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# We are the Children of God



Leonard Feeney S. J.  
The Catholic Hour



# WE ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD

By

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Five addresses delivered in the nationwide Catholic Hour (produced by the National Council of Catholic Men, in cooperation with the National Broadcasting Company) on Sundays from November 1 to 29, 1942, inclusive.

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## THE CHILD IN US

Address Delivered on November 1, 1942

My dear listeners:

I have chosen as my general topic something I could phrase in a short sentence. I have decided to call it "we are the children of God." By "we" I mean all of us—every single one of us—no matter who we are, where we live, or what we look like.

The children of God! What a beautiful title for us to bear! And if you think I am going to be ungenerous and restrict it to any one class or group of my own, let me ask myself a question. What have I, or what has anyone done to deserve it more than you? Your credentials, my dear listeners, for being the children of God are much simpler than those required for importance in any of your specialties. For, being God's child is nobody's specialty. It is the common birthright of us all!

Do you not exist? Did you not obey God's command and issue out of sheer nothingness when His creative act required you to? Were you consulted about your own existence? Rather, did you not have it mysteriously thrust on you? Were you not born, and were you not once little and loved by your parents and taught how to speak

and walk? Did you not go through the experience of slowly realizing that you had arrived in our midst and were living and breathing in a place called "the earth," a place that had been here long before you came, and would, somehow or other, carry on long after you left it? Are you not now assuredly possessed of human hands and eyes and blood and a heart, and a mind that wants to know things, and a will that is searching about desperately for something to love? If this be true—and who cannot qualify in an assignment as simple and as thrilling as I describe—then you are God's child and His delight. You came from nowhere, brought here by God's omnipotence especially chosen for existence because He loved you, and now that you are, you will ever be!

God does not expect you to be different than He made you, either. All He asks in return for the great gift of creation is that you be yourself. "Will you be John Jones or Mary Smith for me?" God asks each one of us, "Will you be big or small, young or old, good-looking or not, with many talents or few, just as I planned you? If you will,

and will bear the burden of being yourself for a few years on this earth for me, then I shall be your God for all eternity. I shall be your Father, your friend, your protector. I shall always interpret you with sympathy and understanding. Others may think they know how wicked you are for they see in your sins what has been consented to; but I shall always remember what has been resisted, and the struggle you have made to keep at least something in you fine and innocent and pure. I shall be your defender against your enemies, and no one will dare to speak unkindly of you without having to settle a score with me. I shall be the faithful watcher at your bedside when you are ill, or tired, or uninteresting. For you will never be uninteresting to me, never a bother, never a bore. You will always be my creature, infinitely fascinating, whom I made out of nothing for my own celestial purposes. You will always be my loved one, always my child."

Some may say: This is naive religion: this looking upon ourselves as God's children. Let it be so. It is absolutely the only love-hold on life and reality that can make the kind of thing we are going through bearable. Besides, God has commanded us to address Him as "Our Father"; and in

having enough self-respect to call ourselves His children, we are merely doing what we are told. "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (*Matt. 18:3*), is another of His Divine encouragements not given to apes, or dogs, or bugs, but to us who stand erect and straight and look each other in the eye and know both our human level and our human dignity.

Our simple status as God's child is the foundation in us of every thing beautiful we know: of friendship and romance and marriage and babies; of art, song, gaiety, and laughter. Even good manners (I mean instinctive good manners, not the kind that are studied artificially in books of politeness) and every sense we have of refinement and courtesy derives from the fact that we are God's sons and daughters making this earth our temporary home. My dear listeners, if you have been intrigued into believing, from some book you have read or lecture you have listened to, that you are merely a scientific accident, that your ancestry is in the jungle, and that your destiny is to collapse in a few years in a heap of positive and negative electrons, you are free to be persuaded of this, I suppose. But try seeing how much joy you



get out of the thought, how much courage, hope, or even simple sufficiency for remaining civilized and human. There is mental discipline even among children. Anyone can have a fit of intellectual tantrums and by way of being a sceptic, a sophisticate, or a professor, write an unpleasant book or deliver an unpleasant lecture on the vileness of the human race. But it is not from such melancholy sources that we discover our dearest and truest selves. It is rather in the simple innocence of our hearts, in our unspoiled thoughts, the thoughts that no one has ever been allowed to tamper with and that still urge us to look around for life's joyful explanation with the unprejudiced vision of a child.

Not long ago I saw a picture of a man who was a hundred years old. I saw it in the newspaper. You know that old man who keeps cropping up year after year in the newspaper—he always seems to be the same old man, but of course he isn't. Well, anyhow, I saw him again this year, wrinkled and toothless and a hundred years old, sitting on the front doorstep and having his picture taken on his one hundredth birthday, by way of showing how old one of us can occasionally become when he tries to overdo it. Well, I looked at the pic-

ture of this old man of a hundred years, and I admired it. I always admire it. There was a short account in the newspaper to go with the picture. He never seems to come from the city, this one-hundred-year-old man, always from the country, usually from "upstate." We are told that he smoked a pipe all his life or he didn't; he drank or he didn't; he was a vegetarian, or he wasn't; and one way or the other, tobacco or alcohol or vegetables were, or were not, responsible for his good (or bad) health at the age of one hundred years. There never seems to be any real birthday celebration for this man who has lived for a century. No mention is made of a birthday cake: perhaps the thought of a hundred candles has created such an extraordinary problem in the matter of a cake as to discourage the idea of it altogether. And so our poor old man spends his one hundredth birthday pretty much the same as he spent his ninety eighth and ninety ninth, without any fuss or bother. He sits on the front doorstep and has a few words to say about the weather. He says "O Pshaw!" when the newspaper photographer arrives to take his picture; but finally lets it be taken, and then the next day we see him in the paper, the old man of a hundred years, with that quizzical

look in his eye that seems to say—at least it always does to me—“I am not a hundred years old. Nobody ever is. For by the mercy of God I moved, a few decades ago, into my second childhood, a childhood so like the first that all its innocence and helplessness have returned to me. I don't *do* anything any more. I just *am*—am what God has made me in all its stark simplicity, a child, waiting to become in a few months more as ageless as eternity.”

We are the children of God. I say so because God said so first, because it is religion's first lesson, and because around this central and graceful truth is built up all contact between God and man in the beautiful theology of the Catholic Church. The more effort we make to realize what we are in God's sight, and to act upon it, the dearer we become to ourselves and others, the more bearable to live with, and the more missed and remembered when we die.

One cannot say everything in a

single talk. Even in five talks, which by the kindness of the National Broadcasting Company I am allowed to give, one cannot say more than a little. But more of what I have tried to say tonight I shall have to say again next week at the same time.

God bless you. And good-night!

#### PRAYER IN TIME OF WAR

(Adapted from Cardinal Newman)

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who in Thy mercy hearest the prayers of sinners, pour forth, we beseech Thee, all grace and blessing upon our country and its citizens. We pray in particular for the President—for our Congress—for all our soldiers—for all who defend us in ships, whether on the seas or in the skies—for all who are suffering the hardships of war. We pray for all who are in peril or in danger. Bring us all after the troubles of this life into the haven of peace, and reunite us all together forever, O dear Lord, in Thy glorious heavenly kingdom.



## OUR ETERNAL CHILDHOOD

Address Delivered on November 8, 1942

I do not think it is nice to tell our soldiers, sailors, and marines that when they die in the defense of their country, we shall be grateful, and they shall cease to exist. I do not think it is very encouraging to offer them as prospect, when they drop on the battlefields, sink in the waves, or fall from the sky, an eternal oblivion in the dull world of chemistry and electricity. You may say: They will live on in our memories; but how long will we live on and continue to have memories? I find no memories terribly alive in our land at the moment, for the soldiers who died a hundred years ago, let's say in the Revolutionary, or even in the Civil War. It is true we speak of those by-gone heroes with a certain amount of formularized respect; but we have no definite memories of them. Besides, each succeeding war destroys in some way even the memories of the previous one. Where are the wives, sweethearts, and mothers who had memories of the beloved boys who died in Washington's army; or in Lincoln's, or in Lee's? Have both the remembered and the rememberers been blotted out of existence forever?

War sharpens the mind—does it not?—rids it of a lot of sloppy and routine sentiment. War makes us ask each other challenging questions. Shall our heroes who will lay down their lives for us in this present struggle for freedom, survive as personalities anywhere in God's great universe, or shall they not? If not, what good are the tears we shed? We weep for what we have lost, and expect to get back again. If we know we can never, never get it back again, we do not weep; we dry up and become as stoical as a statue and as tearless as a stone. One can weep at death; never at an annihilation. Wreaths on a grave! And memories! What good is the memory of a nobody?

In this country during the past two decades, as you well know—and may I say it was part of our unpreparation for war—a number of petulant professors, melancholy atheists, nervous novelists, and unintelligible poets, have tried to instill in us the foundations of intellectual despair. These writers and teachers and talkers and verse-makers, have enjoyed the notoriety that comes from appearing, in print or on platform, in the role of being

spectacularly unhappy. They seemed to have almost the vocation to inform others of the relative hopelessness of this life, and the complete hopelessness of the next.

The end of all our days  
Is in forgetfulness  
I guess,  
In the cisterns of distress,  
In the boiling bays  
Where the human heart is  
swilled

When its function is fulfilled.

This little snatch of verse happens to be my own. I wrote it because I realize that those whose propaganda is pessimism cannot often phrase their own despair, hardly in literature, and never in art; and so we have at times to help them say what we think they are trying to say when they are trying to think themselves out of existence.

Almighty God—both in the normal instincts of the human mind, and in the clear statements of Revelation—offers us a saner outlook on death than can be found in coldly contemplating the suspended pleasures of annihilation. Almighty God says the human soul can never die, that it is immortal, and that when it sheds the raiment of the poor body it has carried through this life, a better and richer and deeper life is awaiting it in eternity.

Into that richer and deeper life our heroes pass in death. They enter their Creator's eternal country, their Father's eternal home, and in the unencumbered life of the spirit, freed from the bondage of three dimensions, they personally know and appreciate what they have done for us by dying for us when we needed them to. They do not end in bloodstains on a battlefield or in cold corpses floating in the sea.

For all that, this present life has plenty to offer by way of hardship. I do not wish to disparage it, my dear listeners. I rather like this world, and I expect you do too. I like it because it is the only kind of world I know—so far. Our stars in our skies are beautiful, are they not?—no matter what we are worrying about when we look up at them. Our sun is faithful to us, day after day; and our moon is a great comfort, night after night. I greatly admire our mountains, rivers and lakes and forests. I like to listen to our music; and I am terribly fond of our games, especially the games our children play, all through the spring and summer. And even now, when the full autumn is upon us, and winter is threatening, we can still hear the echoes of last summer's children in the playgrounds, and we still

remember the message they were trying to bring us in their songs.

We are the children who play in the park,

All the day long from the dawn till the dark,

We are the children, the children.

We shall grow older, as everyone knows,

But when we grow older what do you suppose

Will become of the children?

Will there be children again,

When we, who are children, are women and men?

Yes!

Surely the world will love children no less.

Children will come when we children are gone,

Out of the darkness and into the dawn,

Taking our places,

Bearing our brightness and lightness of limbs and our laughter and love in their faces!

The children know! Their outlook is surest and fullest of hope. In terms of their thought I want always to think; not in terms of some slumbery lecture I have listened to, or broody book I have read. Human friendship and so-

ciability are delightful experiences; and it is grand to be fond of one another, even for a while; and there are some days when it is marvelously marvelous just to be alive!

But—here's the rub, and the children know it, and it's the burden of all their gay-sad songs. Out we go from all this in a few years! Take it or leave it—out we go! And the prospect of death leads us to ask ourselves some desperately pointed questions when we are alone, when we are locked in the secrecy of our own thoughts, and are not being bothered and confused by being *written at*, or *lectured to*.

Peace has its deaths the same as war, and death will continue to go on when this war is over, I assure you it will. When all the enemy's dive-bombers have been shot down in the skies, and all the enemy's submarines have been raked out of the sea, death will return again to its quiet business of getting rid of us in other ways—by disease, disintegration, destruction by accident, or by that ultimate exhaustion which comes from having lived a bit too long, and which is gently and respectfully referred to as: old age. And then what? And then the problem—shall we rejoin our loved ones in eternity, or shall we have lost them irrevocably in death?

You have all heard, I think, of a Saint called "The Little Flower." It's a kind of pretty name we apply to a young French girl, who died in 1897, at the age of twenty four, and who was admired by God for much more than her pretty name. Her real name was Therese (Teresa would be the English of it) and she lived in a small town in Northern France, called Lisieux—a town nobody ever heard of until she made it famous by dying there, heroically, about forty five years ago. If she were alive today, this young Carmelite nun, Sainte Therese of Lisieux, would be just sixty-nine years of age not a very old lady at that.

Well, Therese of Lisieux was a saint, and therefore a genius. Dr. John C. H. Wu, the great Chinese legal scholar, who studied law in this country and then went back to his native land and gave much assistance to Chiang Kai-Shek in the drafting of the constitution for the New China—Dr. Wu, the Chinaman, says that Sainte Therese of Lisieux was one of the most remarkable geniuses of all time. He says: "In twenty four years she learned more about God than mankind has been able to do in twenty centuries." That is strong praise coming from the Chinese, who are nothing if not conservative.

Well, the Little Flower's genius like that of all the saints, consisted not in being extraordinarily gifted for any one specialty in life, but in having a remarkable talent for acquiring in a lightning-flash all she needed to know in order to love God. She was not well-educated, and yet she could express her spiritual thoughts in a most beautiful French prose. She had never studied psychology, and yet she knew to a nicety every one of our intellectual, volitional, and instinctive habits. She let nothing escape her in the knowledge of how a soul works.

Most modern psychologists say there are two areas in the soul—the conscious and the sub-conscious. On the top we are more or less all right, but just below the surface of our conscious mental processes, we are all seething and troubled and bothered and full of phobias, that need constantly to be analyzed and corrected by a psychiatrist.

Well, the Little Flower says there are three areas in us, not two. She goes the modern psychologist one better. She says that there is an outward self—a self that we show to the world—that we fix up and bother with and discipline with formalities: in the way we look or smile or pretend—but that outward



self is least of all our real self, no matter how brave a show we may put on. For underneath that outward self, says the Little Flower, is a worried, troubled, and frightened self, a self that has been confused by all sorts of wrong experience, and bad education, and it must constantly put up psychological defenses to dispel doubts and preserve human dignities. But the Little Flower also declares that deeper still than this worried and bothered self, there is a third area of the soul, the final and fundamental one, that underlies the other two; and *way down deep there*, we are *always* a child, who *always* knows that *all* is well.

*Way down deep there*, we find courage, love, laughter, simplicity, and hope, spontaneously. *Way down*

*deep there* nobody deceives us—least of all the pessimist who tries to tell our worried self that we are going to end in death. *Way down deep there* is the very sanctity of our personality, to which religion makes its appeal, and to which God speaks pleadingly when He asks us to call Him "Our Father." *Way down deep there* is where Our Father in Heaven is urging us courageously to forfeit the childhood of this earth in favor of the childhood that is waiting for us in eternity.

*Way down deep in us*, my dear listeners, is where none of us can be fooled, least of all by our own dear nature—God-given and God-preserved.

*Prayer In Time Of War*

# THE CHILD'S SACRAMENT

Address Delivered on November 15, 1942

When God assumed our human nature, as He did nineteen hundred years ago, in order to help us solve the problem of our aloneness, He did not become fastidiously human. He entered our world by way of birth and left it by way of death. What could be more human than that? All our helplessness and humiliation—our twenty-four hour cycle of eating and working and washing and sleeping—God shared. His advent among us was not in the form of some wraith, or phantom, or infantile ghost. God became most definitely and obviously a baby. He was born as a baby, and had to be laid in a crib by His mother and covered with clothes and kept warm. If you went to visit Him on the First Christmas night at Bethlehèem, you would most probably have found Him asleep. He spent months and months doing no more than any simple child does: looking at His mother, being tended to in His wants, and being made comfortable and happy. He even allowed Himself to be taught how to walk and speak—and when He did speak, and in the fullness of His powers, and when it began to be evident that

a Divine nature was allied to a human one in the personality of Jesus, and when His lips began to shape those utterances of His which were so unique and unforgettable—for all the sublimity and mystery of His teaching, He never made His religion some sort of esoteric thing you completely close your eyes about and imagine you have. He made it visible and picturesque and colorful through the use of this world's materials, elevated and sanctified by God's power into the Sacraments of the Christian Faith.

There are seven of those beautiful Sacraments of which we could speak, and each effects an alliance between the spiritual and material world so as to give us visible contact with the Divine. But let me speak this evening of just one of these Sacraments: the first: the simplest and most fundamental: the child's Sacrament, the Sacrament of Baptism. Through Christian Baptism, right here on this earth we are adopted into a Divine Childhood, by the power of God wedded to one of our noblest and simplest substances: water.

When on the head of a little child, we pour water and say, as we were



told to by Our Lord, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," we will by some be praised for having performed a worthwhile religious act; we will by others be ridiculed. Those who ridicule—so I have found—do so for a more subtle reason than appears on the surface of what they say. It is not that they want to ridicule God precisely—because, generally, they believe in no God at all—it is because water has never meant anything more to them than a few drops of moisture that drip into a sink when you turn on a spigot. Water, to the unreligious, signifies something common, inconspicuous, prosaic, cheap. The unreligious would be hard put to it to define water as anything more than "what you sprinkle streets with" or "use to flush out a sewer." The unreligious have never once looked on water for what it is: that marvelous and indispensable raiment of wonder and refreshment with which God has clothed the world.

The Pagans respect water because the Pagans have religions. In the Pagan religions water is made good use of, and for holy purposes. Among the Pagans libation is a sacred ritual and every pool has been adopted as a deity. But sentimental Christians—or rather people in whom Christianity survives

not as a set of truths and facts, but as some sort of take-it-or-leave-it emotion, indefinitely identified with Christ—these people despise water when used for any purpose higher than the wash basin.

Water does look very prosaic and uninteresting if you hold a little of it in a glass, or dry a little of it from your hand with a towel. Water has neither taste, nor odor, nor color, nor even shape—for it takes the shape of that into which you pour it. It would be impossible to describe water to one who had never seen it or watched it work. Water follows a most freakish physical law when it cools, for at 32 degrees Fahrenheit, on its way to becoming cold, instead of continuing to contract as other substances do, it starts to expand again—so that ice may be lighter than water—so that ice may float, and instead of sinking to the bottom of the ocean and freezing the world to death, it may rest on the surface of the waves and be mercifully melted out by the sun. Water is both dangerous and dear.

Water is the one indispensable without which it is impossible for us to live for any length of time when we are without supplies. When men are lying on the hot sands of the desert, parched and feverish, they do not cry out for money or gold or diamonds or any fantastic

forms of food. They cry out for water, for we are mostly made of water, and death is nothing more than a drying up of our resources.

Water has a noble history: in the Flood, in the passage of the Chosen People through the waves of the Red Sea; and in all journeys, discoveries, and explorations. It is impossible to spoil water, for no matter how much filth you pour into it, you need only drop it on the earth and let it sink into the ground, and it will purify itself and return to you in the spring and fountain, as pure and virginal as it was originally created.

Indescribable as is this essentially colorless, odorless, tasteless, and unshaped substance, God lets water roam through our world in all manners and varieties so as to give interest and color and light to our thoughts. A dehydrated human mind physically cannot function, imaginatively cannot think. Water supplies us with a whole reservoir of thoughts and words.

What will you say of one thing, water: water—which is the brook and the well and the spring and the fountain and the pond and the lake and the river and the stream and the gulf and the strait and the bay and the sea and the ocean? Are they not all, water? Yes, and water is the whirlpool and the eddy and the falls and the torrent and

the geyser! It is surf, foam, breaker, wave, roller, brine, mist, dew! It is hail, snow, frost, slush, and sleet! It is ice, icicle, and iceberg; rainbow, cloud, and stream! The swimmer plunges and dives and splashes in it. The sailor travels on it in his ship, boat, sloop, canoe, schooner, yacht, vessel, or sail. Water is what makes things moist and damp and wet and soggy and humid—yes, and it sprinkles the world, sprays it and spatters it, laves it and bathes it and washes it and rinses it—for there is never an end to what it can do. Water is one of the world's greatest natural mysteries. And when God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, entered our world to talk our language and take us on our own terms, He used as the first instrument of our sanctification that which was most natural for us to know and understand. He saw water all around us and did not despise it. He turned it into the child's Sacrament. He took water and sanctified it with spiritual power. He transformed it into the Sacrament of Baptism—by the union of water and the Holy Ghost.

You may say, all this is poetry. My dear listeners, poetry is not its own preservative. Poetry is never religion, but it is the illustration of religion, and without religion it ceases to be even poetry. If we

cannot do something more with water than give it to poets to wash with after they have written a lot of unintelligible verse, then let us give it back to the Pagans. The Pagan poets are religious. They respect water!

But most of us are not going to give it back to the Pagans, for Christ has given it to us—to do with it what no Pagan could ever do. Most of us are going to remember that water has a sacred Christian history—nineteen hundred years of it—and that spiritual wonders are wrought with it when we use it as Christ wants it used. Most of us are not going to let Christian Baptism be dried up by a couple of wars and a few despairs. As in the material, so in the spiritual world, with water we are going to refresh the world.

Oh, God is very versatile, I know, and to those who have not yet heard, or been let hear, of the covenant that has been set up by Jesus between the water we see and use, and the living water that imparts to our souls the adoption of a Divine Childhood, God will be able to bestow the fruits of Redemption in other and special ways. But the honest, simple, clear, affirmative way of Sacrament is the best way—the way of God's own institution and choice—which we are free to reject, at our peril.

I could say what Christ has done for us in six other Sacraments, besides Baptism. I could say what He has done for human courage, with the sign of the cross and oil—but that would be the Sacrament of Confirmation. I could tell what He does with sins, in Penance, the Sacrament of Forgiveness. I could add what He does to the love of a boy and girl, in Matrimony, the Sacrament of Love; and the comfort He imparts to the aloneness of our human hearts in the Holy Eucharist, the Sacrament of Food. I could tell what He does with us when we are sick, and need the Sacrament of Consolation, which is Extreme Unction; and finally what He does to make most of these Sacraments possible, in Holy Orders, the Sacrament of Service: the Sacrament of the priesthood. But because my subject in these five Sunday night talks is "We are the children of God," I have spoken tonight of the Child's Sacrament, the Sacrament of Life—and I have reminded you how the littlest child can, by the mercy of Jesus, be made a Christian, yes even right in his own nursery, when love and faith and reverence and charity are his guardians.

Good Night.

# GOD AS A CHILD

Address Delivered on November 22, 2942

Christianity is the religion of Christ is God, you will not believe anybody is God after a while, and will begin to complain that the very notion of God is beyond your reach, because you cannot translate Him into any of your terms. But a child is one of your terms; and if in the role of a child God is rejected, then there is likely to be little or no relish for Him left in the realm of abstract thought. Much of the anti-Christian sentiment in so-called Christian lands, is due to our dislike, our disdain, and even our dread of the child.

Do we like children, and did we not know that God had become a child, and were we about to be told it for the first time, would it please us to learn this bit of news; or would we be dead set against the arrangement from the start?

All the Pagan religions are ancestral. They look back to God in some aged form, as a hoary symbol, as an ancient of days. Christianity does not. It is primarily and centrally the love of God as a baby. Christianity begins at Christmas and to Christmas it returns, year after year, December after December, to renew and refresh itself at a little crib where God, as a child, is sleeping.

If you have a distaste for the child, for his small behaviour and the artless ways in which he can be pleased, then it is impossible for Christianity to take hold of you. Not only will you not believe that

Moral indignation is the easiest of all violent sentiments to indulge in, and let me say frankly that there is a temptation among reformers to indulge in it too freely. If I am not willing to take the time and care that is required for the writing and preaching of a sermon in which religious values are delicately handled and gracefully presented to people who are willing to learn if only we will *teach*—then I am wont to take refuge in the large gestures of a reformer, his loud voice, and a good deal of his general shouting on the subject of sin.

It is not by way of moral indignation



tion that I wish to present to you this evening the sad condition of affairs that prevents our *even being interested* in the subject of God as a child.

Moral indignation should be preserved for those who are to blame for things, and I am quite sure that not any of you are particularly to blame for a phobia as horrible as child-hatred. We are, all of us, better than that at heart; but we have inherited a bad culture. It is a culture that persuades us, or at least allows us to be persuaded, that a child is non-essential to religion. However satisfactorily this antipathy may work among Pagans, it is the absolute destruction of Christianity.

However, let us not be too hard on ourselves for our wrong feelings in this matter, and let us lay lots of the blame where most of the blame is due: to the diseased thought of the past two decades, and, in larger scope, of the past four hundred years, whose clearly expressed intention has been, slowly, insidiously, but relentlessly, to outlaw our lovehold on the child, and through him to overthrow all factual Christian truth.

One cannot make babies out of grown-ups. This is childishness, a sin of which children are never guilty. Children are childlike, but

they are never childish, certainly not with the childishness that is the burden of our novels, our plays, our courtship, and so many of our songs. When an actress, with an icy voice, on an American stage, sees fit to refer to babies this way: "Oh, babies! You mean those queer little things that look like lobsters?"—and gets laughed at for saying it, then you know to what depths our culture has descended.

I have referred to our dislike, our disdain, and even our dread of the child. It seems not by accident that these three phobias can be phrased alliteratively, for they are more than alliteratively allied. They are "mind-weapons" employed by grown-ups in a veritable WAR against babies, a war in which, in the long run, there will be far more casualties than there will ever be in a war of planes and tanks and guns.

Dislike of the child is bound to come where father and mother are not sure of their love, and do not even want to make sure of it. Dislike of the child is inevitable when he is in constant danger of being taken out of his crib and put into the custody of the courts. Unstable love between his parents has given the child a nuisance value which he is helpless to rid himself of. As a possible nuisance he comes

into the world, if he comes at all. As a nuisance he is handed over to a nurse, who, not being his mother, cannot always be expected to understand him with a mother's sympathy. As a nuisance he is sent off to school, not to be educated, but to be gotten out of sight. For the child has challenging eyes, and they try so hard to reunite love, where love has been broken. And the child asks desperately embarrassing questions, questions for which he may be scolded or punished—but which always remain unanswered.

Dislike for the child is bad enough, but disdain for the child is devilish—and such a spirit obtains among those who have been taught to put little more than an athletic value on their little ones. Eugenics, you may call the practice if you want a fancy name. Its purpose is to supply us, if possible, not with a race of children, but of super-children. If our children can qualify, muscularly as gladiators, or mentally as geniuses; if they are pretty enough to win beauty contests, or are self-consciously cute enough to get into the movies (for purposes of general entertainment), Eugenics will allow us to breed them. But the simple little infant who sometimes has a cough and often is not well, and who looks at

you wonderingly for months and months after his arrival, suing for your charity and pleading for your pity, because he *needs* them so much—this little fellow is taboo. Eugenics disdains him. And his commonplace parents are urged to surrender commonplace parenthood in favor of the uncommonplace children of the superfit. So you see how democratic the principle of Eugenics is, and you see what large liberties it allows to simple people in simple homes, amidst the simple sanctities of Democracy.

The last great emotional refusal of the child in the un-Christian dispensation of Christian lands, is dread; the dread of him as an economic hardship. The sterile dollar which has been made fruitful with its regular and unfailing interest, has made the fruitful mother childless for the sake of the fruitful dollar. The practice derives from a religious principle which first advocated perpetual Heaven without merit, and in short order, perpetual wealth without labor. Wealth may be curtailed by taxes, but never if those taxes are in the ingratiating form of one's own flesh and blood.

My dear listeners, I see the difficulties of applying these unpromising principles to a general roundup of our social sins. If we are ever to correct our mistakes,



it must be done slowly, and with sympathy and with charity. But if we are never to look a principle squarely in the eye, and for its own sake—what right have we to talk of principles? Why not run the whole business of human life without principles, and say so?

The child we dislike, the child we disdain, the child we dread! The child who is a nuisance, the child who is a misfit, the child who is all expense! What chance has he got? Poor little fellow! If we do not get rid of him one way, we will in another, for there are three doors, wide-open, through which he may depart. And if he goes, and does not return, what chance has God, the Christian God, to come in—since the Christian God has one first overture of love, and it is in the Incarnation of Himself in the form of a child?

God became a child because the child is the truest reflection of God. "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not. For of such is the kingdom of God" (*Mark 10:14*).

In Heaven God is not eternally old, He is eternally young, every instant as fresh, as infinite and powerful and unspoiled—as unde-terioratedly Divine as He has remained in the forever of the past

and will be in the forever of the future.

If you do not like the child, you will make yourself some sort of aged and hoary God to deal with, and He will get very old on you, before you know it, so old that He will vanish in some gray abstraction and leave you just where you started. But if you take our God, Christianity's God, you will find Him every Christmas, just as bright and new and fascinating, just as trustful and unsuspecting and ready to make friends with you, as only a child can want to and only a child can.

We are the children of God. And we are also the children of men. Despite the fact that we are not marvelous physical specimens, neither too good-looking, too brilliant, or even, at times, too well—someone once believed in us. We were once welcomed into a mother's and father's heart. We were nobody's nuisance, nobody's misfit, nobody's economic bother. Our parents never regarded us as something that arrived annoyingly, and had to be paid for like the gas bill. If there is anywhere in our hearts a remembrance of this charity—a charity extended to us when we were small and silent and sleeping in the cradle—upon that remembrance religion will build, God will

come to us, and Jesus, the little Infant of Bethlehem, will be our God.

Don't you worry about God, my dear listeners, or fear He will be diminished by the charity of Christmas. Infinity is safe in the little hands of Jesus that lie on the coverlet. All majesty and beauty are securely and sweetly hidden in the innocence of those large little eyes. God wants not to frighten us, but to surprise and delight us. Were He to unleash His own lightnings and be brought down to us in some world-shattering revelation,

who could bear the experience? No one can see the face of God and live! But, sifted to suit our sight, and dwelling amongst us as one of our own, one can see the face of little Jesus, and love.

One day when this life is over, we shall have to appear before God in the awful scrutiny of Divine Judgment. That day, the question which is now put to us tenderly and in pure trust and innocence, will be put to us in terror. "What did you think of me as a child?"

*Prayer In Time Of War*

## THE MOTHER OF GOD

Address Delivered on November 29, 1942

This is my last talk, and before I begin it I am going to make three acknowledgments of gratitude, to those to whom I should be most grateful. First, to you for listening to me, if you have listened, and for liking what I have said, if you have liked it; second, to the National Broadcasting Company and the National Council of Catholic Men for letting me speak; and third, to God for making it possible for any human voice, not merely mine, to travel, almost miraculously, such tremendous distance, into your homes, wherever you are, on Sunday evening.

Tonight I am going to speak about a mother and her child; about a human mother and her divine child. Report has it—to speak cautiously by way of a beginning—report has it, that there was once such a mother who bore such a child; that the mother was human and the child divine.

Report has it that this event occurred about nineteen hundred and forty two years ago, and that is why we call this the year of Our Lord 1942, because it is one thousand nine hundred and forty two years since His birth. Report—let me go on saying this way for a moment—report has it, that the

mother was a little Jewish girl, in her early teens, and that she lived in a small town called Nazareth, which is in the province of Galilee, the northern province of Palestine, called “the Holy Land,” where most of the Old Testament was fulfilled and where dwelt God’s greatest spiritual race: the Jews.

Report goes on to say that an angel—a spirit from a world above us—took temporary shape, and as God’s messenger, appeared to this little girl, and said: “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee” (*Luke 1:28*). And the angel told her in very simple words that God was going to become man, to assume our nature, to become one of us, and to show us in flesh and blood what God looks like; and that she to whom the angel spoke was to be His mother.

Report declares that this little Jewish girl was greatly astonished, as well she might be; but being, though poor, a little thoroughbred of the Royal House of David, she spoke back to the angel with quiet dignity, and asked: “How shall this be done, because I know not man?” (*Luke 1:34*). And the angel went on to explain that there was to be, for a child’s sake and for a child’s reason, a most exquisite and divine

delicacy in the birth of Jesus. By the power of sheer love, untouched by man, God was to make her fruitful! And Mary—for that was the little virgin's name—bowed her head and said: "Be it done to me according to thy word" (*Luke* 1:38). And so was the Divine Incarnation achieved.

And nine months later, there is more report of a small deserted stable in Bethlehem, in Judea—the Southern province of Palestine, this time—where this young maid and mother had been obliged to go for the sake of a political requirement; and there in that stable her child was born. And there in that stable God was laid as a baby, enthroned in our flesh and released into our world.

That's all of the story I have time enough to give tonight, my dear listeners, though there's much more of it, as many of you know. But let me stop with what I have so briefly said, and let me explain why I have prefaced each sentence of this story with the phrase "report has it."

Because I wish first to inquire from some of my listeners who may disbelieve it, "Wouldn't you like it to have been true!" Don't you think it would have been nice of God to have so loved us as to take our nature as His own, abide in it, breathe our air and eat our food,

suffer our sufferings and sleep our sleep? Would it not indicate that we are not quite as forgotten by our Creator as we seem to be in some of our darker moments? Would we not have extra reason to be proud of our human race if we knew that one of our little girls was so loved by God that He, Who is motherless in eternity, should have chosen her to be His Mother in time?

Are you provincial enough to have a distaste for our Emmanuel—our God-with-us—because His mother was a Jew? Are not the Jews members of our human race, with bodies and souls and minds and hearts, and a power to know and suffer and love the same, identically the same, as ourselves? If you have a daughter of your own, would it not comfort you to take her in your arms this evening and tell her the story of the Incarnation in some simple words. Words like these which Thomas Butler, the poet, has used in his address to a child:

There was a little girl like you,  
With eyes as big and bright and true.

She loved to laugh and play and run  
The same as you or anyone.  
And in the April of the year  
When all the long-lost flowers  
appear,  
An angel came to her one day  
And said to put her dolls away.



She meekly bowed her little head  
 To what the blessed angel said,  
 And swift as the flying of a dove,  
 She changed from child to mother  
 love.

Such was the incident of Mary  
 and the angel. The love was Di-  
 vine. The little mother was human.  
 And the child was God. This is  
 Christianity!

Now don't tell me, dear listeners,  
 that it doesn't make any difference  
 whether this story is true or not.  
 One who starts tampering with  
 truth that way will soon get his  
 mind out of order. Say the story  
 of the Incarnation is true or it is  
 not true; but do not say it does  
 not make any difference. It may not  
 make much difference in the way  
 you run your business, wind your  
 watch, smoke your cigar, or butter  
 your bread. But it makes a tremen-  
 dous difference in the way you  
 think; and all the difference in the  
 world in the way you pray! Was  
 Jesus God, or was He not? If He  
 was not, then we may well despair.  
 For we have been cheated by an im-  
 postor whom God has allowed to  
 claim His prerogatives and assume  
 His name. "All power is given to  
 me in heaven and in earth" (*Matt.*  
*28:18*). Does anyone but God talk  
 that way? "Before Abraham was  
 made, I am" (*John 8:58*). Does  
 that sound like the statement of

just another nice man? "I abjure  
 thee," Jesus was asked, "that thou  
 tell us if thou be the Christ the Son  
 of God" (*Matt. 26:63*). And He  
 replied: "Thou hast said it" (*Matt.*  
*26:64*). And the answer was called  
 a blasphemy; for blasphemy it was,  
 or else—the truth!

Everyone knows Jesus was a *nice*  
*man*. But *nice men* do not give us a  
 real Bethlehem, a real Calvary, or a  
 real Redemption. Nice men are as  
 impotent to promise us a Kingdom  
 that is not of this world as they are  
 to settle the affairs of this one.  
 Furthermore, nice men do not tell  
 lies, when they are asked, point-  
 blank, the truth.

If Jesus was not God, then in the  
 name of holiness and truth we have  
 been cheated by God so insidiously  
 that we can never return to Him  
 again in prayer and confidence or  
 ever expect another Revelation. The  
 Pagans will go on building up their  
 ancestral religions, their race wor-  
 ship, their hoary divinities, on the  
 ruins of our Revelation, but I prom-  
 ise them that our Revelation will  
 haunt them for all the rest of his-  
 tory; for our Revelation and our  
 Religion is the one that thought  
 God was good enough to become a  
 child for love of us, before it was  
 discovered that the child was a lie.

Report has it—that Jesus, Mary's  
 child was God; and don't you worry,  
 the report is true. It is nineteen

hundred years since the report began and the report is still holding on. For a lie gets swamped out, usually with the years, and always with the centuries. But the truth lasts.

“There was a little girl like you”—if any father or mother is holding their own little daughter in arms tonight while I am speaking, let me say to her the whole of Thomas Butler’s poem. It is interlaced with a refrain which runs “O dulcis, o pia, puellula Maria.” Maria means Mary, for that was God’s mother’s name. You know Ave Maria: Hail Mary! Well, “O dulcis, o pia, puellula Maria” means “O sweet, o holy, o little child Mary.” And so, here’s the way the whole poem goes. There was a little girl like you  
With eyes as big and bright and true.

She loved to laugh and play and run

The same as you or anyone.

*O dulcis, o pia, puellula Maria.*

And in the April of the year  
When all the long-lost flowers appear,

An angel came to her one day  
And said to put her dolls away.  
She meekly bowed her little head  
To what the blessed angel said,  
And swift as the flying of a dove  
She changed from child to mother  
love.

*O dulcis, o pia, puellula Maria.*

Thus as the years go by for you,  
You’ll change as children all must  
do.

Love with its burden, love with woe,  
Will come as it came long long ago  
To *dulcis et pia, puellula Maria.*

But lest your little heart be torn  
With sorrow’s ache and sorrow’s  
thorn,

Teach it to love and ever stand  
Close to the touch of the little hand  
Of *dulcis, et pia, puellula Maria.*

And when you’re old and gray and  
lone

She’ll come to claim you for her  
own,

Take you to Heaven out of pain,  
Make you a little girl, ever  
again . . .

Who will? God’s Mother will!  
For she *was* God’s Mother. The  
angel told her she was going to be,  
and Jesus, her little Child, proved  
that the angel told the truth . . .

O beautiful as the moon, chosen  
as the sun, terrible as an army in  
array! You are the Queen of Angels!  
You are the Mother and the  
Queen of men. You originated on  
this little planet of ours, pertain to  
our race, and are related to us not  
by the angelic ties of love and  
thought, but by the very fibres of  
flesh and blood.

You are still a woman, even in  
this awful majestic status bestowed  
on you by God. You are the Mother  
of Divine Grace, powerful in your



intercession. You are not God, the hand when we die, and lead us but you are the Gate to God, the to the Beatific Vision. For the ra- Gate of Heaven. You are under- in which God redeemed the world, standing, marvelously simple and was begotten in your womb. unsuspecting, tender towards us You are God's Mother! And you poor sinners in our meannesses and are Our Lady! mistakes. You take each of us by *Prayer In Time Of War*

## 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.

# 104 CATHOLIC HOUR STATIONS

In 41 States, the District of Columbia, and Hawaii

Alabama	Birmingham .....	WBRC	960 kc
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Maryland	Baltimore .....	WBAL	1090 kc
Massachusetts	Boston .....	WBZ*	1030 kc
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Minnesota	Duluth-Superior .....	WEBC	1320 kc
	Mankato .....	KYSM	1230 kc
	Minneapolis-St. Paul .....	KSTP	1500 kc
	Rochester .....	KROC	1340 kc
	St. Cloud .....	KFAM	1450 kc
Mississippi	Jackson .....	WJDX	1300 kc
Missouri	Kansas City .....	WDAF	610 kc
	Springfield .....	KGBX	1260 kc
	Saint Louis .....	KSD*	550 kc
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	Butte .....	KGIR	1370 kc
	Helena .....	KPFA	1240 kc
Nebraska	Omaha .....	WOW	590 kc
Nevada	Reno .....	KOH	630 kc
New Hampshire	Manchester .....	WFEA	1370 kc
New Mexico	Albuquerque .....	KOB	1030 kc

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	Fargo .....	WDAY	970 kc
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	Cleveland .....	WTAM	1100 kc
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	Philadelphia .....	KYW	1060 kc
	Pittsburgh .....	KDKA	1020 kc
	Reading .....	WRAW	1340 kc
	Wilkes-Barre .....	WBRE	1340 kc
Rhode Island	Providence .....	WJAR	920 kc
South Carolina	Charleston .....	WTMA	1250 kc
	Columbia .....	WIS	560 kc
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(Revised as of April, 1942)

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