Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
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Address of
Franklin D. Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

To Rear Admiral The Rt. Hon. E. W. B. Vandeventer.

It is a great privilege to me to attend this gathering, not only to enable me to give to the Knights of Columbus my greetings and heartfelt thanks for the truly wonderful service rendered by them to the nation in the war, but also because of the opportunity of meeting personally the men who were responsible for the conception and carrying out of the work.

I would cite to you scores of instances in the Naval branch of the service alone where commanding officers have reported to the Department on the extraordinary value of the war work activities of the Knights of Columbus for the ships and stations under them. Of course, the method of "litigation" there would be enough stars and palm to indemnify over all the flapping banners of the Brotherhood. And, too,
I am certain that no foreign or American decoration is too exploited for bestowal on the individuals so well typified by Lieut. Knight Jacob A. Haberly, who have given their devoted and untiring efforts to assure success to this great cause.

But far more than any mere thanks or appreciation or decoration by a Government or an official: When to true religion history comes the writer, it will be based on the verdict of the more than 5,000,000 American men who went to make up the Army and Navy and Marine corps of the United States in the greatest of wars. And in that history I know very well what will be said - you have but to talk to any man, soldier or sailor, who has come back from overseas and without asking him a question he will in the course of conversation begin speaking of the
work of the Knights of Columbus. It is a voluntary tribute, a proof that he appreciates, down in his heart, what has been done for him. And when you multiply what he tells you, you as an individual by what the millions of other individuals tell you, we have an accurate cross-section of the opinion of the whole body. That expression verdict is not only favorable, it is deeply enthusiastic; it is from the heart, it is lasting.

And through all the feeling of gratitude, runs the keynote that the war camp work of the Knights of Columbus owes its success to the fact that it was humane, that it was run by men who had a deep human sympathy with their fellow men, that there were no fools and no moralizing, but that service on the broad thing counted.
first, service for men, based on good Americanism, true living, straight thinking, and true Christianity. Do this great work to end? I trust not. For though in a sense the war is over, yet it has left us with many dozens of great war problems on our hands. Today it is unwise that we face grave tasks, and that we cannot turn our backs to them. And in the solution of them the Knights of Columbus can be of the greatest assistance by bringing to bear the same spirit of service that they have shown in the past.

It is a time for men to keep their hands, and to remember that they are Americans. In the working out of our problems, national problems like the high cost of living and the running of the railroads and dozens of others, let us think first of the
Great fact that we are as individuals responsible not only to ourselves or our own organizations but to the hundred millions of other citizens. In other words we must feel first the good of the whole country, not merely the good of ourselves.

We happen to have a form of government which has been more successful than any other in the world, and over a longer period of time. It is a form which is elastic enough to change the meaning of things to meet the changing conditions. It is above all an orderly form of government. It is based on law and the observance of law. It makes changes sometimes slowly to be sure, but the fact remains that it does follow the demands of the people as a whole.
The whole world — more in other
countries than here. And in this respect
is the element of trying to get some-
thing for nothing, of trying to rush
law and order off its feet,
of seeking to put into effect new
doctrines without consultation, without
thought, without consideration of the
whole mass of the people.

Everyone of us would like to see a state of perfection on earth, we
would like to make just the life of
every man, woman and child on the
highest possible basis, and we are
most of us working to that great
end. But we know too that every
great reform takes time and good
judgment, and that too great haste
often defeats its own ends.

Two things stand out
in my mind as vital to keep before
us in these continuing days of
crisis. Two things which march hand in hand and which most of necessity remain together if our form of government is to endure. Let us first realize this by looking through the channels of law and order.

It is clear that if a tree ceases to grow, it will wither and die, first in the leaves and at last in the heart of the trunk. So too this nation must continue to grow, not that it grow in social and economic ways, but grow in better living for the average man, grow in justice and in broad humanity. To stand still or go backwards at this time would mean...

But at the same time this growth, these changes, must and
shall come about in an orderly way. The great bulk of the American people stand behind this demand. No person, no organization, no party, can put a gun at the heads of the nation and say hands up. We have the machinery and the will to continue the progress of the country. It is being worked out and will be worked out by cool heads and clean minds. The knights of Columbus can mightily help to keep these principles of progress and order before our eyes in the days to come. Education and high principles will win the fight in the long run.