

Johnson, George

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# THE MISSION OF YOUTH IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

by

George Johnson





# The Mission Of Youth In Contemporary Society

by

Rev. George Johnson, Ph. D., LL. D., Associate Professor of Education at the Catholic University of America, Director of the Department of Education of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, and Secretary General of the National Catholic Educational Association.

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(On Sundays from September 4 to 18, 1938)

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## THE CREATIVE MISSION OF YOUTH

Address delivered on September 4, 1938

More and more continuously these days, does our national consciousness focus on the problems of youth. Our young people, their joys and their disappointments, their security, their preparation for life, their outlook for contentment and happiness, are very much with us as we try to envisage the better social order that we hope is in the making. Nor is this at all surprising. After all, the urge for self-preservation is strong in the group, even as it is in the individual, and a nation recognizes that the arms of those who today stand on life's threshold are freighted with its expectations. If they are lost—lost to honor and integrity and zeal for freedom—the nation is lost. If they fall prey to error, to cheapness, to opportunism, to theories and doctrines that are alien to right reason and the spirit of American institutions, the nation is on its way into bondage. Better times await the coming of better men and women; we dare not sit idly by and allow our young people to deteriorate.

Much of the effort we have expended to date in connection with the Youth Problem has been by way of definition. We are trying to find out what modern living, with its changes, its accelerated tempo, its shifting standards and values, is doing to those who have only just begun to live. We are studying youth in relation to employment, in relation to education, in relation to the increase in leisure time. We are discovering things we never knew before, or, at least, to which we paid but scant attention, about the health of youth, about its home

life, about its manner of recreation, about its readiness to assume the duties of citizenship. All of which we hope will yield us a basis, a basis in fact and not in conjecture, for doing those things that must be done if the young people of America are to be equipped to bear the wider and deeper responsibilities which all too soon must rest on their shoulders.

What disturbs one more than a little, in reading reports or listening to discussions of the Youth Problem, is the frequent accent on the obligation of adult society to solve all of youth's problems. We are told that society has failed youth, tricked it, led it into blind alleys and left it to extricate itself as best it might. Young men and women are given the impression, or might well take it from what they read or hear, that the adult world has conspired to wring existence dry of all opportunity or possibility of happiness and left them nothing but dreams that never can come true. This is, of course, extreme nonsense and serves no purpose other than to make malcontents out of young people and to embitter their souls. He serves youth best who puts his accent, not on what he is going to do for youth, but on what he hopes to accomplish by way of enabling youth to do things for itself. The real joy in life is in giving, not in receiving, in sustaining oneself and others, and not in being sustained. That life is bound to be unhappy that is built on the conviction of having been unjustly treated and never having had a chance.

Such a conviction, on the part of the great majority of American youth, would be quite without foundation. To be sure, the world in which they find themselves is not a perfect world. A perfect

world there never will be. For this we can be devoutly thankful, for it is through adversity and labor and struggle that the human soul finds greatness and peace. Yet the boys and the girls who are even now emerging into manhood and womanhood in the United States of America are very well off indeed, judging from standards that prevailed in years gone by and which prevail today in almost every other country in the world. Of course there are areas in this land of ours, sometimes in the crowded, fetid slums of a big city, sometimes out on the barren, unproductive land, sometimes where ignorance, and malice, and greed have had their way, sometimes where the exigencies of the situation have proven too much for even the best will in the world, in which youth simply has no chance. However even in such situations there is hope, for it is not the mood of America to tolerate them indefinitely. Rather is it our zeal, mindful of the Words of Him Who said, "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly," to discover ways and means that are wise, to enable every boy and girl and every man and woman in the United States to live and move and have his being in an environment and amid conditions that accord with the dignity of a human personality.

What youth needs, what youth wants, is not to be pampered and regarded as the helpless object of charity; what youth needs and what youth wants is not to be treated as a parasite dependent on society's largess. What youth needs and what youth wants, what youth has a God-given right to enjoy, is the opportunity of belonging, of being part and parcel of the realities of life, of proving its mettle and nurturing itself unto greatness of soul. What

youth needs and what youth wants is the right answer to the question, Why am I here on earth? and the guidance that is necessary if it would live in accordance with that answer. Here is the root of the youth problem, even as it is the root of every human problem. Unless this fundamental need is satisfied, neither jobs, nor recreation, nor health, nor better homes, nor greater social security, nor anything else at all will avail. For it remains eternally true that "life is more than the meat, and the body more than the raiment." "Seek ye first the kingdom of god and his justice, and al lthese things shall be added unto you." Those who in their eagerness to find other things know nothing of the quest for God, will discover all too late that what they have garnered is but the grass of the field, which is today and tomorrow is cast into the oven and burned.

"And God created man to his own image; to the image of god he created him." The purpose of human existence is to be sought in the Mind of the Creator. We do not belong to ourselves. Our lives are not our own, to make of them any disposal we see fit. We proceed rationally only when we begin with the acceptance of the fact of our creaturehood, and all that it implies of submission to the Will of God. "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth," warns the Scriptures, "before the time of affliction come, and the years draw nigh of which thou shalt say: they please me not." Young people have a right, prior to every other right, to know God, that, knowing Him, they may love Him, and loving Him, find peace and security and happiness in His service.

We are greatly concerned these days about the way we have been wasting our national resources.



The material advantages with which God has blessed us have all too frequently been put to uses that were unwise and, as a consequence, we are threatened with the loss of them unless we do something immediately for their conservation. Some realization has been coming to us that we have been even as prodigal with our human resources, with the result that there has been, and there is, an appalling wastage of men and women. Anything is wasted and ruined in the degree that it is not used for the purpose for which it was intended. Anything is wasted and ruined when it is utilized in a manner that cannot be justified by the principle of right reason. A human life is wasted and ruined when it is not lived in accordance with the Will of God.

If the nation really hopes to conserve the rich resources that it possesses in its young people, it must begin by helping young people to realize all that is implied in the fact that they are made according to the image and likeness of God. By virtue of that image and likeness, theirs is the capacity to become godly, and godliness is the true destiny of human nature. Each and every one of us was intended by the Creator to be an instrument for the carrying out of His eternal designs. The call to youth comes from on high and is written down in God's Revealed Word. Other calls are siren calls, and youth heeds them at its peril.

God, in His Providence, watches constantly over His children here on earth and manifests continually in and through them His Power as their Creator, their Redeemer, and the Sanctifier of their souls.

Godliness on the part of human beings calls for cooperation with Divine Providence in these three

great works. Our vocation it is to be creative with God, our Creator, to labor unto the redemption of the human race with God, our Redeemer, to become centers whence radiates holiness with God, Who sanctifies our souls.

Youth has a creative mission in this modern world of ours. Today, as in every age, there needs to be a renewal of the face of the earth. Human institutions have a way of getting old and fettering the spirit of man. The error that lodges so easily in human minds and the evil that men do under the sun give rise to modes of thought and action that afflict society with the poison of death and dying. The end would be destruction were it not for the fact that the Power of God always breaks through, making itself perfect in the infirmity of those who understand what it means to be made according to His image.

One of the worst effects that modern living has upon young people is to make them old before their time. They become sophisticated before they have learned wisdom, and life loses its zest for them all too soon. Many different things contribute to this sad state of affairs, such as the speed and excitement of modern living, the diminishing opportunities for quiet and solitude, the mechanization and standardization of everyday existence, the superficiality of much that parades under the name of education. With the multiplication of comforts and conveniences there are fewer opportunities for doing things for oneself. With everything ready-made, from clothing to entertainment, there is little urge to utilize the resources of one's own personality. The result is routine—dull, deadly routine—routine at work, routine at play, routine even in so-called in-

tellectual pursuits. Little wonder, then, that a look into the faces of so many young people reveals that even before they have advanced out of their teens, the years have come upon them of which they say, "they please me not."

It is said that our frontiers have disappeared, but youth needs frontier living. The emphasis today is on security, but the spirit of youth thrives on living dangerously. The accent is on regimentation, but youth dreams of adventuring in ways that are new and untrodden. Youth, if it really is youth, feels stirring within itself the urge to do things, to make things over, to transform the face of the earth. There is something about modern civilization that tends to thwart this urge.

Now, as a matter of fact, the frontiers have not disappeared. Perhaps one kind of frontier has, but there is no end of other frontiers—frontiers of the mind and the soul and the spirit, beyond which adventure beckons. There are thrills to be had even in the midst of the whir and the din of contemporary living, if one has the courage and the ability to live as a free and unfettered human being, if one's creative abilities have been developed and not allowed to atrophy.

Fairly do I believe may it be charged to the organized instrumentalities of formal education that they have neglected the creative side of life. There has been too much standardization in terms of the merely bookish, too general a readiness to take it for granted that there is some magic in the power to read and write. Experiences that young people should have at first hand they get vicariously from books. They listen to music, when they ought to be

producing it. They look at pictures, instead of drawing them. They watch games, instead of playing them. They watch other people act, on the stage and the screen, when they ought to be actors themselves. They are even passive with regard to their religion, though the Apostle emphasizes the fact that it is not simply by listening to the Truth, or reading about the Truth, but by "doing the Truth in charity, we may in all things grow in him who is the head, *even Christ.*"

During His earthly life, the Son of God worked as a carpenter—a fact which is not without its significance. In the making of things with His human Hands, He was expressing the creative power of His Divinity. Down through the ages it is work and study and prayer that have gone hand in hand unto the making of the Saints. The handicrafts, not merely from a prevocational point of view, but as a means of satisfying an essential need of human nature, should be part and parcel of the education of all youth. They offer a means of escape from boredom, a weapon to be used against standardization, a blessed capacity for showing forth the fact that we are made according to the image and likeness of God, our Creator.

Then there is music. Opportunities young people have today as never before to become acquainted with the best and finest that musical genius has produced. As a result, there is bound to be a general raising of taste and appreciation in this field, for, as a great musician has said, popular music is familiar music. According as the classics become familiar, they will become more and more popular. However, the real joy that music offers is born, not just of lis-

tening, but of playing and singing. Again, the schools and means of education have been at fault. The methods and devices they have used for teaching music too frequently have been of a kind to discourage children and youth. Music teachers have seemed bent on producing virtuosos, failing which they have lost interest in their pupils. Happily, a wiser point of view is now beginning to prevail. We are making less of a mystery of instrumental and vocal music, and discovering ways and means of making the production of music the heritage, not of the chosen few, but of the many.

The eagerness with which young people welcome the opportunity to take part in plays and dramatic presentations reveals that here is an outlet for creative energy that should be utilized much more universally than is at present the case. Nor should such opportunities be circumscribed and confined to small groups here and there, whose principal aim is refining theatrical art. In the crowded sections of any large city, halls and auditoriums are available. Perhaps they have not been used for many years. Here and there one discovers an old theater, long since abandoned, moldering in darkness and dust. Why could not the young men and the young women of the neighborhood be brought together and introduced to the joy of producing plays? Some would be given roles to play, others could be interested in the physical phases of the production, in the painting of scenery, the arrangement of the lighting, the renovation of the auditorium. In others there might be discovered a talent for dramatic composition. It will be many a year before the ideal of slum clearance will even begin to be realized. Mayhap amateur theatricals will prove one way of clearing the atmos-

phere of the slums out of the minds and hearts of the children of slum dwellers.

The point I am trying to make is that everything possible should be done by the home, by the school, and by the Church, to develop to the utmost the creative resources that abide in the soul of youth. A civilization that fails to conserve them is fated for destruction. There is in human nature, thanks to the fact that it is made to the image and likeness of its Creator, a capacity for a holy newness. This capacity is at its greatest when life is young. All round about us there are new worlds to conquer, new regions of truth and goodness and beauty to be explored. The work of creation is still going forward, and it is society's obligation to help young people in every possible way to become instruments at the disposal of Divine Omnipotence.

"Send forth thy Spirit, that they may be created, and thou shalt renew the face of the earth." We are dependent upon the youth of the land, vitally dependent upon them, to keep our nation alive, to insure its development and its growth. However, let us not delude ourselves. Life they will not bring us, but death, if everything they are and everything they do does not begin and end in God. Youth is bound for disillusionment, youth is bound for despair, youth must disappoint the hopes of society, unless it has learned how to say, and say with complete conviction, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth."

## THE REDEEMING MISSION OF YOUTH

Address delivered on September 11, 1938

They were young, just emerging into manhood, and it is not at all surprising that the prospect of spending their lives on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, eking out a precarious existence as fishermen, rather appalled them. Surely somewhere beyond the hills must be a fuller and a richer life, some better outlet for ambition and the urge to do. From childhood their souls had fed on the strong meat of God's Holy Word, and oftentimes, their boat anchored out in the middle of the lake and the nets let down, they listened through the long watches of the night, the while their father told them of Israel's former glory, and how it would be restored by Him Whom the prophets had foretold.

Word came that a man named John had come out of the desert and was preaching and baptizing along the shores of the Jordan. They decided to go and find out for themselves what manner of man he was. And there it was that they met Jesus, and soon they had left behind them their father and their mother, their boat and their nets, and become His disciples.

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were from the beginning most intimately associated with the mission of the Saviour. They were young and He was young and they knew and believed with all their hearts, that He was the Christ, the Son of the Living God. They felt the power that was in Him and which went forth to teach, to heal, and to save all who received Him. In Him they beheld the Messiah, the Expected of the Nations. The glories of

Israel were about to be restored. The kingdom of God had come.

They were young, very young. They were young and they were ambitious; they wanted to be in the forefront of things, where there would be struggle and action—and glory. So they sent their mother to Him to ask, “Say that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom.

“And Jesus answering said: You know not what you ask. Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink? They say to him: We can.

“He saith to them: My chalice indeed you shall drink: but to sit on my right or left hand, is not mine to give to you, but to them for whom it is prepared by my Father.”

The other disciples hearing of all this were moved to indignation against James and John. So Jesus called them all together and said to them: “You know that the princes of the Gentiles lord it over them: and they that are the greater, exercise power upon them. It shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister: And he that will be first among you, shall be your servant. Even as the Son of man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a redemption for many.”

What James and John had to learn, what youth always has to learn, is that we find life only in the degree that we are big enough to lose it, that “dying, behold we live.” The life of man here on earth is warfare, and victory is not to be had for the asking. There is only one way, and Christ showed it to us. It is the way of the Cross. “The king-



dom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." It is by dint of generosity, and self-sacrifice, and self-denial, and patience, and meekness, and obedience, that we develop our personalities and lay the foundation for happy and fruitful living. Those who in their youth have not learned to bear the yoke, are bound to become as the years go on a source of misery unto themselves and an occasion of suffering unto all whose ill fortune it will be to come within the orbit of their influence.

Man is a fallen creature. In the beginning he refused to conform to the Will of God, and sin came into the world. Sin is the source of every evil with which we are afflicted. Because of sin came suffering and sorrow and death. In the sweat of our brow are we doomed to eat bread until we return to the dust from whence we came, for dust we are and unto dust we shall return.

Christ came. The Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, became incarnate, was made man, that by suffering and dying, He might redeem us from our sin. He came to gather up the things that sin has scattered, to bring the human race back to obedience to its Creator, to reestablish God's Kingdom of justice and love and peace. He came to "give His life for the redemption of many."

He came to His own and to as many as received Him, He gave the power to become the sons of God. Those who believe in Christ, who profess that He is the Son of the living God, who by reason of their baptism are dead to sin and have risen up unto godliness and newness of life, belong to Him, are one with Him and become instruments for carrying on His redeeming mission. Made unto the image and likeness of God, born anew of water and the

Holy Ghost, their's is the vocation to become other Christs, to fight valiantly against the powers of sin and evil, and to participate in the redemption of the world. They are the only human beings who are truly alive, in whom there is any hope for humanity. They alone have the capacity to know the truth that can make men free and to love as men must love if they are really going to help one another. For they are named with the only Name under heaven in which men can be saved.

Standing on the threshold of manhood or womanhood, gazing out over life's scene and beholding the sufferings of humankind and the oppressions that are wrought under the sun, every young person must feel a deep urge to do something about it, to consecrate his or her talents to the service of humanity. If they do not feel such an urge, if they shrug their shoulders and leave the worrying to someone else, it is a damning commentary on the kind of upbringing they have had. However, even bad education cannot completely smother all the natural impulses of youth toward generosity. Youth has a redeeming mission. The God unto Whose image and likeness it is made, is the Redeemer of the world and calls them unto participation with Him in the great work of salvation. "Go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor," He said to the young man who came to Him in search of something worthwhile to do with his life. That counsel echoes down the centuries in every youthful heart bent on a like search. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Happiness, satisfaction, joy, and peace, are always the portion of those, who like the Son of God, are interested not in being ministered unto but in min-

istering and who are offering their life, their talents and their energies in redemption for their fellow-man.

Youth has the right to demand of adult society that it be given adequate preparation for its redeeming mission. Its own self-interest ought to convince the grown-up world that it needs insurance in the form of an oncoming generation that is capable of generosity and sacrifice. The immediate future of the nation would be very dark, indeed, if avarice and the law of tooth and claw, and lack of self-discipline, and unwillingness to bear other people's burdens, became the outstanding characteristics of contemporary youth. The outcome would be misery and disillusionment for everybody.

Youth is ambitious; it is daring, it is impulsive, it wants to accomplish things and accomplish them in a hurry. It has not learned to wait. Like the Sons of Zebedee, it thinks in terms of reward and forgets the price it has to pay. "Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?" "We can," they answered. They found out all too soon what drinking that chalice meant. Eventually, all who hope to accomplish anything worth while in this world of ours, must drink of that chalice. Let youth sip it betimes in order to become accustomed to its bitterness and thus be prepared if necessary to drain it to the dregs.

The very fact that they are so frequently surrounded by comforts and convenience of every kind, these days, renders it more and more imperative that our young people be schooled in self-discipline and self-denial. Being decent, being noble, being a person of integrity is emphatically not as easy as falling off a log. A good life does not simply happen.

It is something that is achieved by labor and the constant struggle with lower impulses. The starting point in the journey toward moral excellence is mortification.

Now mortification is a word that is not too respectable in the modern vocabulary. One mentions it at the risk of seeing eyebrows raise, and a superior smirk of amused contempt settle over the features of one's listeners. For too many people mortification stands for points of view that hearken back to the Dark Ages and which are a bit morbid and unhealthy. They cannot reconcile it with happy wholesome living.

Such individuals to the contrary notwithstanding, mortification can be reconciled with happy, wholesome living; as a matter of fact it is the only solid foundation for such living. As such it has been understood and valued by wise men since the beginning of time, regardless of whether or not they knew Jesus Christ. It is involved in the ideal of moderation wherever it has been preached or practised. Right thinking demonstrates to us that we cannot have our cake and eat it, that we cannot have things both ways, that in order to achieve a greater good of any kind, there are a multitude of lesser goods that we must sacrifice. Even the sketchiest knowledge of ourselves, reveals that we cannot let ourselves go, that we must keep our impulses under rein or they will run away with us, that our resolution flags and tires if we do not goad it constantly. This is true for just ordinary decency of life. When we attempt to rise higher, to develop the divine image imprinted in our souls, to live holy lives, godly lives, Christian lives, then we may never for one moment forget the words of the Apostle, "They that

are Christ's, have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences."

Youth lives to Christ in the measure that it has learned how to die to self. It must needs learn how to deny itself, how to give things up, how to control and curb its desires and impulses, how to become meek and humble of heart. "Blessed are the meek for they shall possess the land." Youth has the right to that kind of education, to that kind of preparation for life that will strengthen it with might according to the inward man, and make it ready and eager to go into bondage and death for the sake of what is true and good and beautiful. The heart of youth, if youth is to find life worth living, must grow in docility unto God. Its meat and drink, like the meat and drink of the Saviour, must be the Will of the Father, Who is in Heaven. It must learn to pray, "Thy will, not mine be done."

There is a lot of loose talk these days and looser thinking about the quality of obedience in young people. Some there are who look upon it with askance and fear, and distrust it as a possible curb on creativeness and originality and self-development. Such have not read the record of human experience, or they would surely know that conformity is the soil in which originality flowers, and that true creativeness is nurtured in imitation of the master works of others. The long and arduous apprenticeship of the great musician, the great artist, the great writer, far from sapping their genius or fettering it in any way, provided the great means for its growth unto perfection. No soul has ever achieved any real measure of greatness that has not learned how to subject itself to higher powers. "Obedience is greater than sacrifice."

That is all very well, some of you may be saying, but what right have we adults to impose our will and our point of view on youth, when we do not know our own way around. What if we are wrong, what if there happens to be some better way that we know nothing about, what if our attitudes and sense of values grow out of conditions that no longer exist. The world is changing; do we know enough about the morrow to be safe guides for those who must live in it? Who are we to set ourselves up as Masters in Israel? Let youth find its own way in the new age just aborning, nor let us encumber it with the luggage of tradition and custom and prejudice that we have brought down from yesteryear. We have nothing that we believe in strong enough to warrant foisting it on our children.

Thank God, there are not too many people around who think thus, for if there were, the outlook for youth would be dreary indeed. Youth has the right to expect of us that we have lived wisely and rationally enough to be in a position to guide it and to direct it with authority. If we have made such a mess of our lives that we find ourselves approaching our middle years, without having achieved any fundamental wisdom, innocent of any convictions that we know are rooted and founded in truth, with no intellectual or moral wealth that we deem worthy of transmitting to others, then we have failed indeed. Youth comes to ask us for the bread of truth; we offer it the stone of our own disillusionment.

Youth needs guidance and has the right to be directed and led. It is happiest when it has learned to respect authority and knows from experience with the right kind of parents and teachers and

other adult guides, that authority is respectable. If young people have learned to honor father and mother and all that father and mother represent, things cannot go very much wrong for them. At the same time they will have had schooling in self-denial that will stand them in good stead all the days of their life. They will have experienced the joy that is born of giving up, not merely something that they own and possess, but giving up what they are. For obedience is the sacrifice of our very personalities and the placing of them in the Hands of God Who made them and to whom they belong.

“Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?” The sons of Zebedee answered, “We can.” Brave, generous, great-hearted youth in every age has echoed their answer, “We can.” The same holy challenge rings in the heart of modern youth. It too will answer, “we can,” if it is not distracted and confused by the cheap sophistries, the superficial thinking, the shoddy sentimentality, that too often pass muster for wisdom in this day and age of ours.

We can. We can drink the chalice of the Lord. We can drink it even though it means going into bondage and death with Him. We can drink it, even though it means going hungry that other people may eat, even though it means wearing rags and tatters, that others may be clothed. We can drink the chalice of the Lord and we drink it gladly because it will warm our hearts toward our afflicted and suffering brethren everywhere and lend us the courage to die more and more to our selves that we may live more and more for them and the God Who made them.

Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink? We can, we can, indeed, answer those who are

young today in this modern world. We can and we will, if you will only give us the chance, if you will only tell us the truth about life and living, His truth, the eternal, life-giving truth, in which alone there is hope and peace. We can and we will drink His chalice, for He has called us to go along with Him in the giving of His Life for the redemption of many. We are young and our mission it is to bring unto those with whom we live His redeeming power. With Him we have a rendezvous, a rendezvous on the top of a hill, there to hang with Him on the Cross. "As dying and behold we live."



## THE SANCTIFYING MISSION OF YOUTH

Address delivered on September 18, 1938

The Gospel tell us that he was a rich young man. We gather, likewise, that he was a person of some consequence in the neighborhood, that he was popular with the people, that he used whatever belonged to him in the way of possessions and influence for the welfare of his fellowman. Evidently he was not going to be content with a life of ease and pleasure and vain ostentation. Something was stirring in his soul, something that demanded outlet and expression, something that would yield him no peace.

He mingled with the crowds that had come to listen to the Saviour. He rubbed elbows with the maimed, the halt, and the blind. It meant nothing to him that the most intimate associates of Jesus were rude and uncultured working people and that He showed special predilection for publicans and sinners. The rich young man knew only that his heart was hungry and that here was One Who seemed to have brought the bread of life.

There came a day when he could stand it no longer. Jesus and His disciples were walking along a country road. Someone was coming after them. They heard footsteps, the footsteps of one who ran. "And when he was gone forth into the way, a certain man running up and kneeling before him, asked him, Good master, what shall I do that I may receive life everlasting?"

Jesus said to him, "Thou knowest the commandments: *Do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, bear not false witness, do no fraud, honor thy*

*father and mother, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."*

"All these have I kept from my youth," answered the young man, "what is yet wanting to me."

Lovingly Jesus looked at him. As the Scriptures have it, "Jesus looking on him, loved him." Here was a youth who had conformed himself to the Will of God and not to the spirit of the world, who had overcome temptation and kept himself clean. Here was a youth who was not content with being just good enough, who could not be satisfied with moral mediocrity. "What is yet wanting to me?"

"One thing is wanting unto thee," answered the Master, "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me."

A hard saying, this, and, alas, in spite of his high ideals, the rich young man could not hear it. "Who being struck sad at that saying, went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions."

He misses the whole point concerning Jesus Christ who is content to leave well enough alone. He has no inkling whatever of the spirit of the Gospels who would compromise between Christ and the world. "No man can serve two masters . . . You cannot serve God and Mammon." The purpose of the coming of Christ may well be summed up in these His words, "Be ye perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect." "The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men, instructing us that denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly and justly and godly in this world, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all

iniquity and might cleanse to Himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works." Only that people is acceptable unto God that has conformed itself to the image of His Only begotten Son; only those works are good in the sight of God that have been learned of Christ and which reflect His divine example. "Be ye therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect."

Saintliness is the characteristic mark of the Christian. We are called not to just ordinary decency, but to holiness of life. We are members of Christ and through Him members of one another, destined, if we are true to the grace that is in us, to "meet into the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto the perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ." The Saviour, unto those who accept Him, is not just a teacher or seer, voicing certain maxims; He is a way of living and acting. "Learn of me," He tells us. Christ is not merely someone to listen to and read about; Christ is something to do. He is a Way along which to travel, He is a Truth to assimilate, He is a Life to live. He is God made man, demonstrating unto us how human life must be lived if it is to achieve its purpose, uniting Himself with us that ours may be the capacity of living as the sons of God. In the words of St. Paul, "Because you are sons, God hath sent the spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father."

"If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast . . . and come, follow me." Young men and young women in every age have heeded that call and climbed the heights to sanctity. Now in the cloister, now in the world, now in the solitude of the monastery, now amid the whirl and the clang and the helter

and the skelter of public life, now clothed in beggar's rags, now accoutered in the magnificent raiment of royalty, they have died to self that they might live to Christ, and have written the most glorious page in human history. Power has gone out from them and they have brought to humanity its only lasting good. Their victories have never turned into eventual defeats. The fruits of their living remain and will remain until the end of time.

Modern youth has the right to be schooled in sanctity; we fail it if we keep hidden from it the secret of the saints. Young people nowadays have religious yearnings. The study of youth in Maryland conducted by the American Youth Commission makes this abundantly clear. Moreover they expect from religion what religion is supposed to give—not social service, not political theory, not namby-pamby poetry, but substantial food for their souls, the red meat of sound doctrine, the guidance and the strength to find those things that, like the rich young man in the Gospel, they feel are wanting to them. There is no adventure like the adventure in holiness; there is no thrill to be compared with that of following Jesus Christ; there is no joy equal to that which is born of heroic struggle with one's lower impulses. Youth has the right to taste and see for itself that the Lord is indeed sweet.

The compromises with the high principles of morality, the readiness to be content with the second best or the third best, or even the fourth and fifth best, in the realm of the true, the good, and the beautiful, that are so common in adult society today, must of necessity bring disillusionment to youth and lead it to ask What, after all is the difference?

Ideals must be a snare and a delusion if older people can play fast and loose with the moral law and get away with it. The youthful criminal, with whom we are so much concerned these days, is only applying to his petty, sordid affairs the same logic that is respectable among adults who, throwing restraint to the winds, are intent on business success or political success, or domestic arrangements that suit their impulses. Because it is not easy to be good it is too often taken for granted that it is not worthwhile to be good. Because standards of morality contradict the overweening urges of the ego we are told that there are no standards of morality. And then we get all worked up and frightened to death when our children take us at our word and, scoffing at all discipline, proceed to live and act like animals.

As a nation we need to be rescued from the decadence into which we are slipping, more or less imperceptibly. We need to be jolted back into a sound consciousness of right and wrong and become sensitive once again to higher spiritual values. Our hope is in our young people. They have a sanctifying mission to perform. In their own souls is a divine potency that they must know how to develop, that becoming holy and godly themselves, they may show forth in their lives and action the beauty that is virtue and thus leaven the society into which they are entering. They need to learn Jesus Christ and to have that faith and confidence in Him that will enable them to follow Him unto perfection, even though it means giving up all that they possess of self-will, and earthy impulses, and avaricious desires, and calculating ambitions. Neglect this phase of the education of youth and you have deprived youth of all education. By all means teach

youth to earn a living, by all means improve opportunity for academic education for those who are fitted for them, by all means do everything in your power to keep young people alive and well, by all means develop facilities and resources for a right use of leisure time; but if, doing all these things, your starting point has not been the soul of youth, if doing all these things your constant aim has not been the improvement of the human personality, if doing all these things you have lost sight of the fact that youth belongs to God and find its reason for existence only in His Holy Will, if doing all these things you are acting as one who knows not Christ, then your best efforts are doomed to failure and you are depriving young people of their birthright. For it has been said and said by Him Who is the Eternal Truth, "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul."

We are going to have better times in this land of ours, and in every other land, when we have better men and women. We are going to have better times when we have more men and women who are leading Christ-like lives. We are going to have better times when we have more men of business who live as Christ would live were He a man of business. We are going to have better times when we have more men and women engaged in the affairs of government who conduct themselves as Christ would conduct Himself were He engaged in the affairs of government. We are going to have better times when we have more teachers and writers and publicists who carry on their high mission as Christ would carry it on were He a teacher or a writer or a publicist. Christ has work to do, God knows, in these

bewildering days. He needs instruments through which to do it. He needs better men and women. They will not be available unless we take steps to show our young people how to become captive to His Law that they and their talents and their energies may be freed unto the sanctification of society, unto the re-establishment of the Kingdom of God.

Naturally, not every young man and every young woman is destined to be a great saint; but every young man and every young woman is called to try to be a great saint. "Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect", was spoken to all of us, and though it is true that many are called but few are chosen, some degree of perfection is, with the assistance of divine grace, within the compass of everyone. The alternative to striving to be as good as possible is slipping down, bit by bit, into sin and immorality. It is impossible to stand still morally: for this statement I call to witness human experience. It is either upward with Christ or downward with worldliness and the powers of evil.

The Holy Spirit is abroad in the world to sanctify and save all who are wise enough to listen to His promptings, all who keep their souls sensitive to His guidance. In this operation of Divine Providence unto the perfection of humanity, we all are called to participate. This fact our boys and girls should know, in order that they may prepare themselves adequately for their sanctifying mission. "What is yet wanting to me," we hear them asking. We are their worst enemies if because of anything we say or do, we prevent them from hearing the Master's answer, "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor . . . and come, follow me."

The rich young man went away sorrowful. He had great possessions and the price he was asked to pay seemed staggering. Yet one wonders if he did not come back eventually. There must have been something very much worthwhile about him, for looking at him the Saviour loved him. Who knows, perhaps as time went on, he found it impossible to stifle the yearning in his heart. A few years added to his age may have enabled him to see that the possessions he prized so highly were of little worth after all when it came to bringing true happiness. He had seen the Saviour and spoken to Him. The memory of the love he beheld in the eyes divine would haunt him forever. He came running the first time to find out what he must do to be saved; one wonders if there did not come another day in which he came running, more swiftly now, because no longer loaded down with great possessions, to ask more definitely what he needed to do in order to achieve perfection. One rather feels that he was just that kind of a young man.

After the rich youth had gone away, Simon Peter spoke up and said to Jesus, "Behold we have left all things, and have followed Thee: what therefore shall we have?" The disciples too were young, that is to say, the majority of them were. None of them was rich, but they had sacrificed what they had. It is the way of the poor to cling with a kind of desperation to the little they own; in the long run when they cut themselves adrift from their petty competence, they may well be making a greater sacrifice than does the rich man when he gives up his possessions. They have lived so close to want that they become panic-stricken when the last prop of their security is removed. They have nothing else to give



save themselves, and the hardest thing of all to give is self.

Jesus answering said to Simon Peter, "Amen I say to you, there is no man who hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive much more in this present time, and in the world to come, life everlasting."

Holiness is not a state of deprivation. Those who are brave enough and big enough to embrace it must, to be sure, give up many things, make many sacrifices. Living to Christ means dying to self. However, if they empty their souls it is that they may be filled up; if they sell all their earthly possessions and give to the poor, it is that they may be enriched with spiritual treasures. If they do violence to the lusts of the flesh, it is that they may enjoy the delights of the spirit. If they submit themselves to the divine bondage and are obedient even unto death, it is that they may be free, free with the freedom wherewith Christ has set us free. They receive Christ in exchange for all their sacrifice, and He is a reward exceeding great.

"If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast . . . and come, follow me." It takes a lot of courage to accept that invitation, a lot of faith—more faith and courage than the rich young man could muster. Those who live under the spell of the world and are dominated by the here and now, regard it as nonsense, for their souls are nurtured in cowardice, the cowardice that thrives on the expectation of immediate rewards. They are not the stuff of which saints are made.

But saints we need and nothing short of saints will do. They alone like the Master unto whose

measure they have grown up, have the words of eternal life. Here is a mission to enthuse the soul of youth, here is something to do, the one thing in all the world worth doing. May the Spirit of God be poured forth abundantly upon our boys and girls, on our young men and young women. May they behold the path that leads to perfection and set foot upon it unafraid. May the Holy Ghost descend upon them and fill them with all the fulness of God. May Christ dwell in their hearts that they may comprehend as saints always do, the height, the length, the breadth and the depth. May they know the love of Christ, that surpasseth all understanding.

“If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast . . . and come, follow me.” Young men, young women, that call is for you. Just because the temptation to amass wealth is strong, just because the body clamors for indulgence, just because the will to self-assertion urges mightily, will you stifle your ideals and turn sorrowfully away? Think it over. Think it over again and yet again, lest the day come when traveling downward toward the westering sun, you are forced to confess with the poet:

“What I am hails sadly  
What I could have been.”

## CARDINAL HAYES STATES AIMS OF THE CATHOLIC HOUR

(Extract from his address at the inaugural program 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.

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