
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”

The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

**Series 2: “ You have nothing to fear but fear itself:” FDR
and the New Deal**

File No. 1350

1940 December 24

Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremonies

RADIO ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING
THE ELLIPSE
DECEMBER 24, 1940

At this Christmastide of 1940 it is well for all humanity to remind itself that while this is in its name a Christian celebration, it is participated in reverently and happily by hundreds of millions of people who are members of other religions, or belong actively to no church at all.

The reason is not far to seek. It is because the spirit of unselfish service personified by the life and the teachings of Christ makes appeal to the inner conscience and hope of every man and every woman in every part of the earth. It transcends in the ultimate all lines of race, of habitat, of nation. It lives in the midst of war, of slavery, of conquest. It survives prohibitions and decrees and force. It is an unquenchable Spring of Promise to humanity.

Sometimes we who have lived through the strifes
and the hates of a quarter century wonder if this old
world of ours has abandoned the ideals of the Brotherhood
of Man. Sometimes we ask if contention and anger in our
^{own} midst in America ~~is~~ a portent of disunion and disaster.
Sometimes we fear that the selfishness of the individual
is more and more controlling in our lives.

When we are in those moods it is hard for us to keep
from putting our tongues in our cheeks when we say "Merry
Christmas" -- for ^{then} we think in thoughts of futility and not
of hope. A few people are cynics all of the time; some
people are cynics part of the time; but most people keep
their faith most of the time.

^{Mind}
That is why we ~~are willing~~ to keep on striving for
a better and a more happy world.

It is a faint light Abrahamsen.
All is not black. Crisis may beget crisis but the
progress underneath does not wholly halt—it does go forward

In a century we have gained much. Aside from great areas stricken by actual warfare in the present moment, the lives of human beings are safer than they were in the olden days. Great and spreading plagues take smaller toll; starvation of millions is less; the forces of nature are better controlled. There is in the civilization we recognize a greater security for the young, for the worker, for the aged. Charity in the narrower sense of the word helps the needy more usefully.

Compared with the days when Charles Dickens wrote the Christmas Carol, we see a definite betterment. We do not claim attainment, and we recognize that there is much -- Oh so much -- to do.

Most of all we ask a chance to do it -- yes, a peaceful chance to do it.

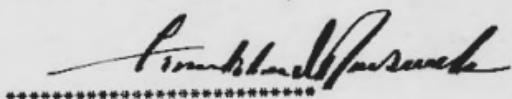
We want to do it the voluntary way -- and most human beings in all the world want to do it the voluntary way. We do not want to have the way imposed on the world by the conquest of the world by the sword.

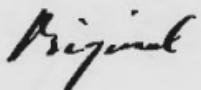
That would not follow in the footsteps of Christ. That would not make for happier Christmases in the future of any nation. Mankind is all one -- and what happens in distant lands tomorrow will leave its mark on the happiness of our Christmases to come.

Let us make this Christmas a merry one for the little children in our midst. For us of maturer years it cannot be merry.

But for most of us it can be a Happy Christmas if by happiness we mean that we have done with doubts, that we have set our hearts against fear, that we still believe in the Golden Rule for all mankind, that we intend to live more purely in the spirit of Christ, and that by our works, as well as our words, we will strive forward in Faith and in Hope and in Love.

In that spirit I wish a Happy Christmas to all,
and happier Christmases yet to come.





HOLD FOR RELEASE

HOLD FOR RELEASE

HOLD FOR RELEASE

December 24, 1940

CAUTION: The following Christmas Greeting to the Nation to be delivered by the President MUST BE HELD IN CONFIDENCE until released.

NOTE: Release is for editions of all newspapers appearing on the streets NOT EARLIER THAN 5:11 P.M., E.C.T. today.

PLEASE SAFEGUARD AGAINST PREMATURE PUBLICATION.

STEPHEN EARLY
Secretary to the President

At this Christmastide of 1940 it is well for all humanity to remind itself that while this is in its name a Christian celebration, it is participated in reverently and happily by hundreds of millions of people who are members of other religions, or belong actively to no church at all.

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When we are in those moods it is hard for us to keep from putting our tongues in our cheeks when we say "Merry Christmas" — for we think in thoughts of futility and not of hope. A few people are cynics all of the time; some people are cynics part of the time; but most people keep their faith most of the time.

That is why we must keep on striving for a better and a more happy world.

It is unintelligent to be defeatist. Crisis may beget crisis but the progress underneath does not wholly halt — it does go forward.

In a century we have gained much. Aside from great areas stricken by actual warfare in the present moment, the lives of human beings are safer than they were in the olden days. Great and spreading plagues take smaller toll; starvation of millions is less; the forces of nature are better controlled. There is in the civilization we recognize a greater security for the young, for the worker, for the aged. Charity in the narrower sense of the word helps the needy more usefully.

Compared with the days when Charles Dickens wrote the

Christmas Carol, we see a definite betterment. We do not claim attainment, and we recognize that there is much -- Oh so much -- to do.

Most of all we ask a chance to do it -- yes, a peaceful chance to do it.

We want to do it the voluntary way -- and most human beings in all the world want to do it the voluntary way. We do not want to have the way imposed on the world by the conquest of the world by the sword.

That would not follow in the footsteps of Christ. That would not make for happier Christmases in the future of any nation. Mankind is all one -- and what happens in distant lands tomorrow will leave its mark on the happiness of our Christmases to come.

Let us make this Christmas a merry one for the little children in our midst. For us of mature years it cannot be merry.

But for most of us it can be a Happy Christmas if by happiness we mean that we have done with doubts, that we have set our hearts against fear, that we still believe in the Golden Rule for all mankind, that we intend to live more purely in the spirit of Christ, and that by our works, as well as our words, we will strive forward in Faith and in Hope and in Love.

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P.P.E.
1F

File

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people are cynics part of the time; but most people keep
their faith most of the time.

must
That is why we ~~willingly~~ keep on striving for
a better and a more happy world.

It is unintelligent to be defeatist.
~~ALL IS NOT BLACK~~. Crisis may beget crisis but the progress underneath does not wholly halt -- it does go forward.

In a century we have gained much. Aside from great areas stricken by actual warfare in the present moment, the lives of human beings are safer than they were in the olden days. Great and spreading plagues take smaller toll; starvation of millions is less; the forces of nature are better controlled. There is in the civilization we recognize a greater security for the young, for the worker, for the aged. Charity in the narrower sense of the word helps the needy more usefully.

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Most of all we ask a chance to do it -- yes, a peaceful chance to do it.

We want to do it the voluntary way -- and most human beings in all the world want to do it the voluntary way. We do not want to have the way imposed on the world by the conquest of the world by the sword.

That would not follow in the footsteps of Christ. That would not make for happier Christmases in the future of any nation. Mankind is all one -- and what happens in distant lands tomorrow will leave its mark on the happiness of our Christmases to come.

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In that spirit I wish a Happy Christmas to all,
and happier Christmases yet to come.



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Let this Christmastide of 1940 it is well for all humanity to remind itself that ~~while this~~ is in its name a Christian celebration, it is participated in generously and happily by ^{hundreds of} millions of people who are members of other religions, or belong to ~~to~~ actively to no church at all.

The season is not far to seek. It is to renew the spirit of moral and service personified by the life and the teachings of Christ made appeal to the inner consciousness ~~and~~ now

2

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

hope of every man and every woman in every part of the earth. It transcends in the ultimate all lines of race, of habitat, of nation. It lives in the midst of war, of slavery, of conquest. It survives prohibitions and threats and force. It is the unquenchable Spring of Promise to humanity.

Sometimes we who have lived through the strife,^{but} the ~~affection~~ and hates of a

3

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Greater century wonder if this
old world of ours has abandoned
the ideals of the Brotherhood of
Man. Sometimes we ask if
contention and anger in our
own midst in America is a
portent of disunion and
disaster. Sometimes we fear
that the selfishness of the
individual is more and more
controlling in our lives.

When we are in those
moods it is hard for us
to keep from letting our

4

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Tangure in our hearts when
we say "Merry Christmas" —
for we think in thoughts of
futility and not of hope.
A few people are cynics all of
the time; some people are
cynics part of the time;
but most people keep their
faith most of the time.

That is why we are willing
to keep on striving for a
better and a more happy
world. ^{It} is not often
there may be crisis but
the progress underneath does

5

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

not wholly lost.

In a century we ^{have} gained much.
Aside from great areas stricken by
actual warfare in the present
moment, the lives of human
beings are safer than they were
in the older days. Great and
spreading plagues take ~~smaller~~
toll; starvation of millions
~~has been~~^{less}, the forces of nature
are better controlled. There
is in the civilization we
recognize a greater security
for the young, for the

6

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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Compared with days when
Charles Dickens wrote the
Christmas Carol we are in
definite betterment. We do
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nize that there is much - oh
so much - to do.

Most of all we ask a
chance to do it - yes, a
gracious chance to do it.

7

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

We ~~want~~ want to do it
the voluntary way—and most
human beings in all the world
want to do it the voluntary
way. We do not want to
have the way imposed on the
world by the conquest of
the world by the sword.

That would not follow in
the footsteps of Christ. That
would not make for happy
christmases in the future
of any nation. It must end
is all over and what happens

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

in distant lands tomorrow
will influence the Fair its
mark on the happiness of
our Christmases to come.

Let us make this Christmas
a happy one for the little
children in our midst. For
us of mature years it
cannot be many.

But for most of us it can
be a Happy Christmas if
by happenings we mean that
we have done with trouble,
that we have set our hearts

9

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

I want you to know that we still
believe in the Golden Rule for
all mankind, that we intend
to live more ~~purely~~ in the
spirit of Christ, and that
by our words as well as our
works ~~we~~ we will strive
forward in faith and in
Hope and ⁱⁿ Love.

In that spirit I wish
a Happy Christmas to all,
and happy New Year's
yet to come.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 6, 1941.

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. TSCHIDA:
Government Printing Office

Would you be good enough to
tie the President's speech and drafts
(as per usual) and stamp box as follows
and return to me:

F.D.R. - Lighting of Christmas Tree
December 24, 1940, Washington, D.C.

Dorothy Jones



THE LIGHTING
OF THE
**National
Community Christmas Tree**

WASHINGTON, D. C.

Christmas Eve
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1940

THE ELLIPSE

Four-Thirty

Christmas Eve Celebration at the National Community Christmas Tree, 1940

Concert

UNITED STATES MARINE BAND

Captain William F. Santelmann, Leader

Henry Weber, Second Leader

PROGRAM

1. Christmas Song: "THE BIRTHDAY OF A KING"	Neidlinger
2. Chorale: "GRANT US TO DO WITH ZEAL"	Bach
3. "NAZARETH"	Gounod
4. "JESU, JOY OF MAN'S DESIRING"	Bach
5. Fantasy: "AROUND THE CHRISTMAS TREE"	Tobacci
6. "HALLELUJAH CHORUS" from "THE MESSIAH"	Handel

Arrival of the President and His Party

5:00 P. M.

INVOCATION

Rev. H. H. D. Sterrett

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Hon. John Russell Young
Commissioner of the District of Columbia

Greetings

OF THE PEOPLE OF WASHINGTON TO THE
PRESIDENT AND MRS. ROOSEVELT

Presented by

Helen Ahern, Troop 29, Girl Scouts of the District of Columbia
Robert Willenborg, Eagle Scout, Troop 88, Boy Scouts of National Capital Area Council

Lighting of the Living Community Christmas Tree

By The

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The President's Christmas Greeting to the Nation

Christmas Carols

By The

GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY GLEE CLUB

Dr. and Mrs. Robert Howe Harmon, Directors

"THE FIRST NOWELL" Sir John Steiner

"O, LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM" L. H. Redner

"SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT" Franz Gruber

"CANTIQUE DE NOËL"—*Comte Solo* Adan

Musician Edward Masters
United States Marine Band

BENEDICTION Rev. John K. Cartwright

This celebration, sponsored by the Community Center and Playgrounds Department of the District of Columbia, The American Forestry Association, The Greater National Capital Committee of the Washington Board of Trade, and the Office of National Capital Parks of the Department of Interior, marks the Eighteenth Annual Lighting of the National Community Christmas Tree by the President of the United States.

Committees on the National Community Christmas Tree, 1940



MERRY
CHRISTMAS!
and
ALL'S WELL

National Committee

HONORABLE JOHN RUSSELL YOUNG, Chairman
HONORABLE NEWTON B. DRURY, Vice-Chairman

- DR. FRANK W. BALLOU, Public Schools of the District of Columbia
LEWIS R. BARRETT, Coordinator of Records, District of Columbia
JAMES C. BROWN, American Federation of Government Employees
OVID BUTLER, The American Forestry Association
HON. ARTHUR CAPPER, United States Senator
MOST REV. JOSEPH M. CORIGAN, Catholic University of America
HON. FRANCIS A. DELANO, National Capital Park and Planning
Commission
MRS. HEINRY GRATTON DOYLE, Board of Education, District of
Columbia
MRS. SAMUEL OBB DUNBAR, General Federation of Women's Clubs
DR. EDWARD W. ENGEL, American University
COL. EDWIN A. HALSEY, Secretary, United States Senate
HON. MELVIN C. HAZEN, President, Board of Commissioners, District
of Columbia
- HON. HAROLD E. ICHEIS, Secretary of the Interior
DR. JAMES L. JOHNSON, Howard University
HON. WILLIAM H. KING, United States Senate
GENERAL GEORGE C. MARSHALL, Chief of Staff, War Department
DR. CLOUD HECK MARVIN, George Washington University
COL. DAVID MCGOWAN, Jr., Commissioner, District of Columbia
DR. JAMES MEYER, The Washington Post
A. G. NEAL, Potomac Electric Power Company
THEODORE W. NOYES, *The Evening Star*
VERY REV. ARTHUR A. O'LEARY, S.J., Georgetown University
DR. ROBERT P. PARKER, Director of the Navy
MRS. ELEANOR PATTERSON, *Washington Times-Herald*
HON. JENNINGS RANDOLPH, House of Representatives
ADMIRAL H. R. STARK, Chief of Naval Operations
LUTHER C. STEWART, SR., National Federation of Federal Employees

Executive Committee

MISS SIBYL BAKER, Community Center and Playgrounds Department, Chairman
OVID BUTLER, The American Forestry Association, Vice-Chairman
FRANCIS F. GILLEN, National Capital Park, Vice-Chairman

- THOMAS J. ANDERSON, Community Center and Playgrounds Department
COL. H. O. ATWOOD, High School Cadets, Public Schools, District of
Columbia, Div. 10
DR. FRANK W. BALLOU, Public Schools, District of Columbia
MRS. FRANCY F. BERTON, Council of Social Agencies
COL. HARRISON BRAND, JR., Board of Trade
MAJOR E. W. BRONSON, Board of Trade
WILLIAM C. CLEVELAND, American Automobile Association
ALBERT CLYDE BURTON, National Capital Parks
JAMES E. COLLIFLOWER, Board of Trade
JOHN B. COLPOYS, United States Marshal
COL. DAVID COOPER, High School Cadets, Public Schools,
District of Columbia, Div. 1-9
MRS. IRNEST H. DANIEL, District of Columbia Federation of Women's
Clubs
LINN C. DRAKE, National Capital Area Council, Boy Scouts of America
MISS ELEANOR DUETTE, District of Columbia Girl Scouts
E. C. GRAHAM, Hamilton National Bank

FORD YOUNG, Merchants and Manufacturers Association

Committee on Lighting the Tree

From the Electric Institute of Washington
JOHN S. KELLEY, Chairman
N. M. BARNES J. GRANGE, S. SHAW
From the Community Center and Playgrounds Department
L. T. SOUDER
HAROLD SNYDER

Committee on Lighting of Alley Christmas Trees

Sponsored by Washington Council of Church Women
MRS. FRANK A. LINZEL, President
MRS. RICHARD A. SAUBER, Chairman, Juvenile Court Department
MISS ETTA MAI RUSSELL, Juvenile Court Worker

Committee on Broadcasting

JOHN A. REMON, Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company, Chairman
CURTIS A. HODGES, Greater National Capital Committee, Vice-Chairman
G. B. WILHELM, Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company, Vice-Chairman
HARRY C. BUTCHER, Columbia Broadcasting System
W. D. DOLPH, Mutual Broadcasting System
K. H. FREDRICK, Columbia Broadcasting System
MISS ANN GILLIS, Columbia Broadcasting System
MISS MADELINE ENSIGN, Mutual Broadcasting System
CARLETON SMITH, National Broadcasting Company

A Guard of Honor for the President and Mrs. Roosevelt are Officers of Washington High School Cadet Corps, Cadet Colonels DAVID A. RHODES and REED RECTOR, Commanding; Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts.

The Washington Council of Church Women is sponsoring Community Christmas Celebrations in many Communities on Christmas Eve. The Alley Trees are lighted as the President Lights the National Tree.

LIGHTING OF CHRISTMAS TREE

Washington 1940

President Roosevelt's draft in pencil and
the typed reading copy of his speech on this
occasion.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

National Archives and Records Service
FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT LIBRARY
HYDE PARK, N. Y.



Papers of President Franklin D. Roosevelt
Speech File -- Dec. 24, 1940

FRA FORM 207 - June 5, 1950

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