
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
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**New York City, NY -
Catholic Charities Luncheon**

Campaign for financial aid to Catholic Charities' agencies in
New York City, at Catholic Charities' Luncheon, New York
City, Saturday, April 9, 1932

I am indeed glad to be present on this occasion to speak in behalf of the Catholic Charities. In my travels about the State, and in New York City, I have seen at first hand convincing evidence that want and distress are widespread in our cities and in our counties. At the same time, I am aware of the splendid contribution being made by the Catholic Charities of New York and the 212 charitable agencies which it represents to the solution of the difficult problems now confronting us. I am therefore glad to joint with all who understand the great extent of this work and the splendid spirit in which it is being carried on in hoping earnestly that the present appeal will meet with eminent success.

The method to be followed interest me greatly. Thousands of volunteer workers will go from house to house, and from door to door, to solicit contributions. For the last 12 years, over 250,000 persons have responded each year to such personal appeals. In this great number there were, no doubt, many who really shared meager earnings that others might not suffer. It is that neighborly aspect of this great work which impresses me so deeply.

Charity, you know, is rightly defined as love of neighbor. Of course it is easy to lose sight of the importance of neighborliness in times of great prosperity, and in great centers of population. You may live in a house with hundreds of others, without having a real neighbor. You may work untiringly to amass power and wealth for entirely selfish purposes. But society cannot endure on such foundations. The whole structure of our social life depends upon the realization that we are neighbors, and that we must be interested in the welfare of others.

Representative government has its roots deep in the soil of neighborliness. Its paramount aim and purpose is the promotion of human welfare. By banding together in communities and in states, people are able to accomplish for themselves and for their neighbors great undertakings which would be beyond individual effort. Public service is really neighborliness on a large scale. It is only by keeping in close touch with the people that men in public life can know their needs and plan intelligently for their welfare.

Well do I remember my first experience in public life up in Dutchess County. To learn at first hand the problems which confronted the people of that district, I traveled by car from farm to farm and from town to town until there was hardly a resident whom I did not know personally as a neighbor. Their troubles, their plans, their hopes became part of me. Then when I went to the Legislature, I felt that I could really speak for them, and could reflect their views on the questions that came up for action. In recent years I have felt it incumbent upon me to travel about the State and to find from personal contact with my neighbors in every part of it just what they expected of the State government.

In these trips I have seen convincing evidence that the people of the State are becoming more conscious of their duty as neighbors to those who are

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in need of assistance. Within the last two decades, the State has given great attention to the problems of human welfare. We have seen built up a State hospital system unequalled in any other commonwealth. Our people have voted to tax themselves for the erection of many splendid new hospitals devoted to the scientific care of thousands of patients afflicted with mental disease. We have taxed our resources to provide spacious parks and parkways that our people might enjoy the beauties of nature and benefit by sunshine, fresh air and outdoor recreation. We are now engaged in revising our prisons and reformatories so as to make them effective instruments of the rehabilitation of those who have violated the law. In every county of the State we have set up Children's Courts to deal with the problems of juvenile delinquency and neglect in a human and understanding manner.

There is one splendid fact that may engage us in these difficult days. I am convinced that during the past generation the spirit of love of neighbor has grown by leaps and bounds throughout our land. All we have to do is to compare the work for social welfare, undertaken both by private and public agencies, today, with the amount that was given only a generation ago, to realize that we are making definite strides.

And may I say that in the task of making the public of this State conscious of the obligation of the State and of the millions of individuals who make up that sovereignty, there is no one individual who has rendered a greater service than my distinguished predecessor, Governor Smith. His greatest contribution lay in what he has accomplished over a long period of years in making us socially-minded—in giving us a better and clearer concept of the command "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Perhaps the greatest contribution made by the State in the field of human welfare is to be found in its efforts to conserve home life. We may well be proud of the vast system of workmen's compensation which yearly is conserving countless homes. The first legislation for mothers' allowances was passed less than two decades ago, yet today 50,000 children are being kept with their mothers through our boards of child welfare. Under the Old Age Security Act which went into effect last year, the State is now helping to maintain about 50,000 old folks in their own homes. In order to relieve distress in the present period of unemployment, we set up a Temporary Emergency Relief Administration last fall. Within the space of four months this administration has appropriated \$18,000,000 to assist local communities in providing work and home relief to the unemployed. It is now helping to give work to about 80,000 heads of families throughout the State and is supplementing the relief expenditures in 109 local communities. These are some of the ways in which the State is fulfilling its duty as neighbor to the members of our Commonwealth who need its assistance.

As Chief Executive of the State, however, I am interested in more than the administration of State departments and the expenditures of State funds. Without the assistance of private endeavor, government would be greatly handicapped in the field of social welfare. Private initiative is indispensable in the development of welfare work, private agencies have led the way. In the development of new fields and trying out new methods. Their funds, being more flexible, have been used to test the validity of new problems. The trained leadership which they have developed is of inestimable assistance to public departments.

Even a cursory glance at the reports made by private agencies and institutions to the State Department of Social Welfare shows that they are bearing a heavy responsibility for the care of the destitute and afflicted of the State. To these reports must be added the splendid contribution to knowledge and to science welfare agencies and the splendid contribution to knowledge and to science which is being made by many great hospitals. In the present emergency, leading citizens in community after community have organized and carried through relief projects of unprecedented size. To these leaders and to many others who have helped support private charities throughout the decades the State owes an everlasting debt of gratitude.

The importance of private endeavor is well exemplified in the record of Catholic Charities during the past year. Its agencies have distributed over

one and a quarter million dollars in relief to families. They have cared for 18,000 homeless children; 45,000 patients have been treated in its hospitals, and thousands of others have been assisted by a vast network of clinics, day nurseries, settlements and clubs. Although the times have been hard, no effort has been spared to maintain high standards of care and efficiency of administration. Truly this is a record of service made possible only because those in charge have been actuated by true motives of charity. Charity in the true sense carries with it a spirit of love. Service or gifts without that spirit are not true charity. To speak of charity as cold, mechanical or lifeless is to miss the true meaning of the word. Charity is love of neighbor—the kind of love that was shown by the Good Samaritan. When we respond to its impulses, we are responding to the promptings of God.

I like to think, especially in times like these, that the Almighty is close to us; that He is watching over us to console, to strengthen, to inspire; that He is stirring the hearts of men to great deeds and to great sacrifices for those who are pressed down by worry, want and suffering. Throughout our history these impulses from On High have served to dot our land with agencies and institutions dedicated to the service of our fellowman. They have inspired thousands of men and women to devote their lives to such service without hope of earthly reward. God is just as near to us today and His guidance will lead us out of these troublous times.

The citizens of this State pay honor to Your Eminence, Cardinal Hayes, because of the manner in which you have organized and strengthened the charitable works under your jurisdiction. You have co-ordinated and extended scores of agencies. You have had due regard for efficiency and scientific method. Your works have joined with other great charities in local, State and national planning. And yet you have never lost sight of the gentle and ennobling spirit of charity.

As one reads through the report of what has been accomplished by Catholic Charities, in hospitals, in the aid of families, in the care of children, in clubs, day nurseries and settlements, one can discern in them all a spirit of consecration. Those in charge seek no selfish ends. Conscious that their work is God's work, they are striving reverently to obey His divine commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

The people of this great community, I am sure, stand ready once more to pledge their support to Catholic Charities and its many agencies of mercy and love. The results of this appeal will prove that in the hearts of the people of New York there is ample confirmation of the words of Paul: "Charity never faileth."