

THE CATHOLIC HOUR

THE GLORIOUS GOAL

BY

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An Editor of the Reader's Digest

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The third in a series of addresses by prominent Catholic laymen entitled "THE ROAD AHEAD," delivered in the Catholic Hour, broadcast by the National Broadcasting Company in cooperation with the National Council of Catholic Men on June 16, 1946, by Fulton Oursler, an editor of the Reader's Digest. After the series has been concluded on the radio, it will be made available in one pamphlet.

National Council of Catholic Men
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THE GLORIOUS GOAL

We have seen that the nations, as they look to the future, are confronting a moral choice. And we have seen that the United States of America, in the grave domestic issues with which it must deal in the years ahead, is faced with a moral choice of its own.

What is true of the world and of this nation is even more overwhelmingly true of each one of us, as individual personalities. Men and women, considering their own personal future, must make a moral choice. They must go one way or the other—toward heaven or hell. Let no one deceive you into believing otherwise. Month by month, and even hour by hour, the issues of the struggle of the future are coming into clearer focus—struggles of whole peoples, of parties within nations, of good and evil within the human soul.

What can the individual citizen do to play a Christian's full part in the battle? Specifically, what can the individual Catholic do so that he may help his country to follow in the pathway of Almighty God? How help, to bring all the nations of the world to obey God's will?

It is not hard for us to know what to do. Fortunately, the an-

swers to these questions are not far to seek. The Christian man and woman are perfectly armed against the subversions of this life. For thousands of years all the knowledge that man needs has been accumulating. We are heirs to the experience of patriarchs, the wisdom of judges, the visions of prophets, and we are beneficiaries of direct revelation by our Father in Heaven.

The Ten Commandments are vital and strong this instant as they were when handed down in lightning and thunders on Mt. Sinai. The Life of Our Lord as recounted in the Gospels is still the shining light for the footsteps of every faltering soul. We know that ". . . God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that those who believe in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting" (*John 3:16*).

We have the teachings and parables and deeds of Our Lord to keep us on the straight and narrow course which—and only which—leads to our perfect and glorious goal. And we have the history of the early Church, as told in the Acts of the Apostles; and we have the Epistles those early heroes wrote, with the glow of coming bonfires throw-

ing upon their pages an immortal light of martyrdom.

We have the writings and traditions of the Church; doctrine and dogma and significant episodes in the history of our faith handed down by word of mouth from old priest to young priest in the long centuries of apostolic succession. We have the Creed of the Apostles, formulating in words that we cannot misunderstand, exactly what it is that we believe. Our priceless possessions are the sacraments, those outer signs of inner grace; one to bid us welcome into the world, in baptism; one to give us final absolution and God-speed as we return into the illimitable mystery from which we came. One of the remaining five sacraments is not for the many but for the few; that is the sacrament of Holy Orders by which a man becomes a priest; and by the beneficence of that ordination it is possible for us to receive all the other sacraments for our spiritual life!—of marriage, of confirmation, confession, and above all, Christ's gift to His children, the Blessed Sacrament, the Holy Communion.

Even these priceless possessions are not all of the ready treasure at our right hand. It is our unspeakable privilege to

speaking to God in prayer—to Our Father Who is in Heaven. There is no barrier that can stand between the Almighty Ruler of the Universe and the least of all earth's people, if he brings to the altar an humble and contrite heart. More, if he finds it hard to pray, the living and the dead will help him; mortal and immortal; his friends on earth and the saints in Heaven will foster and sponsor his appeals for strength. For another unspeakable privilege is the Communion of Saints.

There are, I say it with astonishment, millions of Christians who recite a statement that they do believe in the Communion of Saints but never dream of enjoying communion with them. But the true Christian boldly and patiently and believingly seeks such Communion. For it is a high privilege to entreat prayers of a host of bright and holy souls, and of the glorious first and queen of all the saints, Our Blessed Lady, Mary Most Sanctified, Mary Most Holy, Mary the Mother of God.

Not even yet have I named all the armor and all the equipment which is the endowment of the Christian as he finds himself in conflict with the confusions of this life. But I have cited

enough to show that he is well outfitted, not only for the rest of his life on earth, but equally for eternity.

Can you imagine what the world would be like, if every Christian were to use that equipment? Before its mere mobilization, the hosts of evil would collapse. The hosts of hell could not withstand the irresistible forces of devotion and humility and love. Use the weapons that God has given us and the troubles of mankind will begin to disappear—and soon a race of human beings worthier of Heaven will begin to appear.

Now I believe all this is possible!

If that sounds like a most blatant fantasy of hope, let us begin by conceding its difficulty and go forward then, in faith, remembering that with God all things are possible. We have many earnest Christians today—but we have too many indifferent ones, who do not associate the practice of their belief with the affairs of daily life. We need shining examples of Christian courage and piety in every neighborhood, in every office and factory. In each place, someone must foster the renewal of the fervent Christian example. Someone must make a

start. Why should it not be I or you?

Alone, we are small and weak, against the evil of the world,—but someone has said that God and one make a majority. The powers and forces of evil do, indeed, seem to be very strong. But the truth is that a very little good is far more potent than a large concentration of evil. There is a dramatic reminder of that superiority in the story of David and Goliath — all the angry, destructive might of the giant laid low by a stripling with a slingshot in his hand. The only trouble now is that the striplings of good are so few and the world is over-bred with the giant sons of fury. A few more slingers and we can lay the giants low.

This simply means that workers are needed on the good side; believers of the Christian way are needed; disciples on obscure fronts of home and workplace. The time is ready. With our great heritage and equipment as Christians, we shall be able to do mighty deeds. How then may we proceed?

We can use every opportunity, every minute of our lives to be a light before the eyes of our confused companions. The first and greatest service we can render

is to become a living Christian example of mercy and devotion. It does not matter immediately whether our associates understand what we believe or not. Be sure of this—they can understand and believe what we do!

Let us do, then, as Our Blessed Lord would have us do—in every little one of life's transactions. That is our glorious goal. Faith, hope and charity to shine in all our actions—then truly we become a light. The other day I was reading a small book called "You Can Be A Christopher." The author told of a night meeting held in an open air stadium of Los Angeles known as the Hollywood Bowl. Suddenly the speaker asked that all the lights be put out. There sat the vast assemblage in darkness, except for the million tiny points of silver stars hovering in the skies over the home-town of movie celebrities — only they were hovering forever, being not picture stars but God's stars in Heaven. And the people in the stadium were without light in the sudden darkness, because the picture stars in the audience did not give any light at all. Then, suddenly, they heard the voice of the speaker, who was saying: "I am now about to light a match. Can you see it?"

Everyone of the nearly 50,000 men and women who sat in darkness could see clearly the orange spurt of the match-flame. Shakespeare remarked on the carrying power of one lighted candle; so shines a good deed in a naughty world! Having proved Shakespeare's point with a match, the chairman of the Hollywood audience then went even further. He asked every individual present to light a match. Suddenly, as if miraculously, the darkened amphitheatre was bathed in golden light. Fifty thousand little tapers joined to become one burst of glory.

So it is with the tiny tapers of our individual faith. Enough of us can fill the road ahead with light. This does not mean that Christians have not been zealous; I believe the human race has been preserved safe so far only because Christians have been so. It does mean that we must be more zealous; there must be more of us to be so. We must go forward into the future with increasing and dynamic devotion.

Multiply individual devotion and we shall speedily see improvement in international and domestic affairs. No Christian needs to be told of the grace that will come to the individual

life, for that is a fact demonstrable in daily experience. There is neither time nor space on the road ahead for languid Christianity. Our enemies are vigorous and possessed of the writhing strength of evil; there is something demoniac in their persistent activity. We must overcome that evil with good.

Specifically, by the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, we shall begin to confound our enemies. Our good deeds will shine like Portia's candle. The afflicted that we comfort, the doubtful that we counsel, the ignorant we instruct, the offenses we forgive, the oppressors whose wrongs we bear patiently, even the sinners we admonish, the living for whom we pray, will look with new respect and disturbing wonder on the faith that can produce such patterns of behavior. We shall not seek gratitude or expect it; we must seek merely to understand the will of the Lord and do it, and the hungry that we feed, the naked that we clothe, the thirsty to whom we give drink, the harborless to whom we give shelter, the sick we visit, and the captive—all will recognize, that Christ, Our Blessed Lord, can move His followers to imitate Him. We shall

thus become His living advertisements.

But that is only a small part of what we can do, and what I believe we are going to do. We are not, as our enemies suppose, pious dolts, innocent bumpkins in a sophisticated world. Our instructions on that point are clear. We were told by the Master to be harmless as doves—but wise as serpents. We shall, then, be wise as serpents and use that wisdom on the good side. We shall use it in all our relationships, economic, social and political. We shall carry that wisdom into the smallest affairs of life—from an exchange of ideas in a corner cigar shop to the marking of a ballot in the voting booth. We shall not be deceived because a man labels himself of this party or that, and certainly not of this religion or that. Using our wisdom, we shall want to find out about the man and know him for what he is. Not merely is he an able man; or a fool; but also we shall want to know—is he a good man or a bad man? Because the decisions of the future are moral decisions, choices between good and evil, we shall cast our strength on the good side, and take pains to find out, with all the resources of worldly wisdom,

which *is* the good side. We shall not be taken in by terms misused—like democracy, a word which is often the cloak and mask of political brigands who would rob us of our freedom.

We shall, under God, join with all men of good will and stout heart to restore morality to its rightful, supreme place in all human relations. We shall find ways, organized and unorganized, to let our feelings be known, even in the highest council chambers. No matter who objects, they shall have to let God in to the councils of Nations. The day is coming when it will be unpopular to insult God—because of uncountable little fires lit by little individuals who adore Him.

We shall find ways to make our views felt wherever expediency instead of principle dictates the actions of executives, judges, and legislators. We shall stand in the way of greed and pride and sloth, whether in industry or labor. And we shall restore God to education.

All these things are part of our glorious goal. We are going to do these things—or else civilization is going to collapse. The road ahead is very near ahead. The harvest is great, the laborers are few. The need above all is that Christians shall go to work and labor with unflagging energy in the service of the Master.

THE CATHOLIC HOUR

1930—Seventeenth Year—1946

The nationwide Catholic Hour was inaugurated on March 2, 1930, by the National Council of Catholic Men in cooperation with the National Broadcasting Company and its associated stations. Radio facilities are provided by NBC and the stations associated with it; the program is arranged and produced by NCCM.

The Catholic Hour was begun on a network of 22 stations, and now carries its message of Catholic truth on each Sunday of the year through a number of stations varying from 90 to 110, situated in 40 states, the District of Columbia, and Hawaii. Consisting usually of an address, mainly expository, by one or another of America's leading Catholic preachers—though sometimes of talks by laymen, sometimes of dramatizations—and of sacred music provided by a volunteer choir, the Catholic Hour has distinguished itself as one of the most popular and extensive religious broadcasts in the world. An average of 100,000 audience letters a year, about twenty per cent of which come from listeners of other faiths, gives some indication of its popularity and influence.

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