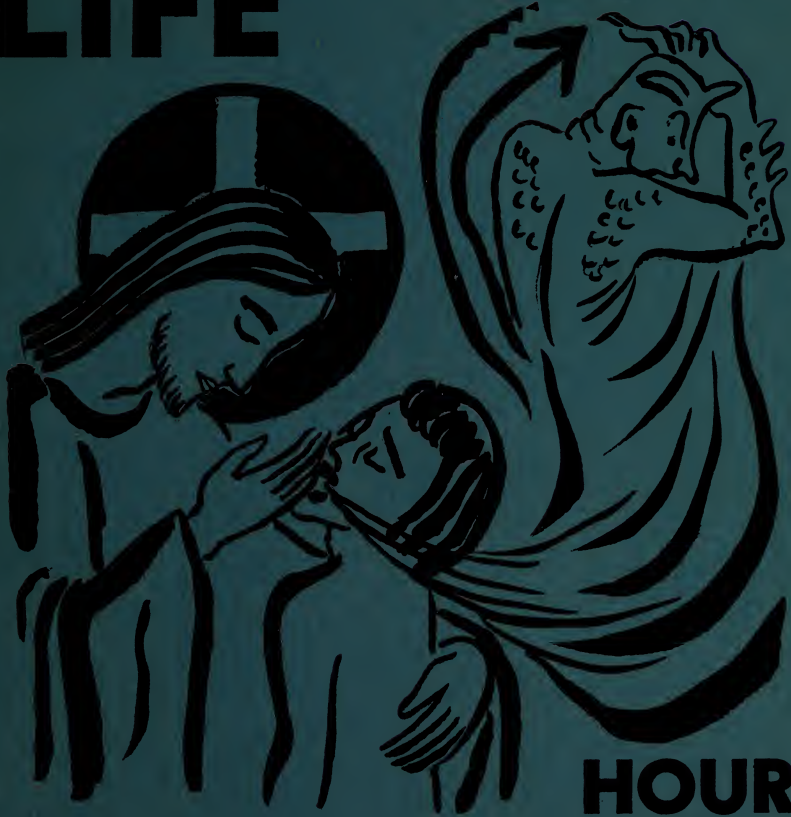


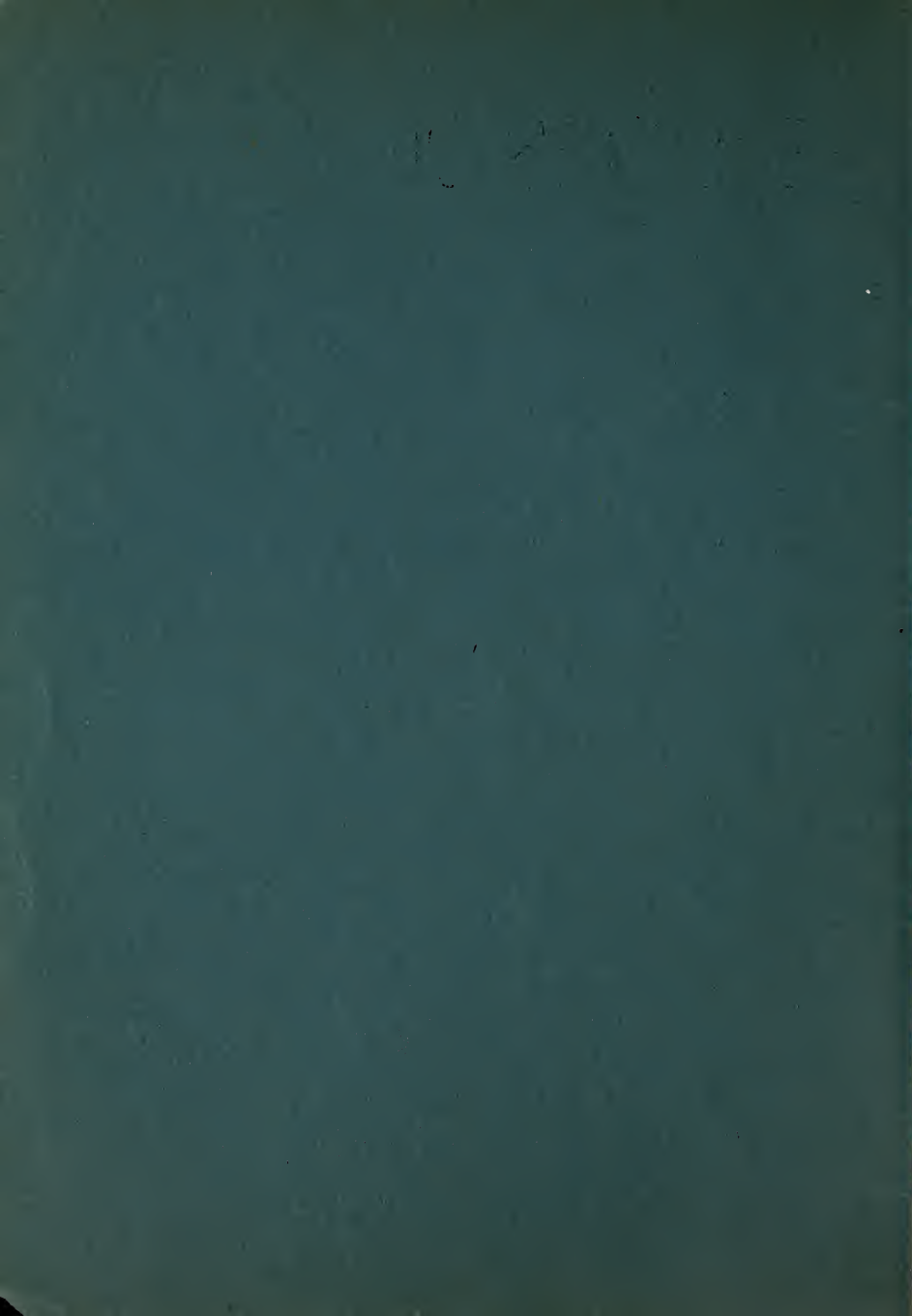
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# REALITIES OF LIFE



REV. VINCENT F. HOLDEN, C.S.P.

**HOUR  
OF  
FAITH**



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REALITIES OF LIFE



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A series of Sunday morning talks given in 1947 on "The Hour of Faith"  
a coast-to-coast religious broadcast produced by the National  
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BY

REV. VINCENT HOLDEN, C. S. P.

Director Paulist Information Center  
New York City



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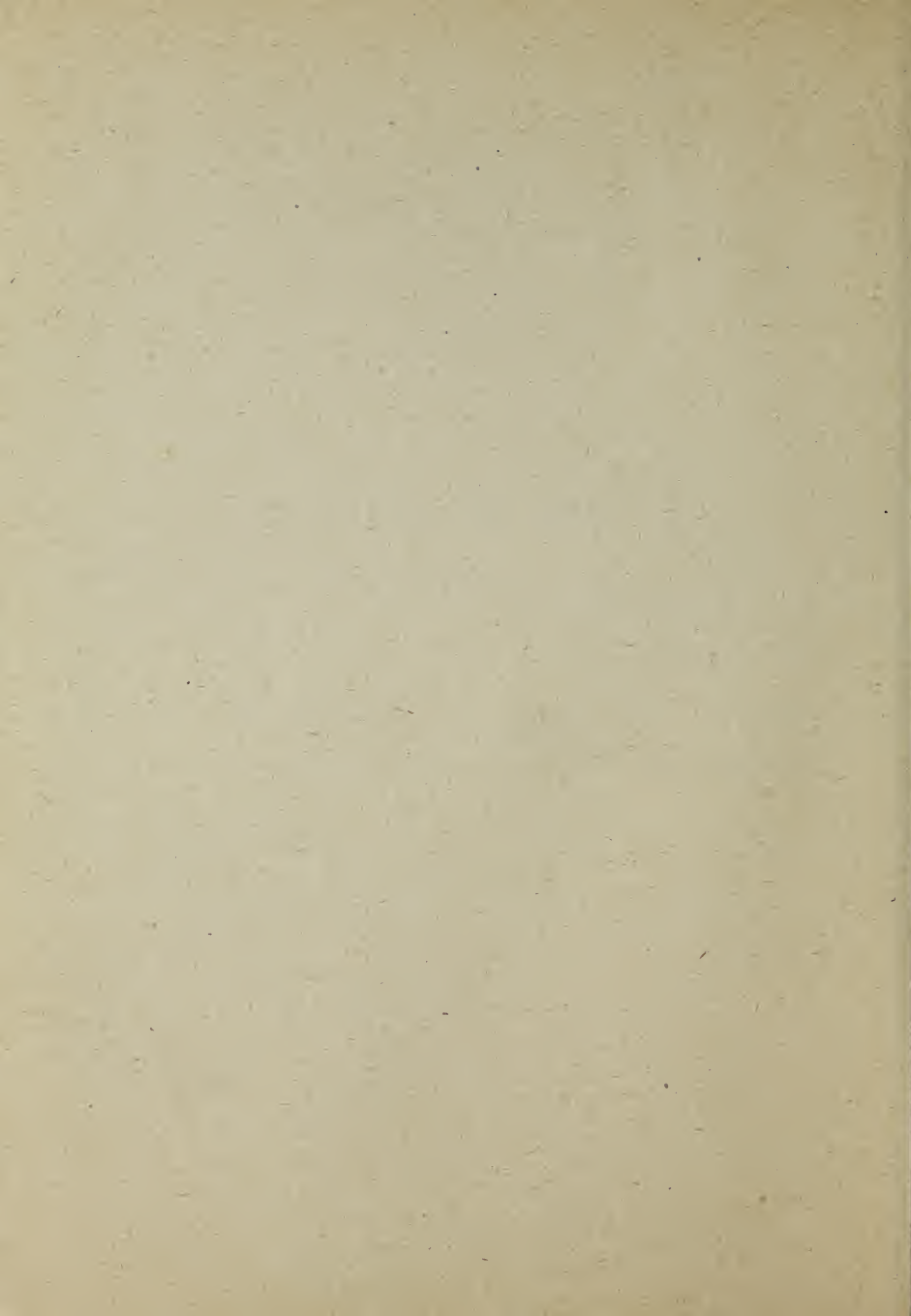
✠ JOHN FRANCES NOLL, D.D.  
Bishop of Fort Wayne

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## CASTLES IN THE CLOUDS

Talk given on January 5, 1947

While I was in college, I had a professor of sociology who had what we students called a "pet theory." To explain his thought he would take a seemingly unimportant, commonplace fact, such as a postage stamp, and analyze it, saying: "Look at the wealth of human development reflected in this stamp. There is trade, communication, color, design, scientific advance, yes, even reference to historical events." After discussing these factors, he would conclude with his favorite thesis: "Details have universal meaning."

This thought occurred to me when 1947 was ushered in with much joy and jubilation. There were the usual shouting and cheers, the customary horns and bells. For many, this was the noisy, the surface welcome. But it soon gave way to the more serious meaning of the dawning year. New Year's Day among us is not only a day for merriment and partying, it is also a day of making good resolutions, a time when so many of us build gleaming, golden castles in the clouds.

A resolution, that's a detail, and I asked myself: "What is its universal meaning?" As I attempted to answer that question, I found myself face to face with some tremendously important realities.

The first rather obvious one was an acknowledgment that mistakes have been made and need to be corrected. But this immediately created other issues. Mistakes mean that a person has failed to measure up to a given definite standard. Well, what is this standard, and what is of far greater importance, who is its author? This is undoubtedly the most important question behind a resolution. Indeed it is one of the most tremendous realities in all life. Who has the authority to determine whether a person's actions are right or wrong?

Certainly there are any number who claim this right. There is the educator who, during the formative years of the child, makes very clear to the youngster that he is not to lie or steal. He reminds the student that in all his contacts with his com-

panions he should act with kindness and consideration. And so the teacher attempts to instill into the mind of the child certain principles of conduct that will act as a guide for daily action.

Then there is the philosopher who, in his study on human conduct, gives not only principles for right living, but the reason for these principles. He usually begins with the desire deep in the human heart for happiness. He points out further that when man violates these principles of good living he creates unhappiness, not only for himself but for others as well. Quite frequently he claims to base his principles on a knowledge and understanding of man's human nature.

To these teachers, as well as to countless self-styled or recognized moralists, we cannot help asking the same question—what is the source of your principles? Where did you derive them? If your only foundation is your own unaided mind, if your only criterion is human experience, then we cannot be too secure in your findings. You are only human, you can be mistaken, and time can change your conclusions. What you decide today is

morally wrong, perhaps twenty-five years from now you may change, and admit that it is perfectly all right.

I remember reading an expression of this idea by the late William Graham Sumner of Yale who held that morals are, after all, only customs, and that as customs change, morals and moral codes change with them. *If* morals and human conduct are based solely on the findings of a human mind and human experience, *if*, after all, morals are only customs, then there is something to what the learned gentleman has said. But, I cannot admit the *if*.

Morals and the principles of right living should never be merely the expression of a human mind. No human being, no matter how learned and clever, no matter how well versed in human affairs, has the right of himself and by himself, to tell another how to live. There is only one Who can—Almighty God. He made man, and He is the only one Who knows how man should live. He has given us the principles of correct living in those fundamental rules of right conduct—the Ten Commandments. They are our guides because they are the expression

of the divine mind of God. And what comforting and consoling guides they are! They have two supremely satisfying realities that are sadly lacking in any human standard.

First, they are eternal. It doesn't make a particle of difference how customs or manners may change. Divine principles go on forever since they manifest the unchanging mind of God. Man from day to day, or from year to year, may vary his way of living. He alters his actions because he doesn't know the future. Our forefathers, when they set out across the perilous waters to come to these shores, could not imagine that some three hundred years hence human beings would span these same waters in much less time by plane. They could not even suspect that, because they could not tear away the veil of time and see the result of human invention. Neither can man, by his own unaided mind, form rules of conduct which will always apply in every day and every age. No, man couldn't do this because he can never bridge the gap of time and space. But God can. With Him there is no one hundred years from now. He knows all things. He knows

conditions that will arise long after you and I are locked in the silence of the grave. And with this knowledge, He has given us the principles by which not only you and I should live, but all men down to the very end of time itself. The Commandments, the reflection of God Himself, are indeed ancient, since they issue forth from the timeless, ageless mind of God, but they are always new, since they spring from the eternally constant and ever vigorous nature of God Himself.

Secondly, these divine principles of human action perfectly satisfy the needs of human nature.

At times, people have a very strange notion of the origin of the Commandments. They seem to imagine that God, as it were, from the height of His celestial home looking down upon man on the face of the earth, observed his actions. Then, almost as a whim or fancy, or perhaps even as an afterthought, He said: "Oh! It is better for these creatures to be honest, so I will make a seventh commandment. It is good for them to be pure, so I will order the sixth and ninth commandments." Such an attitude reveals a false understand-



ing of the very nature of a divine and perfect being, and certainly could never account for the Commandments.

God, when He created man, made him in His own image and likeness. He fashioned the human soul in the likeness of His divine nature, giving man mind and will, as well as a human body. From all eternity, He was divinely conscious that there are certain things which, by their very nature, are so definitely opposed to His divine nature, that He and they could not exist side by side. He could never tolerate, for even one tiny split second, the presence of lying and injustice in the pure brilliance of His infinite and dazzling truth and justice. He could never allow the slightest stain of immodesty in the clear and brilliant glory of His ever spotless purity. Such things as these are infinitely more repulsive to His divine nature than the disgust we would experience if we saw a human being wallowing in the mire of a pig sty. Why, even the most nauseating stench from a decayed and diseased animal body is not nearly so revolting to the most delicate of nostrils as is the odor of injustice, dishonesty, or impurity, to

the all-pure and holy God. His divine nature could never tolerate any of these things. And since our soul was created in the image of His divine nature, it too can never be happy with them. To warn us against their false attraction, God has given to mankind rules of conduct. When we follow these rules we have the greatest possible guarantee of happiness because we are living in accord with the requirements of our nature. But when we go against them, we create our own misery because we are acting contrary to the interests of that nature. We become dissatisfied, disillusioned, discontented, terribly unhappy, not simply because we have broken a law, but because in breaking God's law we have done violence to our own nature. We have hurt ourselves.

That is why the only source for the correctness of human actions is the divine nature of God, not human standards. We can measure our success or our failure, by our obedience to His law, or our violation of that law. And remember, it is not merely progress or failure that we chart, it is our own happiness that we evaluate.

Has the past year been a

happy, successful one for you? I am not now speaking of happiness or success in the sense of material values. I mean peace of mind, deep, sincere happiness which is beyond the touch of human hands; that happiness which the world cannot give nor can it take away. Only you can answer whether you have had it or have lost it. And it is only after you have analyzed that question and examined your conduct, that you can make a

satisfactory, worthwhile New Year's resolution. Such a resolution will not be merely a passing fancy, an idle grouping of words. It will be, in a true sense, building your castle in the clouds, high above the tantalizing, fleeting shadows of human follies and fancies. Then your resolutions will be founded not on whim, nor in the changing customs of the day, but on the unchanging and everlasting mind of God.

## OUR COMMON CONFLICT

Talk given on January 12, 1947

On the 9th of November of this past year, the now famous Yankee Stadium in New York City was filled to capacity. More than seventy thousand people were jammed into that huge structure to see the thrilling football game between the mighty unbeaten teams of Army and Notre Dame. Some months previous that same stadium held a record crowd watching the crucial baseball series between the league-leading Red Sox and the challenging Yankees. Time and again this arena, as well as similar ones throughout the country, has played host to thousands of spectators alternately thrilled and excited by the sight before their eyes. What is it that fascinates these fans? What is it that draws them in huge numbers, often-times at considerable cost and difficulty? A game, you say? That is quite true, but what is in a game that fascinates human nature? It is the age-old interest of man—a conflict. Two teams, or even two individuals, fairly evenly matched, no matter whether they be battling in a

carefully maintained ball park, or in a sorely neglected sand lot, whether they be squaring off in a resin treated canvas ring, or on a paved, slippery city street—it makes no difference where—two opposing forces attract attention. People pause to observe. It is a contest. Their attention is captured.

Now of all the conflicts in the various fields of human happenings, none is more interesting and at the same time more puzzling than the one that is waged within the confines of the human soul. It is not a struggle that is experienced by only one or two people, it is the lot of mankind—*our* common conflict.

You have noticed it, I am sure, many times. It is felt in a variety of ways. How often when a person is tempted to do something wrong, he becomes acutely aware of two forces within him. One draws him towards evil, the other urges him to good. Almost immediately the battle begins. The arguments are hurled back and forth, now for one side, then for the other. This pleading and counter plead-

ing happen so frequently that at times we feel almost as though there is an ever-present Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde contesting vigorously within us and we are at a loss to explain it. It mystifies us. It worries us. Yes, at times it torments us so that we cry out in the words of St. Paul: ". . . the good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do . . . Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7: 19-24). Yes, St. Paul was very well aware of this conflict. He had come to grips with it many times. But he also knew the explanation for it, an explanation which is rooted deep in human nature.

When God created man, He gave him a soul and a body, each of which has distinctive powers. The soul is endowed with intellect and will. The function of the intellect is to form ideas, to generate thoughts, to pass opinions. The will is the power within man which chooses, which brings him to that stage where he says: "I will" or "I will not." But notice that before man exercises this power of choice he must have a reason for acting.

Haven't you noticed that when

you do something, you always have a reason for what you do, even though you may not express it or think about it? Before you listened to your radio this morning, you had some motive for turning the dial. It might have been for diversion, it might have been from curiosity to hear what was on the air at this hour, it might have been because of interest in this program, it might have been out of habit, it might have been for any one of many reasons. But whatever it was, you had some purpose. The will is, as it were, blind and it must be led into action. That is why we need justification for our conduct—to gain consent of the will—because until this power in us has some motivation we refuse to act.

Now besides the soul, with its faculties of intellect and will, we also have a body. That is rather obvious. With some people it is more obvious than with others, but in every case quite apparent. Deeply rooted in this body of ours there are appetites. With all our appetites there are three things that are important: an object, a purpose, and a pleasure. Just notice this in the case of hunger. What do you want



when you are hungry? Food, of course. That is the object of the appetite. Why do you seek food? To keep alive. That is the purpose of the appetite. Do you find it a difficult task to eat a good meal? Of course not, you enjoy it. That is the pleasure associated with it.

If we had more time we could make the same analysis of all our appetites, since they follow an identical pattern. All have an object, a purpose, and a pleasure. Now let us study the influence of these factors in that fascinating conflict which is ever present in man. The mind and the appetites are really the Jekyll and Hyde that frequently come into sharp conflict. Each appetite is essentially selfish since it looks solely for its own pleasure without any concern for the entire good of man. The satisfaction it finds in the possession of its own object is the only interest it has. The mind, on the other hand, considers the whole field of the individual's welfare. It realizes what is the entire good of man. It looks beyond the particular satisfaction of any one appetite to man's real and lasting happiness.

Naturally, there are any number of occasions when there is

no opposition between these forces, but there are also many times when the appetite becomes too imperious and demands an immediate satisfaction not intended by God and, therefore, not for man's total welfare. Intellect objects, and this provides the clash. And each one of these forces seeks to influence the will in its favor. The appetite resorts to very deceptive techniques when it senses defeat. Take the instance of the alcoholic. On his way home from work he is conscious of his desire for a couple of drinks. Conscience, which is nothing more than the intellect judging the morality of the act, reminds the man that he should go straight home and avoid his favorite haunt. But then the desire starts working, and the old appetite, not wishing to come into open conflict with conscience, falls back upon a tricky bit of strategy. "Why not," urges this force, "just go down toward the tavern and walk right past it. Then you show how strong you are." This seems like a good idea so the man falls in with it. But as he gets a little closer to the pitfall, conscience again warns him of the danger and urges him "keep going." Then Mr. Appetite deep-



ens his deception and coaxes: "Just show how strong you really are. Stop in, see your friends, and come right out." That seems like an inviting challenge, so in goes the man, only he doesn't come right out. When he does finally stagger out, the appetite has been completely satisfied. Conscience has lost the appeal, but it doesn't cease to reproach the will for having followed the wrong direction. That is why, after acting contrary to the good, the sinner experiences remorse of conscience. The appetite has had its object and its pleasure. It is quiet. But conscience is not. It says again and again with accusing tones: "You should not have done that."

However, so long as a person follows conscience, the result is quite different, for when the appetite is held under proper control over a period of time and is not given its way, it learns to obey. This side of man's nature, which is really the animal side of him, can be trained. It can be controlled. For just as we impress upon a dog that he must not snap at passersby, so we can insist with this part of our nature, that it must not seize unlawful pleasures. If we keep it,

as it were, on a leash, and rein it in when it attempts to go into forbidden fields, then it will soon realize who is master.

The conflict in man is important. It is fundamental. But what is of far greater importance, is not so much the battle, as the winner. Who is going to be master? If the appetites gain the upper hand, the person will be ruled by an imperious, dominating force that constantly craves more and more satisfaction. The individual will no longer be a free man, but a tortured slave, bound hand and foot, muscle and sinew, by the terrible force of ravenous, raging, tormenting impulses and desires.

If, on the other hand, conscience holds sway, and if that conscience is ennobled by the grace of God, then the person will be in the fullest sense of the words, captain of his fate and master of his destiny. He will not be driven heedlessly this way and that, but will chart his course through life fully aware of the good and the true, following it faithfully and constantly with peace and calm and courage. His life will be full and rich and meaningful.

Certainly you want peace and

happiness in life. You wish to have your days filled with a feeling of loyalty and sincerity and honesty, without any remorse or regret. You can have all these things. They are yours, depending on the answer that you, and only you, can give to the question: Who shall be your master, conscience or appetite?

## THE HUMAN REVOLT

Talk given on January 19, 1947

I wonder if you heard the broadcast of Pope Pius XII to the Congress of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine meeting in Boston during October of last year? If you didn't, perhaps you may have read his message in the press. It was a very interesting and thought-provoking talk that included a rather startling sentence. "Perhaps," said the Pope, "the greatest sin in the world today is that men have begun to lose the sense of sin." I am sure his words must have sounded strange to many a person who would view the rise of totalitarianism, and spread of communism, or the triumph of fascism as the greatest evil. And, when the Pope later on in that same broadcast, indicated that a sense of sin was even more necessary in our modern world than "human legislation, or compacts or treaties," some people would find it very hard to agree. They might be inclined to view these ideas of Pius XII as theoretical, but not at all practical; the natural reaction of a man deeply steeped in religion. However, I recall a very

shrewd and successful statesman of the nineteenth century who voiced almost the same sentiment. William Gladstone, four times Prime Minister of Great Britain, once declared that he considered one of the great needs of our modern world, a sense of sin.

Of course, Gladstone was not original in this idea. Neither was Pope Pius XII. One far greater than either of these men stressed this need more than nineteen hundred years ago in the countryside of Palestine. I am sure you remember Jesus Christ telling the people of His day that one of the purposes of His coming here on earth was to impress upon the mind of man his terrible character of sin. Men of His day were well aware of the existence of sin, but they were not concerned with its seriousness. Our divine Saviour was. He knew that sin was the greatest evil in the history of mankind and He sought both by word and example to impress this realization upon the entire world.

Certainly, a sense of the

malice of sin is necessary. You know very well that unless a man is convinced that something he is doing is wrong, he will not be too ready to give it up. If a business man thinks that it is perfectly all right to short change or to short weigh his customers, he will not discontinue the practice very readily. Obviously, then, the first step in any reform is a realization that sin is definitely wrong.

Now what is this terrible evil called sin? What is its true meaning? Notice I say "true" meaning, because as you know, there are some very vague and inaccurate explanations of it. There are those who regard sin as merely a violation of a law made by human beings. Then there are others who, in a somewhat learned fashion, speak of sin as a "deviation from an established pattern of human conduct." In plainer language, they simply mean that over a period of time, people have agreed that this is a way men should act. Then, when one individual steps out of line and goes contrary to that set way, he is sinning.

I recall a student at a state university telling me that sin was merely a "cultural taboo." When I asked him to explain

these words he launched forth into a long discussion of history and civilization. Briefly, his idea was that sin is nothing more than a person's refusal to fulfill what his fellowmen consider the "nice" way of acting.

These are just a few of the popular notions of sin. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that these are popular misunderstandings of the real meaning of sin. They all have one common fault. They fail to consider sin in relation to God. Sin is more than a mistake, more than a crime. It is an act of hostility to God, a violation of the moral law of God. Man recognizes that the moral law is God's will; that this is what God wants him to do. But, man refuses to follow God's way. He deliberately chooses his own way. When man does this, he sins. The human being revolts against his Creator. That constitutes its great malice, and unless we view sin in this relationship to God, we can never appreciate its gravity.

Very simply, then, we can define sin as man's choice to do something which he knows God has forbidden, or to avoid something which he realizes God has commanded. Has God forbidden or commanded all actions under



the same penalty? Obviously not. After all, even in human affairs, we recognize that there is a distinct difference in types of punishment for violation of law. A man who parks his car in a non-parking area, isn't given the same punishment as a murderer who shoots a man in cold blood. So too, in the divine plan. Almighty God has forbidden certain actions under severe penalty, while He has forbidden others under slight penalty. Now, what is the basis of the difference between the grievous and the less serious?

The distinction is found not in divine whim or fancy, for there is no whim or fancy in God, but the difference is rooted in the very nature of God Himself. There are certain things which, by their very nature, are so violently opposed to the divine nature, that God cannot endure them. They are entirely contrary to His nature and cannot be otherwise. We can think of many things in human life as being quite different from what they are. You could imagine the stars moving in larger or smaller cycles. You could think of men and animals and plants of much different size and shape. You could visualize a far differ-

ent world than our present one. But, could you ever conceive of God saying: "You may maliciously destroy your neighbor's reputation; you may murder innocent people; you may commit all kinds of vile and impure actions?" Certainly not. You can no more think of God doing that, than you can think of black being white. These things are so completely at variance with His divine, all holy, all perfect nature, that He tells us very clearly to avoid them. That is why sin is an act of direct rebellion against God. It is a choice freely made to do something which we know is seriously opposed to the divine nature of God. Once we make such a choice, we have definitely manifested our desire to break our relationship with God. We have cut ourselves off from Him.

Notice too, that in this revolt of the human being against his Creator, man is doing something that is harmful to his own nature. Since we have been made in the image and likeness of God, whatever is contrary to His nature, must by that very fact, be contrary to our own. We can no more be happy living in sin, than we could enthusi-

astically enjoy the life of the fish of the sea.

God then, is not a divine dictator, forbidding or commanding in an arbitrary manner. Not at all. He is merely making clear His will, which is based on His divine nature, and which certainly, in a very true sense, is for the best interests of our own nature. When we ignore His divine warnings, and decide to act against them, we are sinning grievously. We can readily apply the adjective mortal, which means deadly, to this type of sin, because it kills the life of God in us.

This, then, is one kind of sin. What about the other, or less serious? I rather hesitate to speak of this type for fear someone may jump to the conclusion that, after all, since this is not so serious it is all right. That, of course, would be an entirely wrong way of reasoning. You certainly would not say that although it is wrong to steal a man's car, it is perfectly all right to puncture one of his tires. With this in mind, consider for a moment the nature of sin which is not grievous. Now, just as there are actions which are opposed to the very nature of God, so too there are

others which are not pleasing to a Perfect Being. They offend Him. They are displeasing to Him, but they are not of such a character as to force Him away. A sudden flurry of temper, or a small lie, would be instances of such sins. Certainly they are not trivial or unimportant. Definitely, they are to be avoided since they weaken our tie with God. How strong and close would your friendship be with a person who did not do anything to harm you seriously, but who did small things to annoy you? If he deliberately did these things knowing that they would displease you, the bond of union between you would be gradually weakened. So too, if an individual lightly tosses off this type of sin as unimportant and nothing to worry about, he is not strengthening his friendship with God.

With these ideas in mind, I think we can understand why Pope Pius XII viewed with alarm the loss of the sense of sin. Was he exaggerating when he said the world was losing that realization? If you think so, just pick up your newspaper and read the account of current happenings. Notice the crimes that are daily committed, and

particularly observe how calmly the culprits admit them. Wanton actions against innocent women and, at times, even children; utter disregard of the marriage vow; these and countless flagrant violations of divine law which cry to heaven for vengeance are casually acknowledged on a witness stand without the slightest tinge of remorse. Certainly the world is losing, if it has not already lost, its sense of moral guilt.

You and I are living in this environment, in this atmosphere. And there is a great danger that we might be influenced by this attitude. We may be tempted to think that after all, sin cannot be too bad since so many are doing it. That would be false. For the number, large or small, who may commit this act, does not change the malice of sin in the eyes of God. It is still just as much opposed to His divine nature whether

one or a million do it.

Neither should we fool ourselves into believing that since we may fail to realize why a particular action is contrary to God's nature, it is all right for us. No, of course not. As long as God has made clear that an action offends Him, it does not matter whether or not we understand why it offends Him. We should accept His will and faithfully follow it.

Sin, then, is not to be condoned, it is to be condemned; it is not to be excused, it is to be accused. Certainly, if we could only see sin as it is in the eyes of God, then there would be a lot less committed. Then it would no longer be inviting, but forbidding; it would no longer attract, but repel. The clear consciousness of the malice of sin is the greatest guarantee we could possibly have against the terrible evil of the day—the loss of the sense of sin.

## THE RESTORATION

Talk given on January 26, 1947

At the very height of the last war, one of our fighting ships was ploughing through the waters of the Atlantic on her way back to the States. Standing on the bridge of this ship was a young lieutenant, seemingly just staring into space. Was he plotting a course by the stars? Was he studying the horizon? No, he wasn't noticing either the stars or the horizon, for his mind was absorbed in thought. He wasn't counting the days until he would have his leave; he wasn't planning on the things he would do as soon as he landed; he wasn't even wondering how much longer the war would last. His mind was engrossed in a much deeper and more personal problem. As he told me later, he kept asking himself over and over again this simple question: "How can I be sure that God has forgiven me for the wicked things I have done in the past? How can I be sure?"

He tried to tell himself that all he had to do was to look up into the heavens, talk directly to God, and tell the divine, all-

merciful Father that he was sorry. He tried that, but still the young man could not be sure that he was forgiven. Was there no way his troubled soul could feel satisfied that God had heard his cry and had restored him to His divine friendship?

This was the problem the young naval officer wrestled with on the bridge that night. This was the problem that he brought to me, asking if I knew of any definite, satisfying solution. Of course, he isn't the only one who has ever asked that same question. So often we become conscious of the fact of sin in our lives and we feel a deep need, as it were, to wipe the slate clean. And we would like to have definite assurance that it has been cleansed. *How* can we be sure? That is a question a human being of himself could never answer, for it is not up to man to say how God should grant forgiveness. It is God's divine right to tell us how we may receive His pardon, His love and His friendship.

Certainly we recognize this right in human affairs. When



someone has hurt you deeply, is later sorry for what he has done and asks forgiveness, who is the one to say how this forgiveness is to be obtained? Is it he who offends, or is it he who has been offended? Obviously, the one who has been wronged alone has the right to say how his friendship can be restored. Well, so too in this question of sin. God is the one sinned against by man. He then is the one to give the conditions for forgiveness. The answer to the problem: "How can I be sure that God has forgiven me for my actions against Him?" must be found in His divine decrees. Did God leave any means for obtaining forgiveness? If He did, then we can use this means and be sure of our restoration to divine favor. If He did not—well, we don't have to stop to consider that possibility, because we know that God *did* leave a way.

Come back with me through the pages of history to a date some nineteen hundred years ago, to a fairly secluded spot in the City of Jerusalem. A terrible tragedy had taken place in the horribly cruel crucifixion and death of the God-man, Jesus Christ. Then three days later, all the sorrowing and suffering,

all the tears and tragedy had been wiped away by His glorious Resurrection. He had come to bring the glad tidings to His apostles, His chosen co-workers. Sweet, soothing words fell from His lips as He spoke to them: "Peace be to you." Then He commissioned them to continue His work—the reconciliation of sinners to their God. And He gave them the power to bring about that forgiveness when He said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven. Whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."

Notice Christ gave to these men and to their successors a two-fold power—to forgive, or not to forgive. How could they know when to use this power, how could they know when to grant forgiveness, or to refuse it, unless they heard the case? Surely we would condemn most heartily and most justly any judge before whom an accused person was brought, if the judge pronounced him "guilty" or "not guilty" without ever hearing the evidence. So too, would we condemn, and rightly, the apostles and their successors if they were to grant or refuse forgiveness without knowing the sinner's

case. And surely the only one who could disclose the true facts would be the sinner himself. He alone of men knows what he has done and why he has done it. And he, more than any other human being, realizes his guilt and his sorrow. That is why he must tell thoroughly, clearly, and truthfully, the entire case to the priest who has been given this power of forgiving or not forgiving. When this state of soul of the sinner is known, and when the priest is assured that the person is repentant and worthy of forgiveness, then he grants that pardon.

Certainly, it is not enough for the penitent merely to tell what he has done. Not at all. Could you forgive an individual who seriously offended you, told you about it, and then added: "Of course I am not one bit sorry for what I have done, and I will do the same thing all over again?" Why, you could never forgive anyone who had such an attitude. Neither could God, acting through the priest, forgive any one of us if we merely told what we had done and were not sorry for it. And surely, when a person sincerely regrets his action, he will make up his mind not to do it again. That is why

the individual, in addition to telling what he has done, must be sorry for his sins and promise not to commit them again. Unless he has such sorrow, he can never obtain forgiveness. But when he does have such remorse, and the desire to do better, the priest, empowered by God and acting in His name, grants forgiveness. The sinner hears the words of pardon: "I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." He is no longer doubtful or hesitant. He *knows* he has been forgiven.

"But," you say, "why go to a priest? He is only human. Why tell what you have done to a human being? It is much too embarrassing and difficult!" The only answer anyone can give to this objection is that Christ wanted it that way. It was His means of forgiveness. Of course, He could have left many other ways, no one would deny that. But, it isn't a question of what He might have done, but what He actually did do. Whether we like it or not, whether His means is pleasing to us or not, is all beside the point. It isn't up to us to decide the conditions for forgiveness. That is the province of God; He has been disobeyed,

and He gives the conditions of reconciliation. It is the offended God who dictates the terms of peace. It is offending man who must accept and fulfill them, whether he likes them or not.

But don't look at this matter of forgiveness solely from the point of view of convenience and personal approval. Look at it rather from the great assurance it gives you that sin is definitely wiped out. No longer do you have to worry and fret, no longer need you be in doubt and uncertainty. God has seen your problem; He has known your difficulty, and He has left a means to answer that difficulty.

God, as it were, looked down through the depths of the future. He saw the countless thousands of human beings who, in their frailty and weakness, would offend Him. He saw too, how many would stray from the paths of righteousness even, at times, through wilfulness and malice. But He also saw the number of these who would regret the folly of their ways, and would long for His love and friendship. Like the prodigal son of old, they would sorrowfully beg forgiveness with the remorseful words: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and

before thee. I am no longer worthy to be called Thy son" (*Luke 15:21*). He, the infinite and merciful God who had said: ". . . there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance" (*Luke 15:10*), could never turn a deaf ear to such a plea. He would forgive, He would restore man to His divine friendship in a way far surpassing human invention. He would leave a way open that would give man peace and security of mind. He would provide a means that man could recognize and through which he could have moral or practical assurance that his sins were wiped away. That means is Confession, a tremendously gratifying means, for there the penitent hears the words of forgiveness. His doubt vanishes, his uncertainty melts away. He knows through the words of God that he has been forgiven, that he is once again a sharer in the divine friendship and love.

This is how the young lieutenant regarded it. He could not be satisfied just telling God he was sorry without ever knowing if he had been forgiven. In an understandable, human way he wanted to hear the grant of pardon with his own ears. Count-

less millions before his time have felt the same need, and the generations yet unborn that will follow him will also feel it. They shall not be disappointed for they shall find in the words of Christ, a means that will fill this aching void, a means that is not a source of contention, nor a channel to be rejected because of dislike or difficulty, but a divine fountain of forgiveness welling up from the all-compassionate and merciful heart of God. Mil-

lions have praised our divine Saviour for his goodness to the penitent sinner, and at the same time they are eternally grateful for His kindness to fallen humanity, for His divine foresight in leaving to mankind the only means which can certainly assure us that we have been restored to his divine favor, the soul-satisfying words: "I absolve thee from thy sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."



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	Springfield	KWTO	560	kc
Nevada	Las Vegas	KENO	1400	kc
New York	Massena	WNSA	1340	kc
	New York	WJZ	770	kc
	Plattsburg	WMFF	1340	kc
	Poughkeepsie	WKIP	1450	kc
	Troy	WTRY	980	kc
North Carolina	Wilmington	WMFD	1400	kc
Ohio	Cincinnati	WSAI	1360	kc
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