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**Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”**

**The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945**

**Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension**

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**1930 May 31**

**Schenectady, NY - Radio Address to Knights of  
Columbus re Welfare**

Radio Address at Knights of Columbus Convention, Schenectady,  
May 31, 1930

*Welfare Activities of Fraternal Organizations*

At a gathering of the Knights of Columbus, my mind reverts always to the close connection which I had with the Order during the World War. I remember well that within a week of the Declaration of War I received a visit in the Navy Department from two men who were destined to exert a very great influence on the soldiers and sailors of America during the following two years. One was the great humanitarian who was then the Bishop of the Army and Navy and now the great Cardinal of New York. The other was one of the most delightful individuals I have ever had the

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pleasure of knowing and working with, Supreme Knight James A. Flaherty. With them the United States Navy cooperated most heartily in the building up of the magnificent welfare work of the Knights of Columbus in the Army and Navy among the soldiers and sailors, both in this country and on the fields of France and of the various naval stations scattered across the seven seas.

I have read recently some words I uttered at the Supreme Council meeting in Buffalo on August 6, 1919, and because they still apply so well to the work of the Order today, I want to read them to you:

"I extend my heartfelt thanks to the Knights of Columbus for the truly wonderful services rendered by them to the Nation in the war. Commanding officers have reported to the Department the extraordinary value of the war work activities of the Knights of Columbus, but there is more than lies in the official reports.

"One has 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 as an individual by what the millions of other individuals tell you, we have an accurate conception of the opinion of the whole body. That 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 human, that it was conducted by men who had a deep human sympathy with their fellow-man, that there were no frills and no moralizing, but that service on big, broad lines counted first, service for men, based on good Americanism, clean living, straight thinking, and true Christianity."

At that time, 11 years ago, I expressed the hope that this service would not end with the war. That hope has been fully justified, for during the succeeding years the spirit of service, stimulated perhaps by the war, has continued to render striking assistance to the welfare of many hundreds of thousand of Americans, irrespective of creed.

I am particularly lappy to know of the work along educational and historical lines, but just as important has been the work of the Knights of Columbus in welfare work among the young.

It is obvious that government, whether it be State or local, could not undertake more than a limited amount of welfare activities. For example, the State has a fairly definite function in caring for the feeble-minded and the insane. In other words, for those unfortunate human beings who have to become wards of somebody. To private organizations, however, must be left the training and care of the hundreds of thousands who, in order to insure better citizenship, require some kind of outside assistance.

That care is being given more largely and more intelligently every year by private organizations many of them of a fraternal character such as the Knights of Columbus.

It is necessary, however, for us to think in the years to come of what might be called the coordination of all of those splendid efforts. It is right that each private organization should retain absolutely its own identity and at the same time see to it that there is no unnecessary duplication of the ends sought to be accomplished.

One of the best examples, I know, is the situation in the City of New York where the Catholic Charities maintain a separate organization and at the same time cooperate whole-heartedly with the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, the Charity Organization Society and the United Jewish Charities.

So, in a State-wide sense, we need the individual identity of the various fraternal orders and at the same time that they shall work together for the common good. It is a splendid thing that the Knights of Columbus have consistently shown this spirit.

Furthermore in certain phases of welfare work we must more and more specialize in order to obtain the greatest good.

As you all know, I have for many years been deeply interested in the problem of the crippled child. This is a task especially for private charity and yet the actual problem is so complicated that it is perhaps doubtful, if any one organization can cover the whole range of the care of cripples. For instance, there is the problem of the hospital itself which takes care of the child when it has first become seriously ill through accident or disease. This first period calls for orthopedic care and surgery under the most modern conditions so as to give the benefits of the great discoveries which medical science have made during the past few years. The second task in caring for the cripple is what can best be called "after care." In other words the restoration of muscular function is essential so that the child can eventually have an active and useful life. This period of after care may run not merely for weeks, but even for many years. It may be given in hospitals or institutions or camps, but in many cases it must of necessity be given in the home itself. Therefore a wholly separate organization is needed for this work, an organization which will give the kind of personal service which studies and cares for the individual case, and watches over cases that are scattered through almost every institution and many of the homes of the whole State, city, suburban and rural.

Finally, there is the third phase of vocational work and in this is included not merely the teaching of a useful occupation, but the procurement of work for the cripples to do when they are able to start. Here again the task becomes one, not of mass care but of looking after the individual. Every case is different from every other case.

It seems to me especially fitting that great organizations, like the Knights of Columbus, are equipped to carry out this individualized work, for your membership is scattered throughout the length and breadth of the land. You carry on your work through local organizations in which every individual is a factor. Here is the opportunity, not only on the part of the Order as a whole to coordinate the work, to prevent duplication and to cooperate with other organizations, but for the individual members to carry out the thought of doing one good turn daily, the chance to help the individual neighbor and to live up to the second great Commandment.

First and foremost, you are an American organization living up to the fundamentals on which our nation was founded. This has been amply demonstrated over many years. Your great aid to the country in times of war, your assistance in great disasters and now in time of peace, your assistance to scholarships, in the founding of university chairs for American History, your educational work for boy guidance, and your active welfare work in each and every one of the Councils; all of your activities have been a solid contribution to the welfare and prosperity of the Country.