

# POPE COUNSELS ON RETURN OF WORLD TO GOD

## Pledges Broken, Rights Ignored Says German Bishops' Pastoral

NEW YORK (NC)—Text of a joint pastoral letter in which the German Bishops reviewed and publicly protested extensive persecution of the Church in Germany, and told of formal protests they had submitted to the Nazi Government demanding cessation of oppressive measures, has just been received here.

A full English translation of the document was published June 7 by the New York Times, with whose permission it is reproduced. The letter it was said was dated Mar. 22 and was read in the churches on that day. Passion Sunday.

The letter is the first joint pastoral known to have been issued since the annual Fulda Conference of all the German Bishops in 1941. The text received here, signed "The German Bishops," was a copy from the Diocese of Wurzburg and bore a note signed by the Most Rev. Matthias Ehrenfried, Bishop of Wurzburg, directing that it be read in all churches of his Diocese on March 22.

**Pledges Regulated**  
The Passion Sunday letter gives an extensive review by the German Hierarchy of the Nazi persecution of the Church. Stating that they "feel obliged to make public the most important points" of their formal representations to the Government, the Bishops review the pledges, including those of the 1933 Concordat, which have been repudiated by Nazi acts and the "human rights bestowed by God on mankind" which have been "disregarded."

Charging that the Nazis "wish to destroy Christianity in Germany" before the soldiers return home, the Bishops demand redress of the injustices heaped on the Church and call upon their people "to repulse decisively and vigorously all attempts to make you waver."

The following is the text of the joint pastoral letter.

**Beloved Faithful:**  
For years a war has raged in our fatherland against Christianity and Church, and has never been conducted with such bitterness. Repeatedly the German Bishops have asked the Reich Government to discontinue this fatal struggle; but, unfortunately, our appeals and endeavors were without success.

Even in wartime, when solidarity has always been a matter of course, the fight continues; nay, increases in sharpness and bitterness and lies like a tremendous incubus on the German people, of whom at the last census 85 per cent in Bavaria even 98 per cent—have professed to be Christians.

Therefore, the German Bishops have considered it their duty toward Church and people to put an end to this internal war by a public declaration and an effective order. As we know that the faithful expect their Bishops to do everything to protect belief and conscience, to re-establish the peace of religion and Church and to ease their souls from severe pressure we feel obliged to make public the most important points of our memoir to the Reich Government.

In the Concordat of July 20, 1933, the Reich Government granted the Catholic Church state protection for the free developments of its functions. Actually these grants have not been kept. Christianity and the Catholic Church have been denied State protection and are being fought and fettered through measures and organs of party and State.

**Pressure for Apostasy**  
I. Promised and pledged was "the liberty of creed and worship of the Catholic religion." In truth, pressure is frequently used on those who depend on State or party positions to force them to conceal or deny their Catholic religion or to compel them to abandon the Church. Through numerous ordinances and laws open worship of the Catholic religion has been restricted to such a degree that it has disappeared almost entirely from public life. It appears as if the sign of Christ, which in the year 313 was gloriously carried from the catacombs, is to be driven back to the catacombs.

Even worship within the houses of God is frequently restricted and oppressed. Quite a number of places of worship, especially in the Ostmark, in the newly conquered territories, but also in the old Reich, have been closed by force and even used for profane purposes. Services in rented rooms have been prohibited despite urgent necessities. Purchase of lots

for the construction of new churches is being rendered impossible.

From time to time religious instruction for children and juveniles has been prohibited even in church-owned premises and has been punished. Religious care in hospitals has been most severely restricted through new laws.

2. Catholic parents and the Catholic Church have the natural and divine right to educate their children religiously according to the principles of the Christian faith and ethical law and in conformity with their own consciences. Through Concordats, the influence of the Christian churches on school and education has been expressly excluded.

Actually, however, the rights of parents and Church are being more and more restricted and have become ineffective. Juveniles in State youth organizations, in hostels and labor camps, often even in schools and country homes for evacuated children are being influenced in an anti-Christian manner and kept away from religious services and celebrations. In the new State institutions such as teachers' training schools, all political and religious influence is absolutely impossible.

**Priests Spied On**  
3. The Catholic Church and its priests have the right and the duty to pronounce and defend, freely and unrestricted, orally and in writing, the creeds and doctrines of the Christian religion. The clergy, by agreement, has been granted State protection for the execution of its duties.

In reality, Catholic priests are watched constantly and suspiciously in their teaching and pastoral duties; priests, without proof of any guilt, are banned from their Dioceses and homes, even deprived of their freedom and punished for having fulfilled their priestly duties truthfully and scrupulously.

It is unbearable that clergy are being punished with expulsion from the country or internment in a concentration camp without court procedure or any contact with the clergy, when approach to the bishop, could have resulted in the explanation of misunderstandings or the prevention of mistakes.

The holding of religious services and exercises is made almost impossible, the religious press has been destroyed almost entirely; the reprinting of religious books, even catechisms, school Bibles and diocesan prayer books is not permitted, while anti-Christian writings may be printed and distributed in mass circulation.

4. It is consented upon and granted by agreement: "Orders and religious societies are not subjected by the state to any specific restriction regarding their pastoral, educational, medical and relief work conduct of their affairs and administration of their estates."

In fact, the Catholic Orders have been expelled from schools almost entirely and are being curtailed in their other activities on an ever increasing scale. A large part of their property and their institutions have been taken away from them and many are destined to perish because of the law prohibiting able-bodied men to work for them. Consequently, the German people will be in future without the pastoral services of the priests of the Orders and without the sacrificing services of their nuns.

**Seminaries Confiscated**  
5. It has been promised and granted: "Within the limitations of the law, the clergy has the sole right to erect, conduct and administer the seminaries for priests as well as church refectories."

In truth, not only have the Church refectories for students been largely destroyed or taken from the administration of the Church authorities but even seminaries for priests have been confiscated and deprived of their clerical status. This is in conformity with the purpose of those who wish to deprive the Catholic priesthood of successors.

II  
We emphasize that before the authorities we not only stand up for religious and clerical rights but

likewise for the human rights bestowed by God on mankind. Every honest human being is interested in the respect and preservation of these rights without them the entire Western culture must break down.

1. Every man has the natural right to personal freedom within the boundaries designated by obedience to God, consideration of his fellow men and the common good and the just laws of the civil authorities.

"We German Bishops protest against every disregard of personal freedom. We demand juridical proof of all sentences and release of all fellow citizens who have been deprived of their liberty without proof of an act punishable with imprisonment."

2. Every man has the natural right to life and the goods essential for living. The living God, the Creator of all life, is sole master over life and death.

**Protest State Killings**  
With deep horror Christian Germans have learned that by order of the State authorities, numerous innocent persons, entrusted to asylums and institutions, were destroyed as so-called "unproductive citizens." At present a large scale campaign is being made for the killing of incurables through a film recommended by the authorities and designed to calm the conscience through appeals to pity.

We German Bishops shall not cease to protest against the killing of innocent persons. Nobody's life is safe unless the Commandment: "Thou shalt not kill" is observed.

3. Every man has the natural right to property and the use of his lawfully acquired property and to protection by the State of private property against willful interference. Nevertheless in past years many Church possessions and especially houses of religious Orders have been taken away by force from their lawful owners and used for other purposes. Even places of worship have been confiscated and desecrated.

We Bishops, in the name of the Catholic people from whom come the members of our Orders, protest against this violation of natural property rights and demand the return of the unlawfully confiscated in many cases sequestered property. We protest against such willful acts for the sake of the common good and as defenders of the fundamental social order willed by God. For "what happens today to Church property may tomorrow happen to any lawful property."

4. Every man has the natural rights to the protection of his honor against lie and slander. On the front and in the homeland faithful Christians fulfill their patriotic duties like all their fellow citizens. Yet Catholic priests and laymen are suspiciously watched, secretly suspected, may publicly be branded as traitors and national enemies, just because they stand up for the freedom of the Church and the truth of the Catholic faith.

**Orders Left Homeless**  
Catholics of the religious Orders have fulfilled their duty heroically in the field, at home and in war, a fact which has been frequently acknowledged through the bestowing of war decorations. In spite of this many have been deprived of their monastic homes.

We Bishops protest against such violations of truth and justice and demand effective honorable protection for all citizens, including faithful Catholics and members of Catholic Orders.

For months regardless of war misery, an anti-Christian wave of propaganda, fostered by party meetings and party pamphlets, has been carried through the country with the clearly noticeable open outspoken aim to suffocate the vigor of the Catholic Church in German lands. If possible, they wish to destroy Christianity in Germany during the war before the soldiers whose Christian faith gives them the strength for heroic battles and sacrifices, return home.

**Expect Immediate Rectification**  
The vast majority of the German people whose deepest feelings are hurt by such attacks on Christianity, justly expect the immediate and frank rectification by the Reich Government of the unjust

## Urges Prayer, Sacrifice; Sees Misguided Seeking Church's Consolation

VATICAN CITY (N. C.)—The duty of all Catholics to continue to strive unceasingly, through prayer, work and sacrifice, to prepare themselves for that day when a misguided

and strife-torn world will turn again to God was emphasized by His Holiness Pope Pius XII in a discourse pronounced to 22 members of the Sacred College of Cardinals. The Holy Father was responding to greetings which the Cardinals extended to him on his name day.

"Innumerable hearts which have listened to other voices and followed other ideals, or rather false ideals will turn to the Church at God on that day," His Holiness said, "while the false fires of false prophets will be spent."

"Then, on the threshold of a new and real organization of the peoples," the Holy Father said, "will sound the word of the Master to Whose Heart, inflamed with love, the sign and source of grace, this month is dedicated. I stand at the door and knock."

"What will be the reply of Christianity to this Divine Voice? What that of the whole human family?"

**Duty of All Catholics**  
"Our duty, Venerable Brothers, cooperators in Our apostolic ministry; the duty of all members of the Episcopate, of all priests, of all souls consecrated to God in the religious state, of all laymen who cooperate in the mission of the Hierarchy, of all the faithful, is to prepare spiritually, with prayer and sacrifice, with purification and penance, with work and sacrifice, for this future meeting between Christ and a world more than ever in need of His light and His grace, of His help and His salvation, so that on such a meeting may finally shine a providential hour of new concords, knowledge and just motives."

Replying to an address delivered by His Eminence Genaro Cardinal Granito Pignatelli di Belmonte, the Holy Father said the greetings of the Sacred College resounded "in perfect accordance with that union of the Catholic world, which, with its supernatural harmony, has manifested its intrepid faith in all lands and division of the earth, the depth of its sincere love, the breadth of the absolute fidelity, the length of its persevering, confident hope."

The homage of the Senate of the Holy Roman Church, His Holiness said, "symbolizes the unanimity of thought and affection of all who live on earth in faith in Christ and in fidelity to the Church founded by Him."

From the day when he was called

Keep the things that can't be bombed, but could be lost. Buy U. S. War Bonds and Stamps.

oppression and hated struggle against Christianity and the Church.

**Beloved Faithful** We Bishops have informed you of our grave worries and ardent endeavor for inner peace in our German nation. We call upon you, with the devotion we have always shown you to support our efforts through your prayer and your unshakable faith and to repulse decisively and vigorously all attempts to make you waver.

We wish to prove through our attitude that we long for nothing but internal peace, and esteem nothing as highly and faithfully as our sacred creed, which we shall defend against all attacks. Decisively and firmly we refuse the suggestion that we should prove our patriotic faith through faithlessness toward Christ and our Church.

We remain eternally true to our Fatherland just because, and at any price, we remain faithful to our Saviour and our Church. God bless our country and our holy Church. God give an honest happy lasting peace to the Church and the Fatherland.

**The German Bishops**  
Matthias, Bishop of Wurzburg, Wurzburg, Mar. 22, 1942.

The above pastoral is to be read in all churches during the service on Passion Sunday, Mar. 22, 1942. Responsible for distribution and edition:

The Bishop of Wurzburg, Matthias Ehrenfried.

by Divine Providence to succeed his venerated and glorious predecessor as Pope aware of "the increasing duties, solicitude, sorrows and troubles of the present hour of formidable events," the Sovereign Pontiff said, he has often recalled "the holy admonitions of St. Bernard who warned his disciple, become Pope Eugenius III, of the need of thinking of the grave burden rather than of the height of his office."

**Gravity of Present Hour**  
"In the extraordinary gravity of the present hour," His Holiness said, "Our conscience feels the responsibility that binds Us before the eternal High Priest as pastor of the souls entrusted to Us in custody by Him. But the more vividly we feel this responsibility, the more we are consoled and joyful in the knowledge that the mysterious force of Divine Grace cannot fall, even in the midst of the ferment and fury of a world shaken by the fever of a crisis of life and death. It is thus we know that now, more than ever, He is near His Church, its defense and its comfort."

In this tempestuous sea, amid the waves of hate, the waves of love that transport and turn the faithful to the Rock which is Peter's See become the oil that calms the troubled waves and prevents shipwrecks and upheavals. These are promising signs of victory over the tempest of the dawn of salvation and the returning murmur of that placid zephyr, to whose appealing voice no ear can remain closed.

"What occult power teaches millions and millions of souls that the Church of Christ is their joy, health and happiness, the goal of their fidelity, the light of their love? Who teaches them to remain faithful to her when, in not a few places, to share the sentiments of the Church means also to experience her sufferings? Who teaches them to love the Church, to contemplate her as the spouse of Christ, united in sorrows with the Redeemer and therefore the more worthy of fervent and unconditional love?"

"We can thank God that in this violent storm on the human sea He walks upon and dominates the furious waves, and watches and in the darkness guides Peter's Ship, performing with His grace this spiritual miracle of unshakable faith, of serene hope and of strong love day by day in millions of his elect."

With gratitude toward God, we feel intensely also a gratitude toward all those who, cooperating with Divine Grace, are giving the world an example of generosity and greatness of souls which recalls the brave men and heroes of the most beautiful ages of the past. Perhaps never was the peaceful action of these strong, faithful souls for the preservation and the spread of the Kingdom of God so remarkable so vital, so efficacious and vivid with promises as it is today.

**Day Must and Will Come**  
To a Church which abounds in upright champions of truth, models of heroic virtue, luminous guides of spirit, frank and wise moulders of active charity, titles of innocence: to such a Church as God made ready the time when innumerable hearts which have listened to other voices and followed other ideals, or rather false ideals, will turn to her.

"The day must and will come wherein humanity, torn by error and deceit, will be ready to listen with a new interest and a new hope to the Sermon on the Mount. Then this humanity, today more than ever aware of the poverty of its spirit will turn to see in the shining horizon of genuine Christianity, Christ, Light of the World, true God and true Man, whilst the false fires of false prophets will lie spent."

"Then many people of goodwill and clear sight will not fail to understand that the salutary mission of the Church is not a dream of the past, not a mere revival, but is a prolonging of the present that lasts from centuries, that renews itself every day and with itself renews every civilization it accompanies and knows how to perfect."