

True Copy Speeches
Address to be delivered by Honorable John E. Fogarty, Member of Congress from the Second R. I. Congressional District, at the Roger Williams Post, Smith Street, Providence, Rhode Island ("Smith Hill Irish"), on Monday evening, March 12, 1945, at 8:00 P.M.

I am truly grateful to be here, Ladies and Gentlemen. I've had several swell times with you good people, and I deeply appreciate the kind invitation to speak to you on this commemoration of the feast of Ireland's great saint.

I find myself in a rather difficult position, however, You people have heard so often the Glories of Ireland extolled by great men and learned men. You have had old memories quickened - you've felt your hearts beat a little bit faster - at the mention of scenes in the old sod which you knew so well.

To my generation is given pride in the knowledge that you men and women so lived that you have kept the love of Ireland alive in our hearts. Pray God all of us shall prove faithful as you have been and never allow that fire of faith to fade and grow dim.

We have gathered on many occasions such as this, just as Irishmen all over the world gather at the time of St. Patrick's Day, to renew old acquaintances - to rekindle the fire that is the love of Ireland - and to recall the accomplishments of Irishmen in every clime - in every nation - in every line of endeavor.

In these trying days, when our beloved America faces her greatest crisis, there can be no better thing we could do than to recall to our minds the sacrifices Irish men and women have always made in the never-ending fight for liberty and freedom, and, by recalling their sacrifices, we can repledge ourselves to make every necessary sacrifice to preserve the freedom of America and to do every necessary act to crush the powers of evil who would destroy it.

Just as thousands of the sons and daughters of Irish immigrants who were driven from their homeland for no greater crime than that they loved freedom and hated the tyrant who would take it from them - just as those sons of Erin fought the red-coats from field and ditch - at Lexington, Trenton and Yorktown - so did thousands of their women folk, who could not bear arms, tend the fires and till the fields in order to guarantee that the

home - always a sacred institution in the hearts of Irishmen - should not be destroyed while the little Republic's energies were concentrated on the defeat of the enemy.

To those Irish immigrants and their sons and daughters, the Declaration of Independence was not a mere political pronouncement - it was a sacred thing - a document that must be guarded to the last - - and for the protection of that Creed of Freedom, those immigrants pledged their undying vigilance.

But, for what did these men fight - for glory and fortune to themselves? For personal advancement? Ah No, history records that such is not the fact.

Maybe you say they fought for a flag - for a rag torn from a soldier's back they'd have fought as hard and as long - if it could have meant to them all that was symbolized by Old Glory.

Yes - their flag was Old Glory - the first of its kind in all the world - the emblem that called on Heaven's stars - the pure blue of the sky - and the red of real men's blood - to guard and protect and to cherish all those who stood beneath its folds.

The same flag for which Sheridan fought - for which Logan bled - for which Mulligan died - as his heroic soul cried out, in a burst of fervent zeal - "Lay me down - - save the flag".

Yes, they gave their lives for a flag, it would seem - but far more than just that; it was the deep and abiding love of liberty and freedom - the hatred of oppression that led Irishmen to shed their blood in the cause which was closest to their hearts.

To those men, liberty was not merely a high-sounding phrase - - it was a living, breathing thing, depending for its preservation upon the fire of faith in a just God which lives in the hearts of men.

Sparked by that unquenchable fire of faith - knowing the future of America was secure so long as they maintained vigilance - these same immigrants and the thousands who followed them from the Emerald Isle, pushed back the forests on America's frontiers. They bridged the streams - they dammed the rivers. They built cities, churches and schools. They brought harvests, to feed a growing nation, out of the soil which hitherto had known

only the tread of the feet of savages.

These pioneers who gave their all - - not in a mad race for the accumulation of wealth, or because of the inordinate desire to follow the paths of empire - - gave of their blood and their sweat and their tears to prove that a free people can overcome all obstacles - can win through no matter what the opposition - for they know victory brings greater freedom before God - and failure brings misery and the chains of slavery.

These pioneers - your forbears - my forbears - made themselves the front line in the constant war of civilized peoples against ignorance and savagery.

How well they fought the good fight - how well they kept the faith - is attested by such gatherings as this splendid gathering tonight.

In every war when America's freedom was threatened, the descendants of these same pioneers in the cause of liberty and justice were found in the forefront of the battle.

Every hamlet in America has seen the son of an Irishman march off to answer Columbia's call to her sons. Every town in the land has echoed to an Irish mother's tears, as she prayed for her loved ones and kept burning before the crucifix the lamp of faith and hope.

So in this hour, when another threat to the peace has arisen - when the powers of ignorance, intolerance and greed once more stalk the earth - among the smoke and flame of battle - the descendants of these same immigrants are in the vanguard - true to their heritage - keeping faith with the pledge of their forbears - that in an Irishman, anywhere in the world, Freedom will always find a champion.

In the rank and file of the Army, the Navy, and the valiant Marines, are countless thousands of sons of Irishmen who serve in silence - never expecting, never seeking, the awards for brilliance or bravery. Nevertheless, brave they are - brilliant they are - and proud are we of them who carry with them the prayers and love and hopes of the throbbing heart of a people at war. Valiant are they in their defense of America - determined are they in their struggles against those enemies who threaten to take from them and their loved ones the handful of earth which they cherish - the four walls they call home.

One day - pray God that day will come soon - this struggle will have ended - the smoke of the last battle will settle to the earth - and the last doughboy will have crawled out of the last foxhole. Then those boys who now carry the torch will return to us who love them - and they will demand to know how well we have guarded the trust they placed in us. They will demand to know whether we valued the sacrifices they made - or whether we saw in those sacrifices merely an opportunity to strangle personal liberty and to tear from the individual the God-given sanctity which is his.

As the son of an Irish mother and father I was raised in the belief that there are two thoughts which should dominate my life - the two thoughts which form the basis of every true life - religion and patriotism. Religion which binds a man to God, and consecrates him to the truth; and patriotism which causes him to idolize country and think and act for the betterment of the lot of his fellow man.

Those two thoughts, I believe, have been - and Pray God, will continue to be - the foundation stone of the life and character of every Irishman.

The Irishman is passionately fond of liberty because he believes it to be the gift of God to men - his voice and his pen have ever made earth ring with his denunciation of wrong, wherever found. Liberty was his life idea - God its source, and humanity its application.

With that principle as our shibboleth, it is our duty to take our stand today on the side of right and justice, and determine that we will do whatever lies within our power to guarantee that justice and liberty will be the order of the future world, and that lust and avarice shall never again arise to sweep our sons away to foreign battlefields.

We know - regardless of what our individual wishes might be - that our Nation will be called upon to play a major role in the reconstruction of a world half-dead, morally almost bankrupt, tottering on the very brink of despair.

We shall be called upon to be charitable to the sufferers all over the world. In justice we cannot fail to heed that call. But if we have been honest to ourselves - and faithful to the trust which is ours - we shall see that our generosity possesses a measure

of realism. We shall not allow - in our absorption with the affairs of the world - our minds to forget our primary duty to America and to the children of America.

Through our use of the power which is ours, we shall demonstrate to the world that Democracy is powerful as well as charitable - that it is just as well as charitable.

As a freedom-loving people, we can accept the position of leadership which fate has thrust upon our country, and we can assist in leading the peoples of the world to a position of peace and security, where there will be no future rise of power-drunk tyrants - whose greed and avarice would embroil the world in a war of blood and sorrow.

If we are charitable enough to assist in the reorganization of the world - let us be powerful enough to determine that that reorganization must have for its base Justice. If we are charitable enough to give of ourselves for this purpose - let us be just enough to determine that the God who now graces our war communiques - and blesses our arms and our foxholes - shall not be abandoned at the peace table.

Let us strive for honesty in all things - in our individual lives and in the acts and promulgations of our Country - for in subterfuge and selfishness lies disaster.

Let us determine that wherever fate may decree our flag shall go - it shall go unfettered.

Let it be honored and honorable - let it be recognized - not ever as the emblem of false hopes - but forever as the proudest and the most powerful symbol of human freedom in all the world.

John E. Fogarty, M.C.,
Room 1515, House Office Bldg.,
Washington, D. C.