

NEW YORK FIRE DEPARTMENT HOLY NAME SOCIETY
ANNUAL COMMUNION BREAKFAST

Hotel Astor, April 20, 1941

New York, N. Y.

TO say that I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity that has been accorded me to be with you this morning, is merely an attempt to give expression of the feelings that well up as I stand before this splendid group of upstanding Catholic men, and recall with pride the evidence of loyalty to their God that I was privileged to witness today in beautiful St. Patrick's Cathedral.

At various times, in my home city of Baltimore, I have participated in Communion services of members of the Fire and Police Departments, and of other groups as well, but never before has it been my good fortune to be present, and to receive Our Blessed Savior, in the company of so many representatives of one department of city or state activities. It is an experience that I promise you I shall never forget, and never cease to recall with much gratification.

If proof were needed to convince the people of New York that their fire-fighting facilities are in good and responsible hands, a sight of this fine assemblage, as rank after rank approached the altar rail to renew allegiance to their Lord and Supreme Master, would more than suffice. The record of seventy-six years of unblemished service to the people of New York, however, speaks volumes for the Department, just as the thirty-year record of your Department Holy Name Society offers irrefutable testimony to the decency and steadfastness of the many thousands of Catholic men who have won membership in the Department since its establishment in 1865.

Certainly we residents of Baltimore have good reason to value the efficiency of the New York Fire Department, for, without the extensive help of your men and apparatus in our time of civic calamity—the great Baltimore Fire of 1904—there is no telling what would have happened to the metropolis of Maryland, which suffered many millions of dollars of loss as it was.

I understand that a number of your members who came to Baltimore on that memorable occasion thirty-seven years ago are still on the active list. If any of them are here this morning, I take pleasure in extending to them a somewhat belated but none the less heartfelt thanks from all the people of our State for their never-to-be-forgotten assistance.

In passing, may I say, too, that a glance at the list of names of your Holy Name officers brings back to me vivid recollections of my boyhood days in the old Irish Section of Baltimore. When I note the names of Father O'Connor, your Chaplain; of your President, Assistant Chief McCarthy; of Messrs. Murphy, O'Brien, Doyle, Burke, Fay, it reads like a list of my neighbors of years past, when March 17th was one of the year's outstanding holidays, and where everyone, Jew and Gentile, Catholic and Protestant, wore "a little bit of green" in his lapel on St. Patrick's Day.