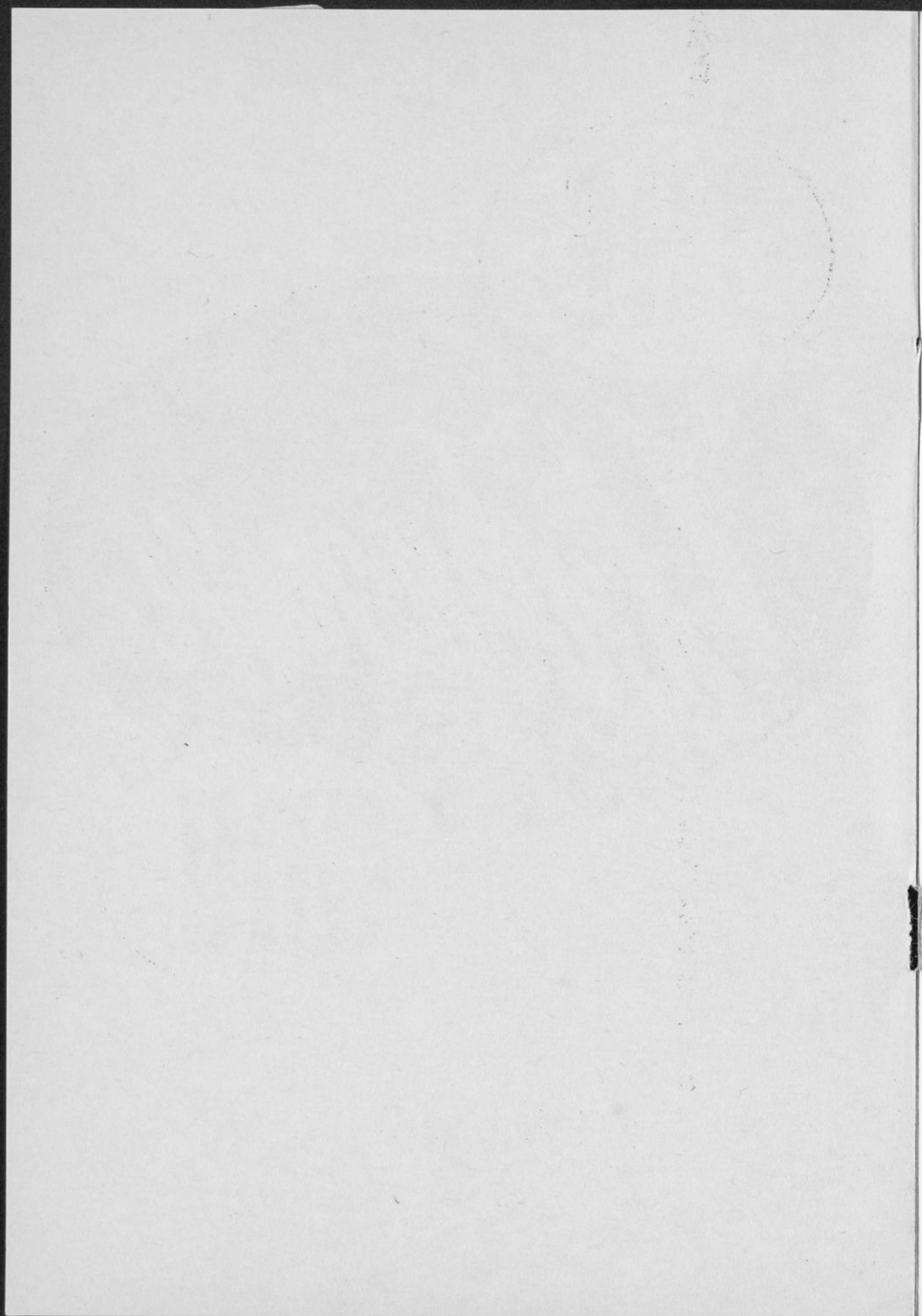
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THE

Unknown

GOD

Rev. Edmond D. Benard



THE UNKNOWN GOD

FIVE ADDRESSES DELIVERED OCTOBER 29-31 TO NOVEMBER
20-22, 1941, ON THE CATHOLIC HOUR, NBC NETWORK, SUNDAYS,
6:00-6:30 P. M., E. S. T.


BY

REV. EDMOND D. BENARD

THE UNKNOWN GOD



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CATHOLIC MEN
1412 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W.
Washington, D. C.

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THE UNKNOWN GOD

FIVE ADDRESSES DELIVERED OCTOBER 23rd TO NOVEMBER 20th, 1949, ON THE CATHOLIC HOUR, NBC NETWORK, SUNDAYS, 6:00-6:30 P. M., E. S. T.

BY

REV. EDMOND D. BENARD

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CATHOLIC MEN
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BY

REV. EDMOND D. BENARD

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THE HILL OF MARS

Talk Given on October 23, 1949

My dear friends:

In the bright new dawn of the Christian day—the year of our Lord 51, a stranger came from Palestine to the proud Greek city of Athens. He found in Athens a city white with gleaming marble; a city of parks and temples, of statues, altars and columns; a city bright with silver, ivory, and gold. High above all he saw the shrine of the goddess Pallas Athena—the exquisite Parthenon, that even today in its ruins has the beauty of a song.

The stranger found in Athens a people who prided themselves on being what they considered open-minded and up-to-date; a people marked with the age-old stamp of the “modern man”: wise in the things that matter very little, and ignorant of those that matter most of all. He found a people (as so often happens) at the same time superstitious and blasé.

Our stranger wandered through the city, gazing at the glory of the buildings. He noted the marks of wealth and art and culture. He was amazed

at the wild and contradictory riot of religious cults. The Athenians only half-believed—maybe less than that—in their pagan gods and goddesses; but they evidently thought, the more of them the better. One day the stranger even saw an altar with the words upon it: “To the Unknown God.” History tells us that his heart “was moved within him”; not with admiration, but with pity and grief. For the stranger from Palestine was the great Saint Paul, and he came to pagan Athens to preach the Faith of Christ.

When he began to speak, men flocked around him. Novelty was the soul of conversation in Athens, and here was something new. A new philosophy, perhaps? No, better than that: a new religion. How exciting; how amusing! Saint Paul spoke to them gravely of Jesus and the resurrection. Of course he spoke in Greek, and, for “resurrection,” he used the Greek word *anastasis*. How interesting, the cultured folk of Athens said to one another, here is a funny little foreigner talking about a new

God, Jesus, and a new goddess, Anastasia!

Does it merely seem amusing, across nineteen hundred years, that the Athenians mistook *anastasis*, the Greek word for "resurrection," for the name of a new goddess, Anastasia? Or does this whole scene haunt you, as it does me, not with its flavor of the past, but with its flavor of the present? The sophisticated Athenians, wise in worldly things and proud of their wisdom, but playing at religion like a childish game, where each player makes up his own private rules as he goes along . . . are not such people always with us? Is the non-existent goddess Anastasia any funnier than the caricatures of the Catholic Faith so solemnly put forth by some critics of the Church today?

Saint Paul came to Athens in 51, but it might as well have been 1949, and the city Boston, or Chicago, or New York, or your home town or mine. Athens and the people in it were not much different from the cities and the people of today; and the Faith Paul preached to the people of Athens was no different at all from the Faith the Catholic Church proclaims today.

At any rate . . . the people of

Athens were curious about this new religion, so they decided to give Paul a solemn hearing. They led him before a tribunal that would correspond roughly, perhaps, to one of our local boards of education, and that held regular meetings at a place called the Areopagus—"The Hill of Mars." As Saint Paul went with them, he must have been thinking of that mysterious altar, with its queer inscription—words that seemed to him a pathetic symbol of the hunger in men's hearts for truth, hunger for the God they worshipped dimly and in ignorance and error, hunger for the Faith they sought all unaware of seeking—the Faith by which alone that God is known.

And so Paul stood there on the Hill of Mars the god of war, and spoke about the Prince of Peace.

"Men of Athens," he began; "Men of Athens, wherever I look I find you scrupulously religious. Why, in examining your monuments as I passed by them, I found among others an altar which bore the inscription, To the Unknown God. And it is this unknown object of your devotion that I am revealing to you" (*Acts 17:22-23*).

I wonder if the Athenians would have been offended if

someone had pointed out to them that Saint Paul knew them better than they knew themselves. I wonder if men today would be offended if the same thing were pointed out to them about the Catholic Church. Most men know only that they are looking for something; the Church knows that they are looking for God. The message of Saint Paul to the men of Athens is the cry of the Church to men of all ages and every place. It is the call to that Faith which is ever ancient, ever new—a Faith that may indeed be out of fashion, but is never out of date. It is an invitation and a summons that sounds today from the Hill of the Vatican as once it sounded from the Hill of Mars: **THE UNKNOWN GOD OF YOUR DEVOTION, HIM I AM REVEALING TO YOU.**

During these five Sunday evenings, relying on our Lord's help and the intercession of His Blessed Mother Mary, I am going to speak to you as clearly as I can about Faith in the living God. I realize the difficulties of speaking about a Light that like the light of the stars is seen only in darkness; about things whose divine simplicity beggars human description. My only ex-

cuse is that these things must be said, again and again, in season and out of season, by somebody—it doesn't much matter who. If we all pray hard enough, and humbly enough, perhaps something of these words, somewhere, to someone, will have a meaning and a value that is not anything of mine, or even of yours, but of God's.

I am going to speak about Faith because it is by Faith that man lives more than he lives by bread. It is Faith alone that gives a pattern to the world—the only pattern that has a place for all the parts. Faith alone unlocks the doors that without it would be forever barred. Whether he wills it or not, every man has a certain road to travel, and Faith alone can light him on his way. It is by Faith we find and know the Unknown God. The Greek inventor-scientist Archimedes, explaining the power of leverage, once said: "Give me a place whereon to stand, and I will move the world." Well, Faith is the place whereon to stand.

There are many things that might be said about Faith, distinctions to be made, attitudes to be examined. Some of them we will think about together during the weeks to come. Re-

member, there is no one of us—here in the studio, in the United States, as far as these radio waves reach beyond our borders—no one of us who is starting from nothing. Men may be mistaken in the gods they worship, as the Athenians were mistaken. Men may waste their strength and squander their lives in the worship of idols: wealth, power, pleasure—idols different from those in Athens' temples, but idols, gods false and soul-destroying just the same. But each man feels from time to time, that these gods he serves are empty gods; that there must be something better, something more. And so in solitude and darkness, in the hidden byways of his heart, he builds himself an altar To the Unknown God. That is why we have recalled the cry of the lonely figure on the Hill of Mars: "This unknown object of your devotion . . . I am revealing to you."

I have said that Faith gives meaning to the world. This is because by Faith we know God as He is; and unless we know God as He is, we cannot know the world as it is, neither can we know ourselves, neither can we know our brothers under God. Isn't that what a saint is

—one who really knows all this, and who loves because he knows?

When I think of saints and Faith, I often think of a particular saint, who goes singing down the centuries as the gay and childlike troubadour of God. I mean, of course, Saint Francis of Assisi.

One day, as a young man, before he had made himself the poorest of the poor for God, Francis of Assisi was riding home after prayer at a little ruined forest shrine. On the road ahead of him he saw a leper.

Now leprosy in those days was not treated as it is today. It was a dread and all-too-common scourge (nineteen thousand leper hospitals in Europe alone), but very little was known about it, and the lepers were shunned for fear of contagion. They had to wear a certain sort of clothing and swing a bell or wooden clapper to warn of their approach.

Young Francis from boyhood had had a horror of leprosy. He was to conquer it later and serve the lepers with the tenderness of a saint, but that was later. This day on the Assisi road it was by Faith he won the bitter battle with himself. He really believed; he saw in the

leper his brother in Christ; saw behind the swollen face and sore-marked body the image of the suffering Christ.

The leper sounded his warning and drew to the side of the road to let the young man pass. But Francis of Assisi leaped from his horse and ran and took the leper in his arms. He kissed his hands and pressed into them all the money that he had. Neither spoke a word. Francis mounted again and rode away.

There is one other thing—rather curious—that we read in the stories of that meeting. When Francis was a few yards off, something prompted him to turn and look around. The dusty road lay long and empty in the sun. On either side there stretched the open fields. They were empty too. There was no Leper in sight.

To see Christ in a leper on the road is to see the meaning of all the lepers on all the roads of the world. It is to see by Faith.

Help us see

With children's eyes

Beauty hidden from the wise.

Thou who art the Truth, the
Way—

Adjuva nos, Domine!

"Adjuva nos, Domine!" "Help us, Lord!" It is the cry of Faith, alike of those who have it by God's gift and of those who seek it from His mercy. "Help us, Lord."

If you have begun to think of Faith, either to search for it, or having it to treasure it the more, and have begun with nothing but this prayer, "Help us, Lord" . . . have no fear.

You have begun well.

God bless you.

THE MEN OF ATHENS

Talk Given on October 30, 1949

My dear friends:

On Friday, the twenty-third of September, I happened to have a few hours to spare in New York. So, I walked out Forty-seventh Street east to the river to see how the construction was coming along on the new buildings for the United Nations.

The building already partly completed rises quietly against the sky like a symbol in stone and steel of the hope for peace in most men's hearts. I think that very many people when they see it must breathe a silent prayer, as I did, that under God the men who work here will do their best, and that their best will be good enough; that here on the teeming island of Manhattan, beside the busy traffic of the East River, this home of the United Nations may be a corner stone of peace, and not a tombstone.

When I turned away from the building and started back towards Times Square, I noticed that the newsboys with the afternoon editions were doing a rushing business. The headlines

were a heavy solid black and could be read from many feet away. "President Truman announces . . ."

The news, of course, was that Russia had the atom bomb.

People were buying papers and stopping right away to read the opening paragraphs of the story, apparently to see if the headlines really meant what they said. In New York, as everywhere, the people were deeply interested in the announcement made at the White House offices that Friday morning. They were interested in its possible effect on the United States, on the United Nations, on the chances for world peace, on their own lives. As far as a casual observer could tell, they were not excited, certainly not frightened; but they were grave, and thoughtful and very much concerned.

On that day and the days following, as I listened everywhere I went to men and women talk about the news, I could not keep my thoughts from straying, even from the atom bomb. Because, you see, I wond-

ered why it is that we can be so rightly concerned about one type of fact, and so wrongly close our eyes and ears to another. I could not help wondering, time after time, how many of these men and women realized that the question whether Russia had the atom bomb—important as it was—was far less important to each of them, infinitely less important, than the question whether in their hearts they had God's gift of Faith.

Now I think it very safe to say that there are usually three reactions to a remark like that just made. Some, I am sure, would say: "Nonsense! complete nonsense, to say that Faith is more important than the atom bomb! You might think we were still in the Middle Ages, and not in 1949!" Others, I am sure again, would suspend judgment: "Well, perhaps there might be something in it. There *may* be more important things than atomic energy, at that. We'll think about it . . . sometime . . . sometime later, perhaps . . . maybe." And some others, I am surest of all, would agree with me.

I hope that no one thinks the three reactions I have men-

tioned are phantoms of a curious imagination. These three responses to the mention of the Faith are as ancient as the Faith itself. Some mock; some suspend judgment; some believe. This is just what happened nineteen hundred years ago on the Hill of Mars, when Saint Paul preached to the men of Athens his sermon "On the Unknown God."

Last week we spoke of Athens and its people and Saint Paul. I would ask you to return to them with me again today. Not to get safely back into pre-atomic history and away from 1949; but to see the present in the mirror of the past, and to meet . . . *ourselves*, upon the Hill of Mars.

Saint Paul began his sermon to the men of Athens by telling them about the Unknown God their hearts desired, like a Light seen dim and far away through pagan dark; "that God," he said, "who is Lord of heaven and earth . . . who gives to all of us life and breath and all we have" (*Acts 17:24-26*). Then Saint Paul went on to speak about the unity of nations. Would to God his words were written somewhere on that building in New York!

The firm foundation that was preached by Paul for a United Nations nineteen hundred years ago remains the only firm foundation still. This is what he said: "It is [God] who has made, of one single stock, all the nations that were to dwell over the whole face of the earth. And he has given to each the cycles it was to pass through and the fixed limits of its habitation, leaving them to search for God . . . Would they find Him? And yet, after all, he is not far from any one of us; it is in him that we live and move and have our being; thus, some of your own poets have told us, for indeed, we are his children" (*Acts* 17:26-29).

For the men of all the nations to remember that they are indeed of single stock—that they are all, of every race and every nation, all the children of that God in whom we live and move and have our being! Can you think of any better guarantee of peace? Can you think of any *other* guarantee of peace? I can not.

Saint Paul was not finished with his sermon. He had hardly begun. He told the pleasure-loving men of Athens that they were called to penance for their

folly and their sins. He warned them that they, so proud and self-sufficient, would one day face the Unknown God as Judge. He told them finally that God's judgment would be spoken by one who was still, to them, an unknown Man—a Man who had risen from the dead (*Acts* 17:30-31).

I said "he told them finally," because he was allowed to speak no more. The men of Athens, when they heard about the resurrection from the dead, broke in upon him. Philosophy they would listen to, and poetry, but not the call to Faith in Christ crucified and risen from the dead. High principles they would admire, and high ideals—as long as no disturbing demands were made upon them, as long as they were spared the trouble of putting principles to practice. The Acts of the Apostles tell us that "some mocked, while others said, we must hear more from thee about this. . . . But there were men who attached themselves to him and learned to believe" (*Acts* 17:32-34). This was the answer in the year 51, as it is the answer to-day, of men confronted with the Living Christ: some mocked, some suspended judgment,

some believed. Was I mistaken when I promised you that we should meet ourselves upon the Hill of Mars?

During these five programs we are thinking together about Faith. I would not like to have any mistake about what I mean by Faith. I mean a sure and firm belief, on the authority of God Himself as witness, in the teachings brought to earth from Heaven by Jesus Christ our Lord, and brought to us today by the Church He founded to be His living voice forever among men. During the weeks to come, with God's help, we shall have a number of things to consider about the nature and meaning of this Faith. Today I mean to keep to the subject of the attitudes men take towards Faith.

Mockery is an easy refuge. It saves a man from thinking; saves him from facing something that for some reason he may not want to face. Ridicule answers no questions; it even refuses to listen to them being asked. There are none so blind as those who will not see.

Suspension of judgment is dangerous, because none of us has much time. To dictate to

God the terms on which we will accept Him is almost the same as denying His very existence. We are not His judges; He is ours. We are not allowed to suspend judgment forever, comfortable as we may be. A great French writer once remarked: "He who doubts, but does not seek to have his doubts removed, is at once the most wicked and most unhappy of men. If together with this, he is tranquil and self-satisfied, if he is vain of his tranquillity . . . I have not words to describe [him]."

A harsh judgment? Perhaps. But the man who refuses Faith to God must of necessity choose a sorry substitute, however much he may flatter his pride. Faith is not found by pride. It is pride that stands between man and God. Faith can only be sought in humility and prayer.

Some mock, some suspend judgment, some believe. The best that can be said about the first two attitudes is that they are sterile and dead. To turn our attention from them to Faith is to turn from death to life. Those who believe have through the centuries found in Faith the answer to fear, in

the God of everlasting life the strength to triumph over death itself. Among them are the shining legions of the martyrs. There is a Saint Perpetua, who went smiling to a bloody death in the Roman arena, on her lips the words, "During my life I have always been happy, I will be happier still in the life to come." There is a Saint Charles Garnier, who died at the hands of the Iroquois on our own continent of North America, and who had looked forward to the chance to speak to his torturers about Jesus for as long as it would take him to die at the stake.

Those who mock, and those who are satisfied to doubt, are unwilling to take the trouble to find something worth living for. Those who believe have found something worth dying for. Do you remember Chesterton's lines from the "Ballad of the White Horse?"

The men of the East may spell
the stars,

And times and triumphs
mark,

But the men signed of the cross
of Christ

Go gaily in the dark.

The men of Athens were offered the true God, and most of them preferred their false gods. We are offered much the same choice, although in terms that are strictly up-to-date. I think the question can be very simply put, a question that should pierce the conscience of the world: Shall we make the object of a worship of despair what an American poet a generation ago called "the dead Atom-King?" Or shall we remember what day this is, in the calendar of the Faith?

Today, Sunday, October 30,
is the Feast of *Christ the King*.
God bless you.

THE THINGS THAT APPEAR NOT

Talk Given on November 6, 1949

My dear friends:

This fall, on Mount Palomar in Southern California, scientists and technicians were still at work polishing the two-hundred-inch mirror of the great Hale telescope. In preliminary tests since the mirror was installed two years ago, the telescope had succeeded in recording stars six thousand billion billion miles away. But it was still, to the astronomers, not quite satisfactory. An average of twenty one-millionths of an inch still had to be rubbed away from the outer rim of the mirror before the telescope could reach its maximum power of penetration into the unimaginable distances of space.

For many years now, in newspapers and in various popular and scientific magazines, we have been following the progress of work on the giant mirror. We have read about the tremendous difficulties met and conquered in the pouring and cooling of the glass; of the ten painstaking years spent in polishing the mirror before its installation; of the great care

and elaborate preparations necessary to transport it safely to Palomar Mountain. We have read of the complicated system of braces and counterweights that prevent the force of gravity from distorting the paraboloid curve of the mirror when it is moved in its framework. We have read of the five hundred tons of precision mechanism that focuses the telescope on its object and—during the time-exposure photograph—moves the telescope slowly to compensate for the motion of the earth. Most of us, who have no special knowledge of astronomy, have marvelled at the uncompromising quest for perfection that has marked every stage of the delicate work.

The huge concave mirror has been so carefully constructed because it is the most important part of the telescope. It is this mirror that gathers the starlight and reflects it on the photographic plate. The slightest, smallest, tiniest imperfection in the mirror would result in a distortion of the image,

and a consequent error in the findings of the scientists who search for answers to secrets space has guarded since the world began.

Oddly enough, I was reminded strongly of the work on the Palomar mirror one day last summer when I was reading a little book written by Saint Bonaventure seven hundred years ago. The book is called *The Ascent of the Mind to God*, and—as might be inferred from the title—it is a good deal concerned with Faith. Saint Bonaventure reminds us that all we read about Faith, all we hear about it, even the teachings of the Faith itself, are received in our minds as in a mirror; and that all we are offered means little or nothing, unless—these are his words—“unless the mirror of our mind has been cleansed and polished.”

The mirror of the mind . . . Men take great care to make the mirror of a telescope perfect, and we admire them for it. We seldom even think about the mirror of the mind. And yet . . . the mirror of a telescope is just a window on the stars, its power measured in the terms of time and space; the mirror of the mind is a window

into Heaven and the measure of its power is Eternity. The mirror of a telescope explores the distant universe; the mirror of the mind reflects a light that shines from beyond the margin of the universe, from beyond the farthest star—the Light of Faith that comes to us from the God who made the stars. The mirror on Mount Palomar is the finest mirror ever fashioned. It has been called “one of the wonders of the modern world.” But compared with the mirror of the mind it is like the plaything of a child.

During this series of broadcasts, we have been thinking together about Faith. We have stood with Saint Paul upon the Hill of Mars and heard him promise the men of Athens that he would speak to them about the Unknown God. We have seen their reaction to his mention of the Risen Christ—a response as old as the first century and as new as the twentieth—some mocked, some suspended judgment, some believed. Today I should like to speak a little bit more in detail about the nature of the Faith; about what Faith really is.

When we use the word "Faith," we can use it in two distinct but closely related senses. It can mean, first, what we believe—the *content*, if you wish to put it that way, of the message sent by God to men. This is what we mean when we speak of "the faith," or when we call it "the Catholic Faith," or "the Faith of Christ." By all these we mean the same thing: the doctrines, or teachings, brought to men by Christ our Lord during His life on earth, and brought to us today by the Church He founded.

Second, we can also mean by "Faith," our *belief* in what Christ taught. When we use the word "Faith" in this sense we mean a real firm and sure consent of the mind to the teachings we receive from God through Jesus Christ His Son. We are more certain of the truth of these teachings than we can ever be about any earthly thing, because God Himself stands witness to their truth, and God can no more deceive us than He can be deceived by us. Faith is not a blind surge of emotion, neither is it wishful thinking. It is a clear and free consent of the mind that we render to God's truth as free

and reasonable men, because God Himself in His wisdom and mercy gives us strength in our weakness and Light in the dark.

I have said that these two meanings are distinct but closely related. We can use them both in a single sentence without any confusion; for example—"It is by God's gift of Faith that we believe the teachings of the Faith of Christ." Not only *can* we use them together; they belong together. We never just "believe." We always believe *something*. And it matters a great deal *what* we believe.

I mention this because I think it is a dangerous error (although at present quite a fashionable one) to say that it doesn't matter what a man believes, just so long as he believes something. This is to substitute Faith in God for faith in a vacuum. It is much the same as saying that it does not matter what a man does, so long as he does something; that it does not matter whether a man eats toadstools or mushrooms, so long as he eats something; that it does not matter where a man goes, so long as he goes somewhere. It is an attitude of mind that was satiriz-

ed many years ago by Lewis Carroll in *Alice in Wonderland*. There is a dialogue between Alice and the Cheshire Cat that runs like this:

(Alice asked the Cat) "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to walk from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where—" said Alice.

"Then it doesn't much matter which way you walk," said the Cat.

"—so long as I get somewhere," Alice added . . .

"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk enough."

I'm sorry. Perhaps I should take some of our contemporary philosophers more seriously. But in all honesty, when they tell me that it doesn't matter what a man believes, just so long as he believes something, I can no more accept them as a guide of life than I could Alice in *Wonderland* and the Cheshire Cat.

Let me emphasize again that the Faith we are considering together during these weeks

entails both the act of believing and the truth we believe. One is just as important as the other, and both of them come from God.

In one of his letters Saint Paul describes Faith as "the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not" (*Hebrews 11: 1*). In a long series of examples he illustrates his description, impressing constantly upon his readers that Faith is a free consent of the intellect to truth that God has revealed. A *free* consent, remember. God grants us Faith as a gift, but He does not force it upon us. We have no right to expect that by a miracle God will preserve the gift of Faith upon a man who has not prepared himself to receive it as best he can. We have no right to expect that by a miracle God will preserve the gift of Faith in a man who by his life and actions does his worst to throw it away. "The evidence of things that appear not" comes to us from God. God gives but *we* receive; and the light that comes to us from Heaven is reflected in the mirror of our own minds. All that we are offered means little or nothing—as Saint Bonaventure

has told us—"unless the mirror of our mind has been cleansed and polished."

I do not think that our long mental journey from the Hill of Mars in Athens to Mount Palomar in California has been wasted if we have been reminded, by the care spent upon the mirror of the Hale telescope, of the care we are bound before God to take of the mirror of the mind. The things that appear not—the things of Heaven, the things of Faith, are constantly threatened by the things that appear to us all too strongly, and appeal to us all too strongly—the things of earth. The stars in themselves are brighter than any electric light bulb; but (have you ever noticed?) the stars in the sky seem very dim when we look at them from the middle of Times Square.

The mirror on Mount Palomar must be constantly adjusted lest the motion of the earth

should destroy its focus on the stars; the mirror of the mind is subject also to the motion of the earth, and ours—each one of us—is the terrible responsibility of keeping it fixed always upon God. The force of gravity would distort the mirror on Mount Palomar unless it were braced and counter-weighted; the strong pull of the things of earth will distort the mirror of the mind unless it is counter-weighted with humility and love and honesty and prayers, and the will to follow Truth wherever it may lead. Even in those who have the gift of Faith, the mirror of the mind is never fully perfect. The final polishing of the Palomar mirror was finished a few weeks ago, but the mirror of the mind must be constantly cleansed, and constantly polished, and constantly guarded in its brightness, until the day we die.

God bless you.

THE HILL OF CALVARY

Talk Given on November 13, 1949

My dear Friends:

On the thirteenth of April, 1534, Sir Thomas More, one-time Chancellor of England, was imprisoned on the King's orders in the Tower of London. The charge against him was "treason"; but it was a queer sort of treason. His only crime was a refusal to deny a truth of that Faith he valued more than his freedom—he refused to deny that the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, is under Christ the rightful head of the Church. Sir Thomas More knew, when he entered the Tower, that if he persisted in following his conscience, persisted in recognizing the authority of the Pope, he would never be released alive.

While he waited for death in his prison cell, Sir Thomas began to write a little book of meditations on the sufferings of Christ. Our Lord's agony of spirit in the Garden of Gethsemane was very real and very near to him as he wrote. He felt that Christ was speaking to him, and these were the words Christ spoke:

"Pluck up thy courage, faint heart . . . What though thou be fearful, sore and weary and stand in great dread of most fearful tormentry that is like to fall upon thee, be of good comfort for all that, for I Myself have vanquished the whole world, and yet felt I far more fear, sorrow, weariness and much more inward anguish too, then I considered My most bitter painful passion to press so fast upon Me. He that is strong-hearted may find a thousand glorious valiant martyrs whose ensample he might right joyfully follow. But thou now, oh timorous and weak, silly sheep, think it sufficient for thee only to walk after Me, which am thy shepherd . . . and so mistrust thyself and put thy trust in Me. For this self-same dreadful passage, lo, have Myself passed before thee. Take hold on the hem of My garment . . ."

The learned and light-hearted Thomas More never finished his book about the sufferings of Christ. When he reached the words, "They laid hands on

Jesus," the jailers came and took his books and pen and ink and paper away from him; and soon after, on July sixth, 1535, he died at the headman's block on Tower Hill.

One of More's biographers has said that when they killed Sir Thomas More, they killed four things: they killed learning, they killed justice, they killed laughter, and—what mattered most—they killed holiness.¹ This is true in a certain sense, of course. But in a larger sense I do not think it is entirely true. Learning, justice, and laughter you can really kill. Holiness you cannot. Death is triumph, not disaster, for a saint—and Thomas More was a saint.

I have recalled the story of Saint Thomas More because of what it means to us who are thinking together, during these five broadcasts, about Faith. Saint Thomas died for his Faith in the teaching of the living Church he loved; and he found his consolation and his courage in the Living Christ he loved. Our Lord was to him more real than the prison

guards around him. It was Gethsemane that gave meaning to his Tower cell. And it was the Hill of Calvary that made a holy place of Tower Hill

Those who have been with us during the past few weeks as we recalled Saint Paul's sermon on the Unknown God will remember that when he began to speak about the Christ who had arisen from the dead, many of those who had listened to him up to then would listen to him no longer. The men of Athens gathered there on the Hill of Mars refused to follow Saint Paul when he tried to lead them to the Hill of Calvary. And yet, everything else in Paul's sermon had been preliminary—an introduction to the Living Christ who is the object and the center, the beginning and the end, of the Faith that Paul was revealing to them.

The Faith the Catholic Church proclaims today is Faith embodied in the Living Christ Paul preached. It is Faith in Christ who lives in us and among us as truly as ever He walked with His disciples along the winding roads of Palestine and beside the Lake of Galilee. He is a Christ who cannot be safely buried in the

¹Cf. Christopher Hollis, *Thomas More* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1935), pp. 245-46.

pages of a history book, as once He was buried in the sepulchre. No book can hold Him whom the sepulchre could not. He is risen, He is not there. The Christ the Catholic Faith brings to us is the Living God and our living fellow-Man. With Him we can never be lonely; without Him we are always alone. He carries our burdens; He quiets our fears; He hangs upon our cross. The poet Alfred Noyes has written:

I thought that I could follow
Him;

But, when my feet drew near
To Calvary, at dead of night,
I quailed in utter fear.

Whereat a voice came whisper-
ing,

Through darkness, like a sea:
"Child, child, be not afraid.
Your Cross

Is occupied by Me."²

A Faith which centers in the Living Christ must of necessity be a living Faith. For those who believe, the Catholic Faith becomes so much a part of their

lives that they can no longer distinguish it from their living. It is as contemporary as it is historic. To mention only one example: we have spoken of the Hill of Calvary— and there is a Hill of Calvary no farther from us than the nearest Catholic Church

Every Catholic altar is as real a hill of sacrifice as Calvary was on that first Good Friday almost twenty centuries ago. Every moment of the day, in some part of the world, the sacrifice of Calvary lives on in the sacrifice of the Mass. The Mass is not a mere reminder of Christ's death for our redemption—it is its living, constant renewal and continuation. The strong grace of Christ on Calvary touched the heart of the penitent thief who was crucified with Him, and who prayed with Christ humbly: "Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom" (*Luke 23: 42*). The same strong grace is ready and waiting for those who kneel today before the altar of the Mass. The mercy of Christ is no different, either—and remember, He answered the penitent thief: "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise" (*Luke 23:43*).

²This verse is included anonymously in *The Golden Book of Catholic Poetry*, edited by Alfred Noyes (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1946), p. 431. The verse was written by Dr. Noyes and is used here with his permission.

John Henry Newman—the great Cardinal Newman—with the fresh and burning vision of one who had just a short while before been granted the gift of Faith, saw the Mass for what it really is: “the greatest action that can be on earth.” The Mass, Newman wrote, is

“... not the invocation merely, but if I dare use the word, the evocation of the Eternal. He becomes present on the altar in flesh and blood, before whom angels bow and devils tremble. This is that awful event which is the scope, and is the interpretation of every part of the solemnity. Words are necessary, but as means, not as ends; they are not mere addresses to the throne of grace, they are instruments of what is far higher, of consecration, of sacrifice. . . Quickly they go; for they are awful words of sacrifice, they are a work too great to delay upon . . . Quickly they pass; for the Lord Jesus goes with them, as He passed along the lake in the days of His flesh, quickly calling first one, and then another. Quickly they pass; because as the lightning which shineth from one part of heaven unto the other, so is the coming of the Son of Man . . . And as Moses on the mountain,

so we too ‘make haste and bow our heads to the earth, and adore’ . . . Each in his place, with his own heart, with his own wants, with his own thoughts, with his own intention, with his own prayers . . . like a concert of musical instruments, each different, but concurring in a sweet harmony, we take our part with God’s priest, supporting him, yet guided by him.”³

I think these words of the brilliant English convert to the Catholic Faith help us a little bit to understand why—in an age when so many deplore what they call “the decline of religion”—millions of Catholics gather, not only on Sundays but every day they can, around that living Hill of Calvary that is the altar of the Mass.

At the beginning of this broadcast we saw how Saint Thomas More died, and died gladly, rather than deny a single doctrine of the Catholic Church. The point we should remark is that this attachment of a Catholic to the living Church, far from interfering with his attachment to the Living Christ,

³Loss and Gain (Longmans, Green and Co., standard uniform edition), pp. 327-29.

is identical with it. For the Church is Christ's Mystical Body—His body in a mysterious and supernatural manner, as Saint Paul explained in his epistle to the Romans when he wrote: "For just as in one body we have many members, yet all members have not the same function, so we, the many, are one body in Christ but severally members one of another" (12: 4-5). In the Catholic Faith, to find the living Church is to find the Living Christ. The devotion of a Catholic to the Church will always surprise anyone who sees in the Church only an ecclesiastical organization. The reverence and respect a Catholic pays to his bishop will always baffle anyone who sees in the bishop only an individual who wears purple robes and seems to have a good deal of authority. The spiritual allegiance Catholics all over the world render to the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, will always astound anyone who

sees in the Sovereign Pontiff only the ruler of tiny Vatican City, who spends so much time writing Encyclical Letters and receiving visitors in audience. But to the eyes of Faith the Church is Christ's Body, the Bishops are our spiritual fathers in Christ, and the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, is the Vicar of Christ on earth. No one who understands the Church would ever waste his time trying to drive a wedge between the Catholic people and their bishops and the Pope.

One final word. I hope these few remarks today do not seem to have been about many different things. They really were all about one. Because when I follow the example of the Psalmist and raise up my eyes to the hills, I see in one far landscape lighted by the Faith, the Hill of Calvary, the Hill of Mars, and many hills like Tower Hill . . . and the Seven Hills of Rome.

God bless you.

KNOWING BY HEART

Talk Given on November 20, 1949

My dear friends:

When we speak of "knowing something by heart" we generally mean that we have memorized it and are able to repeat it word for word. But the phrase "knowing by heart" has another meaning, just as old, and far richer in its significance. It is a meaning that was already noticed and defined by the Latin grammarian Aulus Gellius, who lived and wrote seventeen hundred years ago. To know by heart means not only to know but to love; not only to recognize but to follow; not only to be able to repeat something but to be able to *live* something.

It is with such meaning in mind that I should like to speak to you in this the last of our broadcasts about that "knowing by heart" which is knowing by Faith.

In the English language there are at least thirty legitimate uses of the word "heart"; for example, the doctor, the popular-song writer, and even the bridge player each has his own. Three of these uses are, I think, particularly applicable to "know-

ing by heart" when we speak of such knowledge in connection with Faith.

The heart is regarded, first, as the center of a man's conscience and moral convictions. It is in this sense that Shakespeare writes in *Henry VI*: "What stronger breastplate than a heart untainted!" Second, to the heart is attributed the virtue of courage—a courage that is not based on strength of body but on strength of will. Thus Tennyson's Ulysses calls to his aged companions of the sea:

We are not now that strength
which in old days

Moved earth and heaven, that
which we are, we are,—

One equal temper of heroic
hearts,

Made weak by time and fate, but
strong in will

To strive, to seek, to find, and
not to yield.

Third, the heart is considered the dwelling-place of love—love both human and divine. Francis Thompson's "Arab Love Song," in which human love serves as

a symbol of God's love, ends with the urgent lines:

Leave thy father, leave thy mother

And thy brother;

Leave the black tents of thy tribe apart!

Am I not thy father and thy brother,

And thy mother?

And thou—what needest with thy tribe's black tents

Who hast the red pavilion of my heart?

To know by heart, then, is a matter of purity of conscience, strength of will, and love of the Truth which is to be found at last in God. Both those who seek the Faith, and those to whom it has been given must know it by heart.

Because we who are human are what we are, the search for Faith is not a simple matter of reading books, or listening to sermons, or weighing arguments pro and con. The Catholic Church has always maintained, calmly and confidently, that the claims of Christ to teach the truth of God, and the claim of the Church to speak with Christ's living voice, can be proved from history and reason. The Catholic Church has always maintained that from one who searches with an open mind,

the city seated on the mountain cannot be hid. But the Church has always recognized also that the Faith does not bludgeon us into bowing before it. If a man does not want to believe, he can always find excuses for not believing.

You see—let us face it frankly—it costs a man something to accept the Faith. To believe in Christ means to follow Christ's teachings; and His teachings sometimes interfere with what a man considers pleasure, or his comfort, or his pride. Most men will admit that two plus two equals four. It costs them nothing to admit it. But to see in Christ the Way, the Truth and the Life means often that a man must change the semi-pagan life to which he has become accustomed. Our human nature being what it is, if a man had to change his way of life in order to admit that two plus two equals four, I am afraid that almost as many men would deny it as deny that Christ is God. The mind is, in one respect, like water: it seeks its own level. That is why a right state of heart, which means a right conscience and certain sound moral inclinations, is the first necessity of the search for Faith.

The second requirement is

strength of will. And here we must be absolutely clear. I do not mean that the will should overpower the mind, and force it to accept something that does not stand as reasonable on its own ground. I have always been suspicious of what some modern philosophers call "the will to believe." Strength of will is needed, not precisely so that a man may see the truth, but so that he can overcome the obstacles, in his own life, in his own surroundings, perhaps in his own education, that prevent him from looking clearly at the truth. In the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine we read of the tremendous effort of will he had to make in order to tear himself away from the habits and amusements and sins that were like so many clutching hands that held him back from the Faith. Saint Augustine wrote:

"The very toys of toys, and vanities of vanities . . . still held me; they plucked my fleshly garment, and whispered softly, 'Dost thou cast us off? and from that moment shall we no more be with thee for ever? and from that moment shall not this or that be lawful for thee for ever?' . . . And now I much less than half heard them, and not openly

showing themselves and contradicting me, but muttering as it were behind my back, and secretly clutching me, as I was departing, but to look back on them. Yet they did retard me, so that I hesitated to burst and shake myself free from them, and to spring over whither I was called; a violent habit saying to me, 'Thinkest thou, thou canst live without them?'"

This struggle of Saint Augustine has been in some measure at least the struggle of every man who has ever sought the Faith of Christ. That is why the second necessity of "knowing by heart" is the strength of will "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

Finally, there is need for love. And here I am reminded of a common but curious saying: "Love is blind." Did you ever hear people talking about a recently married couple, and hear one person say "Whatever did she see in him?" Some one usually answers, "Oh well, love is blind." And they let it go at that. I wonder if such people ever think that there might be another answer to the question: "Whatever did she see in him?" The answer might well be: "She saw in him a strength and a

goodness and a virtue that you cannot see, because she loves him and you do not." Love is not blind. It is prejudice, it is hatred, that is blind. Love is clear-sighted. The saying "love is blind" is a curious saying precisely because, as almost any psychologist will tell you, it is nearly the exact opposite of the truth.

Human love, of course, may sometimes be mistaken; that happens when the loved one plays it false. But love of truth and love of God can never be mistaken, for neither truth nor God can ever fail us in the end. No one who does not love the truth and God will ever find the truth or God. That is why this love is needed if we would know by heart.

Today I have been speaking mainly to those who search for Faith. To those who have been granted it as God's gift I have only this to say: to know by heart is to live by what we know. To pay lip service to the Faith, and at the same time by some mental gymnastic to carry on business or professional or political life as if the Faith did not exist, is to make the name of God and the name of Christ a mockery among the nations. Of those to whom much has been

given, much will be demanded. A man who lives by the Faith he professes must be true to ideals of high personal sanctity—yes, sanctity—in a world that sometimes seems a vast pagan conspiracy against it. Unless he holds in his heart the teachings of the Faith he will be helpless. They will first lie empty in his hands and then turn bitter on his lips. May I repeat—it is not enough merely to memorize Christ's teachings; we must know them by heart.

And so we come at last, you and I, to the end of our time together. During the past weeks, we have recalled to mind that day upon the Hill of Mars in Athens when Saint Paul preached the Light of Faith in Christ amid the pagan darkness. We have seen that the Faith Paul preached nineteen hundred years ago, the Faith the Catholic Church proclaims today, the Faith that is reflected in the mirror of the mind, is a Faith embodied and personified in the Living Christ we know by heart. All this we have seen; and yet we have seen so little about Faith.

There is an incident in the life of Saint Augustine that I have thought about many times

in the weeks we have spent together. One day the saint was walking along the sea-shore, meditating on the tremendous mysteries of the Faith, when he noticed a child playing in the sand. The child, as children often do, was digging little holes, then running to the water's edge, filling a tiny bucket with water, then running back to pour the water into the holes. Saint Augustine watched him for a while, then asked: "What are you trying to do, my child?" The child answered: "Why, I'm trying to empty the sea into these holes!" "But you can't do that, you know," the saint said; "the sea is far too big." The child answered "Neither can you, with a finite mind, comprehend the Infinite."

I suppose this answer startled Saint Augustine as much as we would be startled if we received the same sort of answer from a child playing in the sand at Coney Island or Jones Beach. But Saint Augustine knew that

he had been given, through the words of a child, a message from God. He had been reminded of the fundamental principle from which we always start and at which we always end, when we speak about the Faith. With human minds and human words, we can no more plumb the depths of God's mysteries of Faith than we can empty the ocean into a few little holes in the sand.

If anyone has been helped, even in the tiniest degree, by anything that has been said during the past weeks, these words have been rewarded far out of proportion to their merits. For any help that comes to a man's soul really comes from God, the God who sometimes in His mercy uses men as His instruments. It comes from that God who, as Saint Paul has said: "is not far from any one of us; it is in him that we live and move and have our being . . . For indeed, we are his children" (Acts 17: 27-28).

God bless you, and goodbye.

THE PURPOSE OF THE CATHOLIC HOUR

(Extract from the address of the late Patrick Cardinal Hayes at the inaugural program of the Catholic Hour in the studio of the National Broadcasting Company, New York City, March 2, 1930.)

Our congratulations and our gratitude are extended to the National Council of Catholic Men and its officials, and to all who, by their financial support, have made it possible to use this offer of the National Broadcasting Company. The heavy expense of managing and financing a weekly program, its musical numbers, its speakers, the subsequent answering of inquiries, must be met. . . .

This radio hour is for all the people of the United States. To our fellow-citizens, in this word of dedication, we wish to express a cordial greeting and, indeed, congratulations. For this radio hour is one of service to America, which certainly will listen in interestedly, and even sympathetically, I am sure, to the voice of the ancient Church with its historic background of all the centuries of the Christian era, and with its own notable contribution to the discovery, exploration, foundation and growth of our glorious country. . . .

Thus to voice before a vast public the Catholic Church is no light task. Our prayers will be with those who have that task in hand. We feel certain that it will have both the good will and the good wishes of the great majority of our countrymen. Surely, there is no true lover of our Country who does not eagerly hope for a less worldly, a less material, and a more spiritual standard among our people.

With good will, with kindness and with Christ-like sympathy for all, this work is inaugurated. So may it continue. So may it be fulfilled. This word of dedication voices, therefore, the hope that this radio hour may serve to make known, to explain with the charity of Christ, our faith, which we love even as we love Christ Himself. May it serve to make better understood that faith as it really is—a light revealing the pathway to heaven: a strength, and a power divine through Christ; pardoning our sins, elevating, consecrating our common every-day duties and joys, bringing not only justice but gladness and peace to our searching and questioning hearts.

127 CATHOLIC HOUR STATIONS

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	Williamsport.....	WRAC	1400 kc
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South Carolina.....	Charleston.....	WTMA	1250 kc
	Columbia.....	WIS*	560 kc
	Greenville.....	WFBC*	1330 kc
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