

**Four Sermons in Defiance
of the Nazis**



**Preached During 1941
by Bishop von Galen of Münster**

Clemens August, Count von Galen

Clemens August, Count von Galen, was born on 16th March 1878 in Burg Dinklage in Oldenburg. As the eleventh of thirteen children he grew up in the safeness of a deeply religious family. He attended the secondary school of the Jesuits in Feldkirch and obtained his leaving certificate at Vechta in 1896.

After studying philosophy at Fribourg (Switzerland) for a short period, he resolved to become a priest. He was a student of theology in Innsbruck and Münster and was ordained on 18th March 1904 in Münster. After his ordination he became first a minor canon of Münster Cathedral. At the same time he was commissioned to accompany his uncle, Suffragan Bishop Maximilian Gereon, Count von Galen, on his journeys to conduct confirmations.

In 1906 he became chaplain of St Matthias' Church in Berlin. This was for him the beginning of 23 years of pastoral work in the capital of the Reich. After several years as curate of St Clement's he was appointed parish priest of St Matthias in 1919. In Berlin he lived through the difficult times of the First World War, the troubled post-war period and a great part of the Weimar Republic. Great demands were made upon him by the diaspora situation in Berlin.

In 1929 Clemens August von Galen was called back into the diocese of Münster and appointed parish priest of St Lambert's Church in Münster. After the death of Bishop Johannes Poggenburg, Clemens August von Galen was made Bishop of Münster. The consecration took place on 28th October 1933. As his motto he chose: „Nec laudibus nec timore“ - „Unconcerned about praise, unaffected by fear“.

Bishop Clemens August commenced his episcopal work by the inauguration of the „Perpetual Adoration“ in the Church of St Servatii in Münster. This is indicative of his deep personal piety, which also found expression in a special veneration of the Virgin Mary. Often, early in the morning, he would pilgrim alone to Telgte, in order to say mass before the image of Our Lady of Sorrows.

Already in his first Lent pastoral letter in 1934 Bishop Clemens August exposed the neo-heathen ideology of National Socialism. Time and again he stood up for the Church's liberty, for that of the church associations, and for the protection of religious education, by presenting petitions to the competent state authorities and by pleading these rights in public speeches and sermons. Above all his numerous journeys through the districts of the diocese to conduct confirmations became - in spite of all the chicanery of the National Socialist Party and the Gestapo - incontestable demonstrations of faith and solidarity. When Alfred Rosenberg in his „Mythos of the Twentieth Century“ attacked the Church and the Christian faith, he assumed the responsibility for a rejoinder written by Catholic men of science, the „Studies Concerning the Mythos“, and had them published as supplement to the gazette of the diocese of Münster.

In a great sermon in Xanten Cathedral, preached in the spring of 1936, Bishop Clemens August accused the National Socialist regime of discriminating Christians because of their faith, of throwing them into prison and even killing them. He said: „There are in Germany new graves which contain the ashes of those upon whom the German people looks as martyrs.“ This sermon had its echo far beyond the frontiers of Germany. Already at that time Bishop Clemens August was prepared for the possibility that even he might be deprived of his liberty and hindered in the execution of his episcopal office.

Bishop Clemens August belonged to those bishops whom Pope Pius XI in January 1937 invited to Rome in order to discuss the situation in Germany and to prepare the encyclical letter „With Burning Anxiety“, which taxed and accused the National Socialist regime before the world public.

Together with the others bishops Bishop Clemens August, in several pastoral letters, stood up against the racial doctrine of the Nazis. In the Fulda conference of bishops he was one of those who demanded that a determined stand be made against National Socialism, and this above all also in public.

In 1941, when the Third Reich had reached its height of power, the state authorities began to confiscate convents and monasteries and to expel the religious. At the same time it transpired that extensive measures were being

taken for the killing of mentally handicapped persons. In three great sermons on 13th and 20th July and on 3rd August the Bishop publicly exposed this outrage upon justice.

In his sermon in St Lambert's Church in Münster on 13th July 1941 he says: „None of us is safe - and may he know that he is the most loyal and conscientious of citizens and may he be conscious of his complete innocence - he cannot be sure that he will not some day be deported from his home, deprived of his freedom and locked up in the cellars and concentration camps of the Gestapo (i. e. the State Secret Police)“. Most emphatically he pointed out: „Justice is the only solid foundation of any state. The right to life, to inviolability, to freedom is an indispensable part of any moral order of society ... We demand justice! If this call remains unheard and unanswered, if the reign of Justice is not restored, then our German people and our country - in spite of the heroism of our soldiers and the glorious victories they have won - will perish through an inner rottenness and decay.“

In a sermon in the Liebfrauenkirche in Münster on 20th July 1941 he once more turned against the unjust encroachments through the state: „Become hard! Remain firm! We see and experience clearly what lies behind the new doctrines which have for years been forced on us, for the sake of which religion has been banned from the schools, our organisations have been suppressed and now Catholic kindergartens are about to be abolished - there is a deep-seated hatred of Christianity, which they are determined to destroy ... Become hard! Remain firm! At this moment we are the anvil rather than the hammer ... ask the blacksmith and hear what he says: the object which is forged on the anvil receives its form not alone from the hammer but also from the anvil. The anvil cannot and need not strike back; it must only be firm, only hard! If it is sufficiently tough and firm and hard the anvil usually lasts longer than the hammer. However hard the hammer strikes, the anvil stands quietly and firmly in place and will long continue to shape the objects forged upon it.“

On 3rd August 1941 in St. Lambert's Church Bishop Clemens August accused the Nazi regime of murdering mentally handicapped persons. He points out that his written protests and appeals had been of no avail. „We must expect, therefore, that the poor defenceless patients are, sooner or

later, going to be killed. Why? ... because in the judgement of some official body, on the decision of some committee, they have become „unworthy to live“, because they are classed as „unproductive members of the national community“. The judgment is that they can no longer produce any goods: they are like an old piece of machinery which no longer works, like an old horse which has become incurably lame, like a cow which no longer gives any milk. What happens to an old piece of machinery? It is thrown on the scrapheap. What happens to a lame horse, an unproductive cow? I will not pursue the comparison to the end - so fearful is its appropriateness and its illuminating power ... If it is once admitted that men have the right to kill „unproductive“ fellow-men - even though it is at present applied only to poor and defenceless mentally ill patients - then the way is open for the murder of all unproductive men and women: the incurably ill, those disabled in industry or war. The way is open, indeed, for the murder of all of us, when we become old and infirm and therefore unproductive“.

Far and wide the sermons of the Bishop created a sensation. They were secretly duplicated and passed on far beyond the frontiers of Germany. After having preached these sermons the Bishop was prepared to be arrested by the Gestapo. It was Reichsleiter Bormann who suggested to Hitler, that the Bishop should be taken into custody and be hanged. The Nazi command, however, feared that in such a case the population of the diocese of Münster had to be written off as lost for the duration of the war. The Bishop was deeply dejected when in his place 24 secular priests and 13 members of the regular clergy were deported into concentration camps, of whom 10 lost their lives.

The war destroyed the Cathedral and the Bishop's house. During the last months of the ending war, when the City of Münster was almost completely demolished, he found a home in St Joseph's Foundation in Sendenhorst.

In the troubled months of the post-war period Bishop Clemens August was a personality who instilled new courage into many. With courageous frankness he faced the military government, if some hardship or injustice was to be removed or prevented. With emphasis he pronounced against the at that time circulating verdict of the collective guilt of the Germans.

On 18th February 1946 Pope Pius XII appointed the Bishop to the College of Cardinals, an honourable distinction for his fearless resistance against National Socialism. In Rome the crowded St Peter's Church rang with applause, when the „Lion of Münster“ received the cardinalate from the hands of the Pope.

On his return on 16th March Cardinal von Galen was enthusiastically welcomed by a great crowd of people. In front of his destroyed Cathedral he made his last speech. One day later he fell seriously ill. An operation could not save his life. He died on 22nd March 1946 and was laid to rest in St Ludger's Chapel amidst the ruins of his Cathedral.

At the Bishop's death the president of the regional association of the Jewish communities wrote to the Capitular Vicar in Münster:

„Cardinal von Galen was one of the few upright and conscientious men who fought against racialism in a most difficult time. We shall always honour the memory of the deceased Bishop.“

On 22nd October 1956 Bishop Michael Keller initiated the process for beatification for his predecessor at the request of the „Confraternitas Sacerdotum Bonae Voluntatis“, a brotherhood of priests. On the occasion of his second journey to Germany Pope John Paul II visited Münster Cathedral on 1st May 1987 in order to honour the outstanding personality of the Cardinal and to pray at his tomb.

† Reinhard Lettmann
Bishop of Münster



Sermon by Bishop Clemens August von Galen.
Xanten, 9th February, 1936.

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I have just consecrated a new altar in your venerable and splendid cathedral, in a small space deep beneath the choir. But why? Your church is already so richly endowed with altars.

You know the answer. The researches of the past few years have given proof that there below us lies a holy and particularly venerable place. Not only has the tradition been substantiated, according to which several previous churches were said to stand on the site of this present church, the oldest of them dating back to the time of the martyrs, to the fourth century A.D. We are also provided with fresh evidence that holy martyrs, who with their blood bore witness to Christ, were interred here, to await the resurrection. We believe in the resurrection of the body. Christ's words have given us this promise: The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. Whosoever does not believe in the independent life of the individual soul, in its continued existence after the death of the body, in its reunification with the body and in life everlasting, this man is no true Christian. We hold these beliefs, because we believe in Christ, who is the truth. Because we hold fast to the beliefs of the Apostles and of our Christian forebears. The entire history of your city, speaking to you through the its towering churches, which are monuments in stone, proclaiming itself in the stones found lying beneath them, is evidence of our faith.

In confession of that faith St. Victor and his companions, and likely also those men whose mortal remains have now been found, shed their blood. It is clear that their grave has not been opened, has been disturbed by nobody, since the wooden coffin in which, notably, both bodies were laid was interred, around sixteen hundred years ago. Thus it has been possible to establish „with a probability bordering on certainty“, according to the testimony of highly respected and expert scholars at the University of Bonn, that the two men died a violent death, and that what remains for us to see of the wounding and shattering of their limbs is in the main attributable to wounds and torture inflicted before their deaths, which led to their deaths. Above this ancient and newly discovered double grave, lying deep beneath

the floor of the present Cathedral, you, out of love, have erected an altar, which I have just now consecrated, and upon which the sacrifice of the New Covenant has just been celebrated for the first time. We have offered it up to the glory of God, in thanks for His Divine favours, in atonement for our sins, to beseech Him for His blessing upon us, upon your town, our diocese, the German people and our country. We have also offered it up in remembrance and adoration of the beloved saints, especially those who found in this spot their last earthly resting place, and who slumber here awaiting the glorious resurrection. The glorious resurrection. „The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.“ (John 5, 28) Will these two men rise again at the resurrection?

Had we been present at their martyrdom and torture, and at their terrible death, and had we been able to ask those who sat in judgement upon them, and their henchmen who with their iron clubs broke their bones and perhaps with one terrible heave struck the deathblow, if these men had done good or done evil, we would have received the answer that they had to die, at the Emperor's command, because they stubbornly refused to honour and worship deities created by men and acknowledged by the state; because the only God of whom they would confess their recognition was a transcendent God who reigned in fatherly love over all earth's people.

Perhaps it was feared that these men, who were probably, like St. Victor, soldiers serving under Roman command, here to defend the Rhine border against Germanic tribes pressing in from the east, would not be sufficiently dependable fighters against the german enemy, seeing them also as children of the same heavenly Father, made equally in the image of God. Foolish fear! For genuine Christians have always been the most loyal of citizens, the most reliable public servants, the most courageous soldiers among their people. Their loyalty, their reliability, their courage is not only founded upon a naturally good predisposition, upon goodwill, be it e'er so weak, upon conscious efforts to guard their honour in the sight of other men, to avoid punishment on this earth, perhaps to gain of others respect, recognition and reward. True Christians are aware that loyal fulfilment of their duty as citizens, as public servants, as soldiers, is an exercise of virtue which God,

our supreme Lord, demands of them unreservedly, regardless of witness, recognition or reward by other men, but throughout which they are supported by God in his goodness, with the help of His divine grace. The Christian looks beyond reward, praise and fame after death, all be they worthy worldly possessions, because he knows all these to be small and slight and undependable and finite compared to the hundredfold reward, the honour and glory which God almighty bestows upon them who in accordance with Christ's word have been found faithful in the face of the ephemeral.

Thus did the Christian confessors and martyrs think and act. You know that many martyrs of the Catholic church have been drawn from the ranks of brave soldiers: St. Theodore, St. George, St. Sebastian, St. Mauritius, Cassius and Florentinus, Gereon, and your own St. Victor, with whom according to legend all the officers and men of their legion suffered martyrdom for the sake of Christ. They allowed themselves to be mown down by their heathen comrades, without defending themselves or offering resistance. The swords which they had so heroically wielded in the heat of battle for their emperor and their fatherland they did not draw against their comrades who on the orders of the emperor fell upon them like enemies, to massacre them. In them they saw not enemies, but misguided friends. They did not fight the emperor, rather they obeyed the emperor unto death. For it was the emperor who ordered that they must either sacrifice to the idols or die. Because they could not offer up that sacrifice without sinning, they chose to die, in order not to sin. Is that not faithfulness? Is that not heroism? Is that not courage in the service of the emperor, and in the service of God even unto death?

Christ our Lord, the King of kings, and Ruler of rulers, our only judge and He who shall mete out our eternal reward, declared them saints, these warriors loyal unto death. For he says: „Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of Heaven.“
Theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

From the torture bench, from their place of execution, from the hands of their bloodstained executioner, where they left behind their transitory, mutilated, lifeless bodies, their souls ascended and were taken up into Heaven,

into the eternal realm of the living God. On the Day of Judgement they will also once again take possession of their mortal dust, the sometime habitation, place of work and place of suffering of their heroic souls, their bodies, their bones and relics, because these too shall be rewarded, transfigured, granted eternal bliss. „The hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the son of God. And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life.“

In this place also, in this Cathedral, shall this wonder come to pass. The saints will arise in glory. That was their belief, their faith, and their sure hope of victory during their torture and death. That was also the belief of the Christians of that time who, with deep emotion and joyful solemnity, witnessed that martyrdom, and who afterwards collected up the bloody, shattered, disfigured remains, bore them away, and reverently interred them in a common shrine. That was the belief of the Christian era that followed soon after, of the Christianised Romans, and even more so of your forefathers, the Frankish Germans, who settled here and erected one church after the other, each more magnificent than the last, over these martyrs' graves. That is why they called this place „Ad sanctos“, „by the saints“, Xanten. Here, for more than fifteen hundred years without interruption, the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass has been offered up, the renewal of Christ's most sacred, obediently suffered sacrificial death, whence all martyrdom, all Christian devotion, courage, self-sacrifice, have gained their worth and effect. The love of Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, and the devotion of the martyrs, who gave themselves for Christ, have in this place throughout the ages roused and inspired your forefathers to devotion, courage and self-sacrifice for God and the highest good. Emulate them!

Yes, emulate them! For the sake of your souls, of your children, of our people. We too are called, are bound through the faithful fulfilment of duty to our family, our occupation, our community, based upon the fear of God and the love of God, to serve God and the kingdom of God on earth, our fellow beings, our nation and the state, as did the holy martyrs. We have been chosen to swell the glorious ranks of the saints, one day to belong with them in Heaven. And if in consequence we are misjudged, despised, slandered, reviled, even persecuted, tortured and killed, „Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of

evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.“

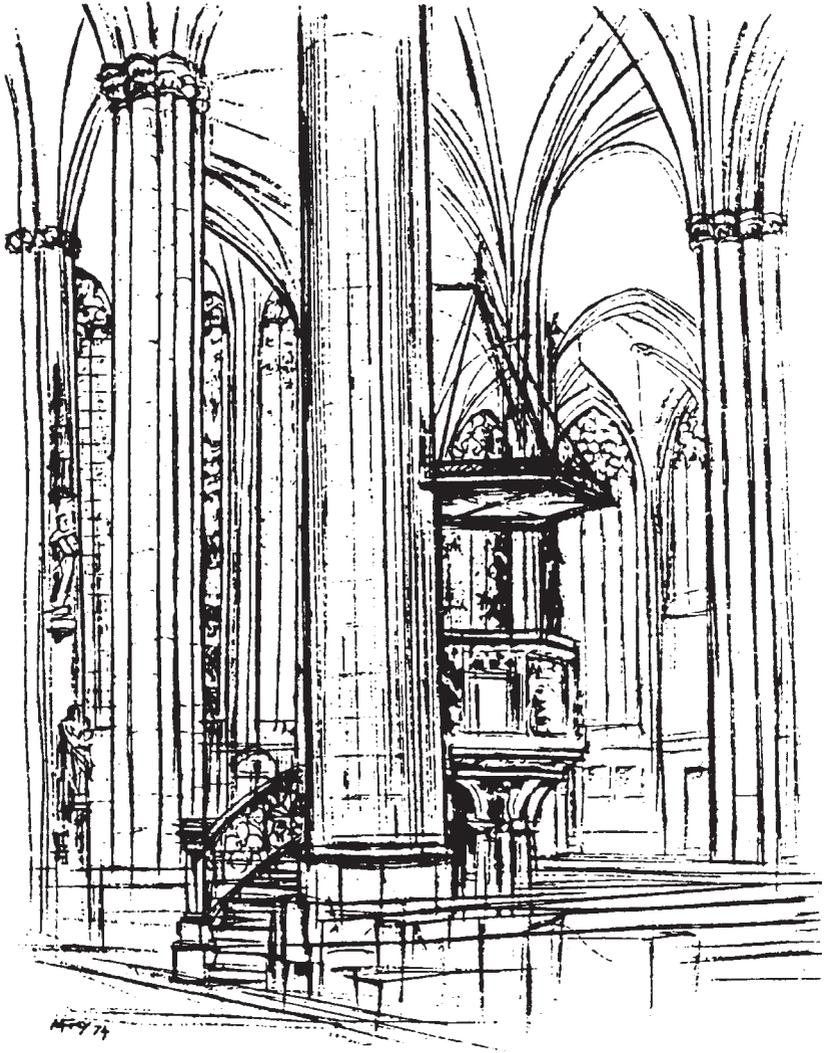
Yes, rejoice and be exceeding glad! You know that the time is come when not a few of us will be granted such a portion. How are the holy church, the Pope, the bishops, the priests, the members of religious orders, how are the faithful children of the church in Germany disparaged, defamed, derided, publicly and without saction. How many Catholics, priests and laity, have been attacked and abused in newspapers and in meetings, have been driven out of their professions and positions, and have without due process of law been imprisoned and maltreated. The head of the episcopal information service in Berlin, Canon Dr. Banasch, has for months been languishing in prison, and at no stage have his superiors the Bishops been informed of any charges against him. The Bishops'appointed leader of the Young Men's Association, Msgr. Wolker, was arrested three days ago, and how long will it be before he is able to prove his innocence before an independent German court? There are in Germany fresh graves, in which rest the ashes of such as the Catholic people hold to be martyrs of their faith, because their lives are a testimony of the most faithful fulfilment of duty to God and the fatherland, nation and church, and because their deaths are shrouded in closely guarded mystery. And how often does the heaviest burden of conscience weigh upon public servants and employees, parents and teachers, who are faced with having to chose between faithfulness to God and their Christian conscience and winning the pleasure and favour of those upon whom their position and whole livelihood depend!

Do not be surprised if the good Lord sends us times of trial. Our church is the church of martyrs. If you question how matters can come to such a pass, the answer lies in the words of our Saviour when he said: „If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.“ (John 15,18). „The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you,

that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.“ (John 16, 2).

The answer to this question lies also in the sacrificial death, the death by martyrdom, the heroic death of Jesus Christ, who submitted himself obediently to an earthly judge, acknowledging before him that the power authorised him by his position stemmed from God; and who then, in order that the truth he preached, that his claim to be the Son of God and the King of Creation, might be recognised, freely accepted the death sentence, humiliation and prison and captivity and the crown of thorns and finally crucifixion. We celebrate his memory, and the bloodless renewal of his self-sacrificial and bloody death, in every holy mass said over the relics of holy martyrs, who, like St. Stephen, gave thanks with their deaths unto him who, through his death, purchased life for us all. Since then the sign of the cross, once a sign of ignominy, has become a symbol of victory and triumph; yea, a pledge of God's grace and of His choosing of us for Heaven. For St. Paul assures us: „If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.“ (Romans 8, 17).

Like Christ, like the Apostles, like the holy martyrs, we are obedient to authority, loyal to our nation, conscientious in our occupations, at work, in our families, in the community, willing to sacrifice ourselves, even to give our lives, like St. Victor and all soldiers, like our brave soldiers who in the World War by the thousand staked their lives and sacrificed them for the german fatherland. But when we, like those saints, are confronted with the choice between earthly happiness and confession of the faith, the choice between the service of God and death, then, like our brave exemplars, we will with God's grace stand fast in our faith, for like them we would rather go to our deaths than commit a sin. May today's celebration and the memory of the holy heroes of our faith whose remains are enclosed in this cathedral, may the power of the holy sacrifice on the cross, which we now reverently celebrate together in the holy mass, strengthen us all in this sacred resolve, so that one day that which Christ promised those who follow him on the glorious way of the cross shall be true for us all: „Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.“



*Sermon by the Bishop of Münster, Clemens August Count von Galen,
on Sunday 13 th July 1941 in St. Lambert's Münster*

Sunday 13 th July 1941 in St. Lambert's Münster

My dear Catholics of St. Lambert's:

I have longed to read personally from the pulpit of this church today my pastoral letter on the events of the past week and in particular to express to you, my former parishioners, my deep-felt sympathy. In some part of the city, the devastation and loss have been particularly great. I hope that by the action of the municipal and government authorities responsible, and above all by your brotherly love and the collections taken today for the work of the Caritas Union and the Parish Caritas, some of the hardship and suffering will be relieved. I had in mind also, however, to add a brief word on the meaning of the divine visitation: how God thus seeks us in order to lead us home to Him. God wants to lead Münster home to Him. How much at home were our forefathers with God and in God's Holy Church! How thoroughly were their lives - their public life, their family life, and even their commercial life - supported by faith in God, directed by the holy fear of God and by the love of God! Has it always been like that in our own day? God wants to lead Münster home to Him!

Concerning this I had meant to put some further reflections before you. But this I cannot do today, for I find myself compelled to openly and in public speak of something else - a shattering event which came upon us yesterday, at the end of this week of calamity.

The whole of Münster is still suffering from the shock of the horrible devastation inflicted on us by the enemy from without during the past week. Then yesterday, at the end of this week - yesterday, 12th July - the State Secret Police [i. e. Gestapo] confiscated the two residences of the Society of Jesus in our city, Haus Sentmaring in the Weseler Strasse and the Ignatius-Haus in Königstrasse, expelled the occupants from their property and forced the fathers and lay brothers to depart without delay on that very day, not merely from their residences, not merely from the city of Münster but from the provinces of Westphalia and the Rhineland. Yesterday, too, the same cruel fate was inflicted on the missionary sisters of the Immaculate Conception in Steinfurter Strasse, Wilkinghege. Even their convent was seized and the nuns are being expelled from Westphalia: they have to leave

Münster by 6 o'clock this evening. The premises and possessions of these religious orders are confiscated and assigned to the authorities of the Gau [i. e. administrative district] of Northern Westphalia.

Thus the attack on the religious orders which has long been raging in Austria, South Germany and the newly acquired territories of the Warthegau, Luxembourg, Lorraine and other parts of the Reich, has now stricken Westphalia. We must be prepared that in the near future such terrifying news will accumulate - that even here one religious house after another will be confiscated by the Gestapo and that its occupants, our brothers and sisters, children of our families, loyal German citizens, will be thrown on to the street like outlawed helots and hunted out of the country, like vermin.

And this is happening at a time when we are in utmost fear and terror of further nightly air-raids which may kill us all or make us homeless refugees! Even at such a time innocent and deserving men and women, who are greatly esteemed by countless people, are expelled from their humble possessions; at such a time fellow Germans, fellow-citizens of Münster, are made homeless refugees.

Why? They tell me, „for reasons of state policy“. No other reasons have been given. No occupant of these religious houses has been accused of any offence or crime; not one has been brought before a court, still less found guilty. If any one of them were guilty, let him be brought to justice; but is one also to punish the innocent?

I ask you, under whose eyes the Jesuit fathers and the sisters of the Immaculate Conception for many years have been leading their quiet lives dedicated solely to the glory of God and the salvation of their fellow-men - I ask you: who holds these men and women to be guilty of an offence meriting punishment? Who dares to level any charge against them? If any dare, let him prove his assertion! Not even the Gestapo has made any such charge, let alone a court or the public prosecutor.

Here I testify publicly, as the bishop who is responsible for the supervision of the religious orders, that I have the greatest respect für the quiet, humble missionary sisters of Wilkinghege who are being expelled today. They have

been founded by my esteemed friend Bishop P. Amandus Bahlmann, mainly for missionary service in Brazil. There he worked himself, and his untiring and fruitful activities - not least in the name of German culture and civilization - lasted until his death three years ago.

I testify as a German and a bishop that I have the greatest respect and reverence for the Jesuit order, which I have known from the closest observation since my early youth for the last fifty years, that I remain bound in love and gratitude until my last breath to the Society of Jesus, my teachers, tutors and friends, and that today I have all the greater reverence for them, at a moment when Christ's prophecy to his disciples is once again fulfilled: „If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.“

And so from this place, speaking also in the name of the true Catholics of the city and diocese of Münster, I greet with profound love those who have been chosen by Christ and are hated by the world as they go into unmerited banishment. May God reward them for all the good they have done for us! May God not punish us and our city for the unjust treatment and banishment which here has been meted out to His faithful disciples. May God's omnipotence soon return to us these our beloved banished brothers and sisters!

My dear diocesans! Because of the heavy visitation brought on us by enemy air-raids I originally resolved to keep silent in public about certain recent acts of the Gestapo which simply called for some public protest on my part. But when the Gestapo pay no heed to the events which have made hundreds of our fellow-citizens homeless, when they at this very moment continue to throw innocent fellow-citizens on to the street and to expel them from the country, then I must no longer hesitate to give public expression to my justified protest and my solemn warning.

Many times, and again quite recently, we have seen the Gestapo arresting blameless and highly respected German men and women without the judgment of any court or any opportunity for defence, depriving them of their freedom, taking them away from their homes interning them

somewhere. In recent weeks even two members of my closest council, the chapter of our Cathedral, have been suddenly seized from their homes by the Gestapo, removed from Münster and banished to distant places. Since then I have received no reply whatever to the protests which I addressed to the Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs. But it has at any rate been established by telephone enquiries to the Gestapo that neither of the canons has been accused, or is suspected, of any punishable offence. Without any guilt on their part, they have incurred the penalty of banishment, without any charge against them and without any opportunity to defend themselves!

My Christians, hear what I say! It has been officially confirmed that Canons Vorwerk and Echelmeyer are accused of no crime. They have done nothing meriting punishment. And yet they have been punished with banishment.

And why? Because I did something that did not please the government. Of the four appointments of canons made in the past two years the government informed me that they objected to three. Since the Prussian Concordat of 1929 expressly excludes any right of objection by the government, I confirmed the appointment in two of the cases. In doing so I committed no wrong, but merely exercised my established right, as I can prove at any time. Let them bring me to court if they think that I have acted contrary to law. I am sure that no independent German court could condemn me for my actions in the appointment of these canons. Was it because of this that the matter was handled not by a court but by the Gestapo, whose actions in the German Reich are unfortunately not subject to any judicial review? Against the superior physical power of the Gestapo every German citizen is entirely without protection or defence. Entirely without protection or defence!

In recent years many Germans have experienced this in their own person, like our beloved teacher of religion Friedrichs, who is held prisoner without any legal process or sentence, like the two canons who are now living in banishment; and again it is experienced by those religious orders who yesterday and today have been suddenly expelled from their property, their city and their province.

None of us is safe - and may he know that he is the most loyal and conscientious of citizens and may he be conscious of his complete innocence

- he cannot be sure that he will not some day be deported from his home, deprived of his freedom and locked up in the cellars and concentration camps of the Gestapo.

I am aware of the fact: This can happen also to me, today or some other day. And because then I shall not be able to speak in public any longer, I will speak publicly today, publicly I will warn against the continuance in a course which I am firmly convinced will bring down God's judgment on men and must lead to disaster and ruin for our people and our country.

When I protest against these actions and these punishments by the Gestapo, when I call publicly for an end to this state of affairs and for the judicial review or reversal of all actions by the Gestapo, I do no more than Governor-General and Reichsminister Dr. Hans Frank has done, writing in January of this year in the Journal of the Academy of German Law (2,1941,p.25):

„We desire to achieve a well-balanced system of internal order in which penal law does not degenerate into the absolute authority of the prosecution over an accused person who is condemned in advance and deprived of any means of defence ... The law must offer the individual the legal opportunity of defending himself, of establishing the facts and thus securing himself against arbitrariness and injustice ... Otherwise we had better speak not of penal law but of penal authority ... It is impossible to reconcile the fabric of law with a sentence pronounced without any defence ... It is our task to proclaim, - no less loudly and with no less emphasis than others defend authority in every form - that we have courageously to assert the authority of the law as an essential element in any enduring power.“

These are the words of Reichsminister Dr. Hans Frank.

I am conscious that as a bishop, a promulgator and defender of the legal and moral order willed by God and granting to each individual rights and freedoms to which, by God's will, all human claims must give way, I am called upon, no less than Reichsminister Frank, courageously to assert the authority of the law and to denounce the condemnation of innocent men, who are without any defence, as an injustice crying out to heaven.

My Christians! The imprisonment of many blameless persons without any opportunity for defence or any judgment of a court, the deprivation of the

liberty of the two canons, the closing of religious houses and the eviction of guiltless religious, our brothers and sisters, compel me today to publicly recall an old and unshakeable truth, „Justitia est fundamentum regnorum“ Justice is the only solid foundation of any state.

The right to life, to inviolability, to freedom is an indispensable part of any moral order of society. It is true that the state is entitled to restrict these rights as a penal measure against its citizens, but the state is only entitled to do so against those who have broken the law and whose guilt has been established in an impartial judicial process. A state which transgresses this boundary laid down by God and permits or causes innocent persons to be punished is undermining its own authority and the respect for its sovereignty in the conscience of its citizens.

Unfortunately, however, we have repeatedly seen in recent years how penalties of greater or lesser severity, usually involving terms of imprisonment, have been imposed and carried out without the victim's guilt having been proved in a regular court of law and without giving him any opportunity of asserting his right to prove his innocence. How many Germans are now languishing in police custody or in concentration camps, how many have been driven from home, who have never been sentenced by a regular court or how numerous are those who have been freed by the court or released after serving their sentence and have then been re-arrested and held in confinement by the Gestapo! How many have been expelled from their home town and the town where they worked! Here again I remind you of the venerable bishop of Rottenburg, Johann Baptist Sproll, an old man of 70, who not long ago had to celebrate his 25th jubilee as a bishop far away from his diocese, from which the Gestapo had banned him three years ago.

I mention again the names of our two canons, Vorwerk and Echelmeyer. And I commemorate our venerable teacher of religion Friedrichs, now in a concentration camp.

I will forbear to mention any other names today. The name of a Protestant minister who served Germany in the first world war as a German officer and submarine commander, who later worked as a Protestant

clergyman in Münster and for some years now has been deprived of his liberty, is well known to you, and we all have the greatest respect for this noble German's courage and steadfastness in professing his faith.

From this example you will see, my Christians, that I am not talking about a matter of purely Catholic concern but about a matter of Christian concern, indeed of general human and national concern. „Justice is the foundation of all states!“ We lament, we observe with the greatest anxiety that this foundation is nowadays shaken, that justice - the natural and Christian virtue which is indispensable for the ordered existence of any human community - is not maintained and held in honour in a for everybody unequivocally recognizable way. It is not only for the sake of the Church's rights but also out of love for our people and in grave concern for our country that we beg, we appeal, we demand: Justice! Who must not fear for the existence of a house when he sees that its foundations are being undermined? „Justice is the foundation of all states!“

The state can take action with honesty and any prospect of enduring success, against the misuse of power by those whom chance has made stronger, against the oppression of the weak and their debasement to the mean employments of a slave, only if those who hold the powers of the state submit in reverence to the royal majesty of Justice and wield the sword of punishment in the service of Justice alone.

No holder of authority can expect to command the loyalty and willing service of honourable men unless his actions and penal decisions prove in an impartial judgment to be free from any element of arbitrariness and weighed on the incorruptible scales of Justice.

Accordingly the practice of condemning and punishing men who are given no chance of defence and without any judicial sentence, - in Reichsminister Dr Frank's words: the prosecution of an accused person who is condemned in advance and deprived of any means of defence - engenders a feeling of legal defencelessness and an attitude of apprehensive timidity and subservient cowardice, which must in the long run deprave the national character and destroy the national community.

That is the conviction and anxiety of all honest Germans. It was given open and courageous expression by a high legal officer in the National Administration Paper in 1937:

„The greater the power of a public authority, the more necessary is a guarantee of the impeccable use of that power; for the more deeply felt are the mistakes that are made, and the greater is the danger of arbitrariness and abuse of power. If there is no possibility of redress by an administrative tribunal there must be in each case some regular means of providing a form of control which is as impartial as possible, so as to leave no room for the feeling of legal defencelessness, which in the course of time must gravely jeopardise the national community“ (Herbert Schelcher, President of the Supreme Administrative Court of Saxony, Dresden: National Administration Paper [i. e. Reichsverwaltungsblatt], 1937, p. 572).

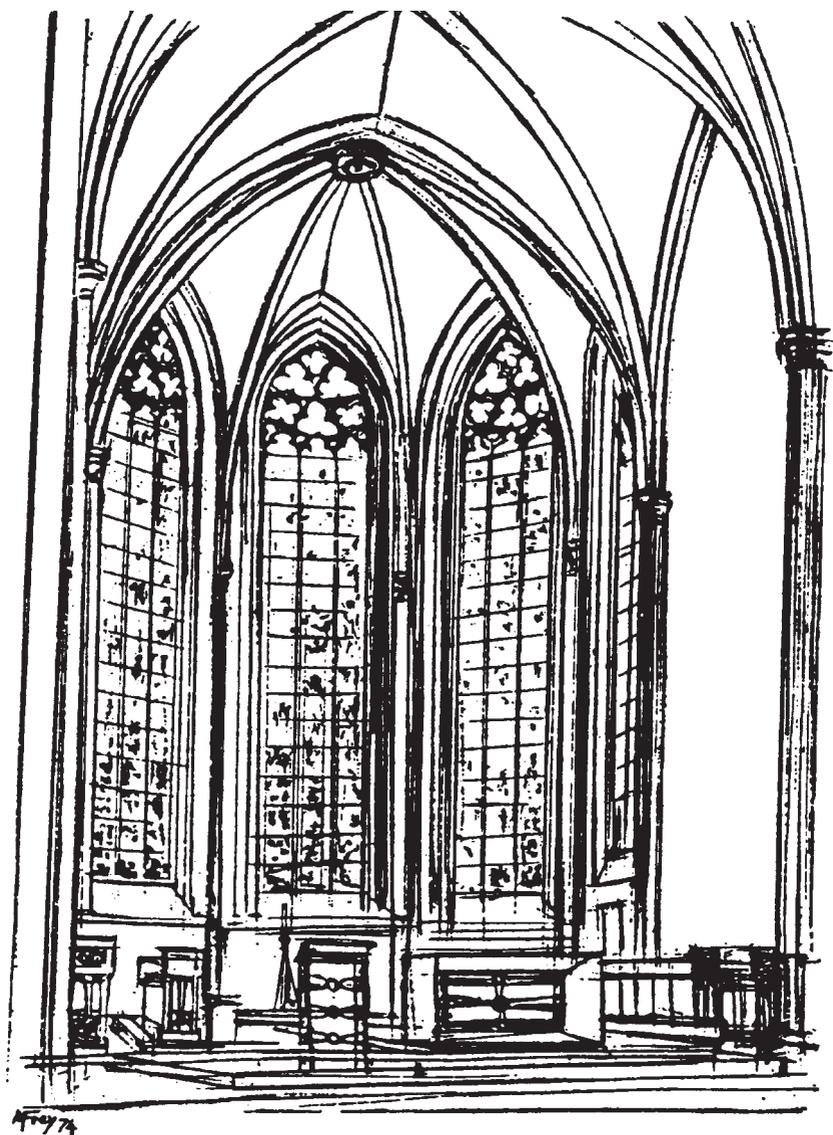
The orders and penal decisions of the Gestapo are not open to redress by any administrative tribunal. Since none of us know of any means of achieving impartial control over the actions and persecutions of the Gestapo, the restrictions they impose on men's freedom, their banishment and arrest and their imprisonment of German men and women in concentration camps, there is by now among our people a widespread feeling of defencelessness, even of cowardly apprehension, which does grave harm to the national community. The duty imposed on me by my episcopal office to speak up for the moral order, by the oath which I swore before God and the representative of the government to „ward off“, to the best of my ability, „any harm which might threaten the German people“, this duty compels me, in the face of the Gestapo's actions, to state this fact and pronounce this public warning.

My Christians! It will perhaps be held against me that by this frank statement I am weakening the home front of the German people during this war.

I, on the contrary, say this: It is not I who am responsible for a possible weakening of the home front, but those who regardless of the war, regardless of this fearful week of terrible air-raids, impose heavy punishments on innocent people without the judgment of a court or any possibility of defence, who evict our religious orders, our brothers and sisters, from their property, throw them on to the street, drive them out of their own country. They destroy men's security under the law, they undermine trust in law, they destroy men's confidence in our government. And therefore I raise my voice in the name of the upright German people, in the name of the majesty

of Justice, in the interests of peace and the solidarity of the home front; therefore as a German, an honourable citizen, a representative of the Christian religion, a Catholic bishop, I exclaim: we demand justice! If this call remains unheard and unanswered, if the reign of Justice is not restored, then our German people and our country - in spite of the heroism of our soldiers and the glorious victories they have won - will perish through an inner rottenness and decay.

Let us pray for all who are in trouble, particularly for our banished religious orders, for our city of Münster, that God may preserve us from further trials; for our German people and fatherland and for its leader.



Sermon by the Bishop of Münster, Clemens August Count von Galen,
on Sunday 20th July 1941 in the Liebfrauenkirche, Münster

Sermon on Sunday 20th July 1941

Today the collection which I ordered for the inhabitants of the city of Münster is held in all the parishes in the diocese of Münster which have not themselves suffered war damage. I hope that through the efforts of the state and municipal authorities responsible and the brotherly help of the Catholics of this diocese, whose contributions will be administered and distributed by the offices of the Caritas, much need will be alleviated.

Thanks be to God, for several days our city has not suffered any new enemy attacks from without. But I am distressed to have to inform you that the attacks by our opponents within the country, of the beginning of which I spoke last Sunday in St. Lambert's, that these attacks have continued, regardless of our protests, regardless of the anguish this causes to the victims of the attacks and those connected with them.

Last Sunday I lamented, and branded as an injustice crying out to heaven, the action of the Gestapo in closing the convent in Wilkinghege and the Jesuit residences in Münster, confiscating their property and possessions, putting the occupants into the street and expelling them from their home area. The convent of Our Lady of Lourdes in Frauenstrasse was also seized by the Gau authorities. I did not then know that on the same day, Sunday 13th July, the Gestapo had occupied the Kamilluskolleg in Sudmühle and the Benedictine abbey of Gerleve near Coesfeld and expelled the fathers and lay brothers. They were forced to leave Westphalia that very day. On 15th July the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Vinnenberg, near Warendorf, were expelled from their convent and from the province. On 17th July the Sisters of the Cross were driven out of their convent, Haus Aspel in Rees, and forced to leave the district of Rees. Had not Christian love shown compassion for all these homeless ones, these men and women would have been exposed to hunger and the rigours of the weather.

Then a few hours ago I learned the sad news that yesterday, 19th July, at the end of this second terrible week in our region of Münster, the Gestapo occupied, confiscated and expropriated the administrative centre of the German province of the Holy Heart of Jesus, the great missionary house at Hiltrup, which is well known to you all. The fathers and lay brothers still living there were given until 8 o'clock yesterday evening to leave their

residence and their possessions. They too are expelled from Westphalia and the province of Rhineland.

The fathers and lay brothers still living there: I do emphasise these words, for, as I happened to learn recently, 161 men from the ranks of the Hiltrup missionaries are serving as German soldiers in the field, some of them directly in face of the enemy; 53 fathers are caring for the wounded as medical orderlies, and 42 theologians and 66 lay brothers are serving their country as soldiers, some having been decorated with the Iron Cross and other distinctions. The same can be said of the Kamillus fathers of Sudmühle, the Jesuits of Sentmaring and the Benedictines of Gerleve. While these German men are fighting for their country in accordance with their duty and in loyal comradeship with other German brothers, at the risk of their lives, they are being deprived, ruthlessly and without any basis in law, of their home, their parent monastery is being destroyed. When, as we hope, they return victorious they will find their monastic family driven from house and home and their home occupied by strangers, by enemies!

How is this going to end? It is not a question of providing temporary accommodation for homeless inhabitants of Münster. The religious orders were very ready to reduce their own accommodation requirements to the minimum in order to take in and care immediately for those made homeless. No: that was not the reason. I have heard that the convent of the Immaculate Conception in Wilkinghege is occupied by the Gau film unit. I am told that a maternity home for unmarried mothers is installed in the Benedictine abbey. I have not yet learned what is happening to Sentmaring, Sudmühle and Vinnenberg. And no newspaper has so far carried any account of the safe victories won by the Gestapo in recent days over defenceless men and unprotected women, of the conquests made at home by the Gau authorities of the property of fellow Germans.

On Monday 14th July I called on the President of the Regional Council and asked for protection for the freedom and property of innocent German citizens. He told me that the Gestapo was a completely independent authority with whose actions he could not interfere. He promised, however, that he would at once convey my complaints and my requests to the Senior President and Gauleiter, Dr. Meyer. To no avail.

On the same day I sent a telegram to the Führer's Chancellery of the Reich in Berlin, in the following terms.

„After a series of terrible nightly air attacks from 6th July onwards, in which the enemy has sought to destroy the city of Münster, the Gestapo began on 12th July to seize religious houses in the city and surrounding area and to make them over, along with their contents, to the Gau authorities. The occupants, innocent men and women, honourable members of German families, whose relatives are fighting for Germany as soldiers, are robbed of their homes and possessions, thrown into the street, driven out of the province. I ask the Führer and Reichskanzler, in the interest of justice and the solidarity of the home front, for the protection of the freedom and property of these honourable German men and women against the arbitrary actions of the Gestapo.“

I addressed similar requests by telegram to the Governor of Prussia, Marshal Göring, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs and the Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht. I hoped that, if not considerations of justice, at any rate a recognition of the consequences for the solidarity of the home front in wartime would move these authorities to put a stop to the action taken by the Gestapo against our brothers and sisters, and that innocent German women would not be refused chivalrous protection. It was a vain hope. The action continued, and the situation which I had long foreseen and of which I spoke last Sunday has now come to pass: we are faced with the ruins of the inner national community of our people, which in the last few days has been ruthlessly shattered.

I urgently pointed out to the President of the Regional Council, the ministers and the Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht that these acts of violence against blameless German men and this brutal treatment of defenceless German women, which make a mockery of all chivalry and can arise only from deep-seated hatred of the Christian religion and the Catholic Church, that these machinations are sabotaging and destroying the national community of our people. For how can there be any feeling of community with the men who are driving our religious, our brothers and sisters, as easy victims out of the country, without any basis in law, without any investigations, without any possibility of defence and without any judgment by a court?

No! With them and with all those responsible for these actions I cannot possibly have any community of thought or feeling. I shall not hate them; I wish from my heart that they may gain a new insight and mend their ways.

In this spirit I also at once said a prayer for the soul of Ministerialdirigent [i. e. Assitant Secretary] Roth, who died suddenly on 5th July. He was a Catholic priest, originally in the archdiocese of Munich, who worked for years, without the permission and against the will of the bishop, as an official in the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs, composing and signing many documents which encroached on the Church's rights and injured the Church's dignity. And now he has been drowned during a boat trip on the river Inn. May God have mercy upon his poor soul!

Thus, in accordance with our Saviour's command, we will pray for all who persecute us and slander us. But as long as they do not change, als long as they continue to rob and banish and imprison innocent people, so lang do I refuse any community with them.

No: the community of convictions and aspirations in our people has been irreparably destroyed, against our will and regardless of our warnings. I cannot believe that our long-established citizenry and farmers, craftsmen and workers, that our women, that our fathers and brothers and sons, who even now are risking their lives for Germany at the front, can have any community of convictions with those who have persecuted and turned out our religious orders.

We shall obey them in so far as they are entitled to give us orders as representatives of the lawful authorities. But it must be impossible for us to have a community of convictions, a sense of inner solidarity, with these persecutors of the Church, these invaders of religious houses, who expel defenceless women from their convents, the children of our best families, our sisters, many of whom have lived there for decades in work and prayer, doing nothing but good for our people. I should feel ashamed before God and before you, I should feel ashamed before our noble German forefathers, before my own late father, who was a chivalrous man and brought up, admonished and taught my brothers and me sternly to show the most delicate respect to every woman or girl, to afford chivalrous protection to all the unjustly oppressed, particularly to women as the images of our own mothers, and of the beloved Mother of God herself in heaven, if I had any

community with those who drive innocent and defenceless women out of house and home and drive them out of their country without shelter and without resources! Moreover, as I showed last Sunday in St Lambert's church and as I must repeat today with great solemnity, in a warning inspired by love for my people and my country, that these punitive actions by the Gestapo against innocent people, without any judgment by a court or judicial proceedings or opportunity for defence - the „prosecution of accused persons who are condemned in advance and deprived of any means of defence“, in Reichsminister Dr Frank's words - destroy men's security under the law, undermine faith in law and destroy confidence in the government of our country.

We Christians, of course, are not aiming at revolution. We shall continue loyally to do our duty in obedience to God and in love of our people and fatherland. Our soldiers will fight and die for Germany, but not for those men who by their cruel actions against our religious, against their brothers and sisters, wound our hearts and shame the German name before God and men. We shall continue to fight against the external enemy; but against the enemy within, who strikes us and torments us, we cannot fight with arms. Against him we have only one weapon: endurance - strong, tough, hard endurance.

Become hard! Remain firm! We see and experience clearly what lies behind the new doctrines which have for years been forced on us, for the sake of which religion has been banned from the schools, our organisations have been suppressed and now Catholic kindergartens are about to be abolished - there is a deep-seated hatred of Christianity, which they are determined to destroy. If I am correctly informed, the Schulungsleiter [i. e. head of indoctrination], Herr Schmidt, before an audience which had been invited by force and which included schoolboys and schoolgirls, expressed this quite frankly and district leader Mieling applauded him enthusiastically, expressing his intention to exert himself for the execution of such plans.

Become hard! Remain firm! At this moment we are the anvil rather than the hammer. Other men, mostly strangers and renegades, are hammering us, seeking by violent means to bend our nation, ourselves and our young people aside from their straight relationship with God. We are the anvil and

not the hammer. But ask the blacksmith and hear what he says: the object which is forged on the anvil receives its form not alone from the hammer but also from the anvil. The anvil cannot and need not strike back: it must only be firm, only hard! If it is sufficiently tough and firm and hard the anvil usually lasts longer than the hammer. However hard the hammer strikes, the anvil stands quietly and firmly in place and will long continue to shape the objects forged upon it.

The anvil represents those who are unjustly imprisoned, those who are driven out and banished for no fault of their own. God will support them, that they may not lose the form and attitude of Christian firmness, when the hammer of persecution strikes its harsh blows and inflicts unmerited wounds on them.

It is our religious, the fathers, lay brothers and the sisters, who are now forged on the anvil. The day before yesterday I was able to visit some of those who had been driven out in their temporary accommodation and to speak with them. I was greatly edified and encouraged by the valiant bearing of the good men and the weak and defenceless women, who had been so ruthlessly torn from their convent, from the chapel, from the vicinity of the tabernacle, and who are now going into unjust banishment with their heads held high, in the consciousness of their innocence, trusting in Him who feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field and even joyous in the joy which the Saviour enjoins on His disciples: „Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.“ Verily, these men and women are masterpieces of God's forging.

What is being forged in these days between the hammer and the anvil are our young people - the new generation, which is still unformed, still capable of being shaped, still malleable. We cannot shield them from the hammer-blows of unbelief, of hostility to Christianity, of false doctrines and ethics. What is instilled into them at the meetings of those youth organisations, which we are told they joined voluntarily and with the agreement of their parents? What do they hear in the schools which the children are compelled to attend without regard to the wishes of their parents? What do they read in the new school-books? Christian parents, ask your children to show you these books, particularly the history books used in the secondary schools.

You will be appalled to see how these books, in complete disregard of historical truth, seek to fill inexperienced children with mistrust of Christianity and the Church, indeed with hatred of the Christian faith. In the favoured state educational establishments, the Hitler schools, the new teachers' training schools, all Christian influence and even all religious activity are excluded as a matter of principle. And what is happening to the children who were sent last spring to remote parts of the country to escape the air-raids? What religious instruction are they getting? How far can they practise their religion? Christian parents, you must concern yourselves with all this. If you do not, you are neglecting your sacred duties; if you do not, you cannot face your own conscience, nor Him who entrusted the children to you that you might lead them on the way to heaven.

We are the anvil, not the hammer! Unfortunately you cannot shield your children, the noble but still untempered crude metal, from the hammer-blows of hostility to the faith and hostility to the Church. But the anvil also plays a part in forging. Let your family home, your parental love and devotion, your exemplary Christian life be the strong, tough, firm and unbreakable anvil which absorbs the force of the hostile blows, which continually strengthens and fortifies the still weak powers of the young in the sacred resolve not to let themselves be diverted from the direction that leads to God.

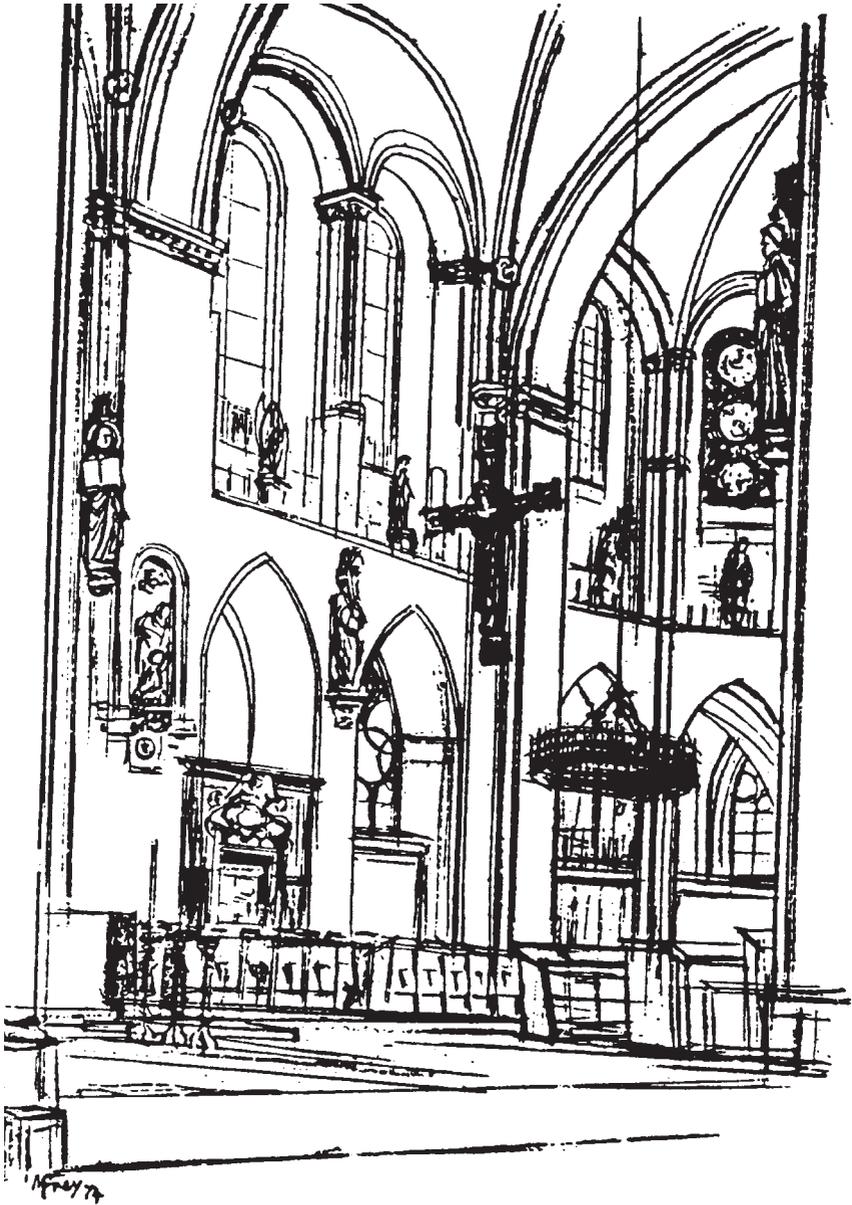
It is we, almost without exception, who are forged in this present time. How many people are dependent - on an occupational pension, on a state pension, on children's allowances and so on! Who nowadays is still independent, unrestricted master in his own property or business? It may be that, particularly in time of war, strict control and guidance, even the concentration and compulsory direction of products, of production and consumption, is necessary, and who will not readily bear this out of love for his people and his country? But through this follows dependence on many persons and authorities, who not only restrict freedom of action but also bring free independence of sentiments and convictions into grave danger and temptation, as soon as, at the same time, these persons and authorities represent an ideology hostile to Christianity, which they seek to impose on those who are dependent on them. Dependence of this kind is most evident in officials; and what courage, what heroic courage is required of those officials who in spite of all pressure maintain and publicly confess their faith as Christians, as true Catholics!

At this present time we are the anvil, not the hammer! Remain steadfast and firm like the anvil receiving all the blows that rain down on us, in loyal service to our people and country, but also ready at any time to act, in the spirit of supreme sacrifice, in accordance with the precept: „Men must obey God more than men.“ Through a conscience formed by faith God speaks to each one of us. Obey always without any doubt the voice of conscience. Take as your model the old Prussian minister of justice - I have spoken of him before - who was ordered by King Frederick the Great to overturn and alter in accordance with the monarch's wishes a judgment which he had pronounced in accordance with the law. Then this true nobleman, a certain Herr von Münchhausen, gave his king this magnificent answer: "My head is at your majesty's disposal, but not my conscience." Thus he wanted to say: I am ready to die for my king; indeed I am obedient to him and shall even accept death at the hands of the hangman. My life belongs to the king, not my conscience, that belongs to God! Is the race of such noblemen, who have this attitude and act in accordance with it, are Prussian officials of this stamp now extinct? Are there no longer any citizens or country people, craftsmen or workers of similar mind? Of similar conscientiousness and nobility of mind? That I cannot and will not believe. And so I say once again: become hard, remain firm, remain steadfast! Like the anvil under the blows of the hammer! It may be that obedience to our God and faithfulness to our conscience may cost me or any of you life, freedom or home. But: „Better to die than to sin!“ May the grace of God, without which we can do nothing, grant this unshakeable firmness to you and to me and keep us in it!

My dear Catholics of Münster! After a bomb had crashed through the aisle of the Cathedral during the night of 7th - 8th July another bomb hit the outer wall and destroyed St Ludger's Fountain, the monument to the return from banishment of Bishop Johann Bernhard in 1884. The statues of Bishops Suitger and Erpho flanking the monument were badly damaged, but the figure of St. Ludger, apostle of the Münster region and first Bishop of Münster, remained almost unscathed. The undamaged right hand is raised in blessing and pointing to heaven, as if to convey to us through the almost miraculous preservation of the statue this admonition: Whatever may befall, hold firm to the Catholic faith that was revealed by God and handed down by our forefathers! In all the destruction of the works of man, in all trouble and

sorrow I address to you the words which the first Pope addressed to the oppressed Christians of his day: „Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, ... Whom resist stedfast in the faith ... But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.“ (I Peter 5,6-11).

Let us pray for the banished religious orders, for all who must suffer unjustly, for all in trouble, for our soldiers, for Münster and its inhabitants, for our people and country and for its leader.



Sermon by the Bishop of Münster, Clemens August Count von Galen, on Sunday 3rd August 1941 in St. Lambert's Church, Münster

To my regret I have to inform you that during the past week the Gestapo has continued its campaign of annihilation against the Catholic orders. On Wednesday 30th July they occupied the administrative centre of the province of the Sisters of Our Lady in Mühlhausen (Kempen district), which formerly belonged to the diocese of Münster, and declared the convent to be dissolved. Most of the nuns, many of whom come from our diocese, were evicted and required to leave the district that very day. On Thursday 31st July, according to reliable accounts, the monastery of the missionary brothers of Hiltrup in Hamm was also occupied and confiscated by the Gestapo and the monks were evicted.

Already on 13th July, referring to the expulsion of the Jesuits and the missionary sisters of St Clare from Münster, did I publicly make the following statement in this same church: None of the occupants of these convents is accused of any offence or crime, none has been brought before a court, none has been found guilty. I hear that rumours are now being spread in Münster that after all these religious, in particular the Jesuits, have been accused, or even convicted, of criminal offences, and indeed of treason. I declare: These are base slanders of German citizens, our brothers and sisters, which we will not tolerate. I have already lodged a criminal charge with the Chief Prosecutor against a fellow who went so far as to make such allegations in front of witnesses. I express the expectation that the man will be brought swiftly to account and that our courts of justice still have the courage to punish slanderers who seek to destroy the honour of innocent German citizens whose property has already been taken from them. I call on all my listeners, indeed on all decent fellow-citizens, who in future hear accusations made against the religious expelled from Münster to get the name and address of the person making the accusations and of any witnesses. I hope that there are still men in Münster who have the courage to play their part in securing the judicial examination of such accusations, which poison the national community of our people, by coming forward with their person, their name and if necessary their oath. I ask them, if such accusations against the religious are made in their presence, to report them at once to their parish priest or to the Episcopal Vicariate-General and have them recorded. I owe it to the honour of our religious orders, the honour of our Catholic Church and also the honour of our German people and our city of Münster to report such cases to the state

prosecution service so that the facts may be established by a court and base slanderers of our religious punished.

(After the Gospel reading for the 9th Sunday after Pentecost: „And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it ...“, Luke 19.41-47):

My dear diocesans!

It is a deeply moving event that we read of in the Gospel for today. Jesus weeps! The Son of God weeps! A man who weeps is suffering pain - pain either of the body or of the heart. Jesus did not suffer in the body; and yet he wept. How great must have been the sorrow of soul, the heartfelt pain of this most courageous of men to make him weep! Why did he weep? He wept for Jerusalem, for God's holy city that was so dear to him, the capital of his people. He wept for its inhabitants, his fellow-countrymen, because they refused to recognise the only thing that could avert the judgment foreseen by his omniscience and determined in advance by his divine justice: „If thou hadst known ... the things which belong unto thy peace!“ Why do the inhabitants of Jerusalem not know it? Not long before Jesus had given voice to it: „O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!“ (Luke 13,34).

Ye would not. I, your King, your God, I would. But ye would not! How safe, how sheltered is the chicken under the hen's wing: she warms it, she feeds it, she defends it. In the same way I desired to protect you, to keep you, to defend you against any ill. I would, but ye would not!

That is why Jesus weeps; that is why that strong man weeps; that is why God weeps. For the folly, the injustice, the crime of *n o t b e i n g w i l l i n g*. And for the evil to which that gives rise - which his omniscience sees coming, which his justice must impose - if man sets his *u n w i l l i n g n e s s* against God's commands, in opposition to the admonitions of conscience, and all the loving invitations of the divine Friend, the best of Fathers: „If thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But thou wouldst not!“ It is something terrible, something incredibly wrong and fatal, when man sets his will against God's will. I would!

thou wouldst not! It is therefore that Jesus weeps for Jerusalem.
Dearly beloved Christians! The joint pastoral letter of the German bishops, which was read in all Catholic churches in Germany on 26 June 1941, includes the following words:

„It is true that in Catholic ethics there are certain positive commandments which cease to be obligatory if their observance would be attended by unduly great difficulties; but there are also sacred obligations of conscience from which no one can release us, which we must carry out even if it should cost us our life. Never, under any circumstances, may a man, save in war or in legitimate self-defence, kill an innocent person.“

I had occasion on 6th July to add the following comments on this passage in the joint pastoral letter:

„For some months we have been hearing reports that inmates of establishments for the care of the mentally ill who have been ill for a long period and perhaps appear incurable have been forcibly removed from these establishments on orders from Berlin. Regularly the relatives receive soon afterwards an intimation that the patient is dead, that the patient's body has been cremated and that they can collect the ashes. There is a general suspicion, verging on certainty, that these numerous unexpected deaths of the mentally ill do not occur naturally but are intentionally brought about, in accordance with the doctrine that it is legitimate to destroy a so-called „worthless life“ - in other words to kill innocent men and women, if it is thought that their lives are of no further value to the people and the state. A terrible doctrine which seeks to justify the murder of innocent people, which legitimises the violent killing of disabled persons who are no longer capable of work, of cripples, the incurably ill and the aged and infirm!“

I am reliably informed that in hospitals and homes in the province of Westphalia lists are being prepared of inmates who are classified as „unproductive members of the national community“ and are to be removed from these establishments and shortly thereafter killed. The first party of patients left the mental hospital at Marienthal, near Münster, in the course of this week.

German men and women! Article 211 of the German Penal Code is still in force, in these terms: „Whoever kills a man of deliberate intent is guilty of

murder and punishable with death“. No doubt in order to protect those who kill with intent these poor men and women, members of our families, from this punishment laid down by law, the patients who have been selected for killing are removed from their home area to some distant place. Some illness or other is then given as the cause of death. Since the body is immediately cremated, the relatives and the criminal police are unable to establish whether the patient had in fact been ill or what the cause of death actually was. I have been assured, however, that in the Ministry of the Interior and the office of the Chief Medical Officer, Dr Conti, no secret is made of the fact that indeed a large number of mentally ill persons in Germany have already been killed with intent and that this will continue.

Article 139 of the Penal Code provides that „anyone who has knowledge of an intention to commit a crime against the life of any person ... and fails to inform the authorities or the person whose life is threatened in due time ... commits a punishable offence“. When I learned of the intention to remove patients from Marienthal I reported the matter on 28th July to the State Prosecutor of Münster Provincial Court and to the Münster chief of police by registered letter, in the following terms:

„According to information I have received it is planned in the course of this week (the date has been mentioned as 31st July) to move a large number of inmates of the provincial hospital at Marienthal, classified as ‘unproductive members of the national community’, to the mental hospital at Eichberg, where, as is generally believed to have happened in the case of patients removed from other establishments, they are to be killed with intent. Since such action is not only contrary to the divine and the natural moral law but under article 211 of the German Penal Code ranks as murder and attracts the death penalty, I hereby report the matter in accordance with my obligation under article 139 of the Penal Code and request that steps should at once be taken to protect the patients concerned by proceedings against the authorities planning their removal and murder, and that I may be informed of the action taken“.

I have received no information of any action by the State Prosecutor or the police.

I had already written on 26th July to the Westphalian provincial authorities, who are responsible for the running of the mental hospital and for the

patients entrusted to them for care and for cure, protesting in the strongest terms. It had no effect. The first transport of the innocent victims under sentence of death has left Marienthal. And I am now told that 800 patients have already been removed from the hospital at Warstein.

We must expect, therefore, that the poor defenceless patients are, sooner or later, going to be killed. Why? Not because they have committed any offence justifying their death; not because, for example, they have attacked a nurse or attendant, who would be entitled in legitimate self-defence to meet violence with violence. In such a case the use of violence leading to death is permitted and may be called for, as it is in the case of killing an armed enemy.

No: these unfortunate patients are to die, not for some such reason as this but because in the judgment of some official body, on the decision of some committee, they have become „u n w o r t h y t o l i v e," because they are classed as „unproductive members of the national community“. The judgment is that they can no longer produce any goods: they are like an old piece of machinery which no longer works, like an old horse which has become incurably lame, like a cow which no longer gives any milk. What happens to an old piece of machinery? It is thrown on the scrapheap. What happens to a lame horse, an unproductive cow?

I will not pursue the comparison to the end - so fearful is its appropriateness and its illuminating power.

But we are not here concerned with pieces of machinery, we are not dealing with horses and cows, whose sole function is to serve mankind, to produce goods for mankind. They may be broken up, they may be slaughtered when they no longer perform this function.

No: We are concerned with men and women, our fellow creatures, our brothers and sisters! Poor human beings, ill human beings, they are unproductive, if you will. But does that mean that they have lost the right to live? Have you, have I, the right to live only so long as we are productive, so long as we are recognised by others as productive?

If the principle that men is entitled to kill his unproductive fellow-man is established and applied, then woe betide all of us when we become aged

and infirm! If it is legitimate to kill unproductive members of the community, woe betide the disabled who have sacrificed their health or their limbs in the productive process! If unproductive men and women can be disposed of by violent means, woe betide our brave soldiers who return home with major disabilities as cripples, as invalids!

If it is once admitted that men have the right to kill „unproductive“ fellow-men - even though it is at present applied only to poor and defenceless mentally ill patients - then the way is open for the murder of all unproductive men and women: the incurably ill, the handicapped who are unable to work, those disabled in industry or war. The way is open, indeed, for the murder of all of us when we become old and infirm and therefore unproductive. Then it will require only a secret order to be issued that the procedure which has been tried and tested with the mentally ill should be extended to other „unproductive“ persons, that it should also be applied to those suffering from incurable tuberculosis, the aged and infirm, persons disabled in industry, soldiers with disabling injuries!

Then no man will be safe: some committee or other will be able to put him on the list of „unproductive“ persons, who in their judgment have become „unworthy to live“. And there will be no police to protect him, no court to avenge his murder and bring his murderers to justice. Who could then have any confidence in a doctor? He might report a patient as unproductive and then be given instructions to kill him! It does not bear thinking of, the moral depravity, the universal mistrust which will spread even in the bosom of the family, if this terrible doctrine is tolerated, accepted and put into practice. Woe betide mankind, woe betide our German people, if the divine commandment, „Thou shalt not kill“, which the Lord proclaimed on Sinai amid thunder and lightning, which God our Creator wrote into man's conscience from the beginning, if this commandment is not merely violated but the violation is tolerated and remains unpunished!

I will give you an example of what is happening. One of the patients in Marienthal was a man of 55, a farmer from a country parish in the Münster region - I could give you his name - who has suffered for some years from mental disturbance and was therefore admitted to Marienthal hospital. He was not mentally ill in the full sense: he could receive visits and was always happy, when his relatives came to see him. Only a fortnight ago he was visited by his wife and one of his sons, a soldier on home leave from the front. The son is much attached to his father, and the parting was a sad one:

no one can tell, whether the soldier will return and see his father again, since he may fall in battle for his country. The son, the soldier, will certainly never again see his father on earth, for he has since then been put on the list of the „unproductive“. A relative, who wanted to visit the father this week in Marienthal, was turned away with the information that the patient had been transferred elsewhere on the instructions of the Council of State for National Defence. No information could be given about where he had been sent, but the relatives would be informed within a few days. What information will they be given? The same as in other cases of the kind? That the man has died, that his body has been cremated, that the ashes will be handed over on payment of a fee? Then the soldier, risking his life in the field for his fellow-countrymen, will not see his father again on earth, because fellow-countrymen at home have killed him.

The facts I have stated are firmly established. I can give the names of the patient, his wife and his son the soldier, and the place where they live.

„Thou shalt not kill!“ God wrote this commandment in the conscience of man long before any penal code laid down the penalty for murder, long before there was any prosecutor or any court to investigate and avenge a murder. Cain, who killed his brother Abel, was a murderer long before there were any states or any courts of law. And he confessed his deed, driven by his accusing conscience: „My punishment is greater than I can bear ... and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me the murderer shall slay me“ (Genesis 4,13-14).

„Thou shalt not kill!“ This commandment from God, who alone has power to decide on life or death, was written in the hearts of men from the beginning, long before God gave the children of Israel on Mount Sinai his moral code in those lapidary sentences inscribed on stone which are recorded for us in Holy Scripture and which as children we learned by heart in the catechism.

„I am the Lord thy God!“ Thus begins this immutable law. „Thou shalt have not other gods before me.“ God - the only God, transcendent, almighty, omniscient, infinitely holy and just, our Creator and future Judge - has given us these commandments. Out of love for us he wrote these commandments in our heart and proclaimed them to us. For they meet the need of our

God-created nature; they are the indispensable norms for all rational, godly, redeeming and holy individual and community life. With these commandments God, our Father, seeks to gather us, His children, as the hen gathers her chickens under her wings. If we follow these commands, these invitations, this call from God, then we shall be guarded and protected and preserved from harm, defended against threatening death and destruction like the chickens under the hen's wings.

„O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!“ Is this to come about again in our country of Germany, in our province of Westphalia, in our city of Münster? How far are the divine commandments now obeyed in Germany, how far are they obeyed here in our community?

The eighth commandment: „Thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not lie.“ How often is it shamelessly and publicly broken!

The seventh commandment: „Thou shalt not steal“. Whose possessions are now secure since the arbitrary and ruthless confiscation of the property of our brothers and sisters, members of Catholic orders? Whose property is protected, if this illegally confiscated property is not returned?

The sixth commandment: „Thou shalt not commit adultery.“ Think of the instructions and assurances on free sexual intercourse and unmarried motherhood in the notorious Open Letter by Rudolf Hess, who has disappeared since, which was published in all the newspapers. And how much shameless and disreputable conduct of this kind do we read about and observe and experience in our city of Münster! To what shamelessness in dress have our young people been forced to get accustomed to - the preparation for future adultery! For modesty, the bulwark of chastity, is about to be destroyed.

And now the fifth commandment: „Thou shalt not kill“, is set aside and broken under the eyes of the authorities whose function it should be to protect the rule of law and human life, when men presume to kill innocent fellow-men with intent merely because they are „unproductive“, because they can no longer produce any goods.

And how do matters stand with the observance of the fourth commandment, which enjoins us to honour and obey our parents and those in authority over us? The status and authority of parents is already much undermined and is increasingly shaken by all the obligations imposed on children against the will of their parents. Can anyone believe that sincere respect and conscientious obedience to the state authorities can be maintained when men continue to violate the commandments of the supreme authority, the Commandments of God, when they even combat and seek to stamp out faith in the only true transcendent God, the Lord of heaven and earth?

The observance of the first three commandments has in reality for many years been largely suspended among the public in Germany and in Münster. By how many people are Sundays and feast days profaned and withheld from the service of God! How the name of God is abused, dishonoured and blasphemed!

And the first commandment: „Thou shalt have no other gods before me.“ In place of the only true eternal God men set up their own idols at will and worship them: Nature, or the state, or the people, or the race. And how many are there whose God, in Paul's word, „is their belly“ (Pilippians 3, 19) - their own well - being, to which they sacrifice all else, even honour and conscience - the pleasures of the senses, the lust for money, the lust for power! In accordance with all this men may indeed seek to arrogate to themselves divine attributes, to make themselves lords over the life and death of their fellow-men.

When Jesus came near to Jerusalem and beheld the city he wept over it, saying: „If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the day shall come upon thee, that thine enemies ... shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.“ Looking with his bodily eyes, Jesus saw only the walls and towers of the city of Jerusalem, but the divine omniscience looked deeper and saw how matters stood within the city and its inhabitants: „O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings - and ye would not!“ That is the great sorrow

that oppresses Jesus's heart, that brings tears to his eyes. I wanted to act for your good, but ye would not!

Jesus saw how sinful, how terrible, how criminal, how disastrous this unwilligness is. Little man, that frail creature, sets his created will against the will of God! Jerusalem and its inhabitants, His chosen and favoured people, set their will against God's will! Foolishly and criminally, they defy the will of God! And so Jesus weeps over the heinous sin and the inevitable punishment. God is not mocked!

Christians of Münster! Did the Son of God in his omniscience in that day see only Jerusalem and its people? Did he weep only over Jerusalem? Is the people of Israel the only people whom God has encompassed and protected with a father's care and mother's love, has drawn to Himself? Is it the only people that would not? The only one that rejected God's truth, that threw off God's law and so condemned itself to ruin?

Did Jesus, the omniscient God, also see in that day our German people, our land of Westphalia, our region of Münster, the Lower Rhineland? Did he also weep over us? Over Münster?

For a thousand years he has instructed our forefathers and us in his truth, guided us with his law, nourished us with his grace, gathered us together as the hen gathers her chickens under her wings. Did the omniscient Son of God see in that day that in our time he must also pronounce this judgment on us: „Ye would not: see, your house will be laid waste!“ How terrible that would be!

My Christians! I hope there is still time; but then indeed it is high time: That we may realise, in this our day, the things that belong unto our peace! That we may realise what alone can save us, can preserve us from the divine judgment: that we should take, without reservation, the divine commandments as the guiding rule of our lives and act in sober earnest according to the words: „Rather die than sin“.

That in prayer and sincere penitence we should beg that God's forgiveness and mercy may descend upon us, upon our city, our country and our beloved German people.

But with those who continue to provoke God's judgment, who blaspheme our faith, who scorn God's commandments, who make common cause with those who alienate our young people from Christianity, who rob and banish our religious, who bring about the death of innocent men and women, our brothers and sisters - with all those we will avoid any confidential relationship, we will keep ourselves and our families out of reach of their influence, lest we become infected with their godless ways of thinking and acting, lest we become partakers in their guilt and thus liable to the judgment which a just God must and will inflict on all those who, like the ungrateful city of Jerusalem, do not will what God wills.

O God, make us all know, in this our day, before it is too late, the things which belong to our peace!

O most sacred heart of Jesus, grieved to tears at the blindness and iniquities of men, help us through Thy grace, that we may always strive after that which is pleasing to Thee and renounce that which displeases Thee, that we may remain in Thy love and find peace for our souls!

Amen.

Prayer for the Beatification of the Servant of God Clemens August, Cardinal von Galen

God, Thou didst select Thy faithful servant Clemens August to be a priest and appoint him Bishop of Münster in a time of great trouble. Thou gavest him the strength valiantly to defend Thy honour, the faith of the Church and the right to life of defenceless men and women, and himself to be a shining example of steadfastness in the faith.

Humbly we beg Thee: give Thy servant a part in Thy glory and grant us the grace that we may soon be permitted to revere him publicly as a saint in heaven, so that we may praise Thee for the sake of his service. And grant to all who call to Thee in reliance on his intercession salvation in soul and body through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Not a few answers to prayer which are attributed to the intercession of this servant of God have been reported. Any who have experienced his intercessory help in this way are invited to inform

The Episcopal Vicariate-General
per Josef Alferts
Provost of the Cathedral

48135 Münster

Illustrations

Page 9: Cathedral of Xanten, where the Bishop Clemens August von Galen preached his sermons on 9th February, 1936.

Page 17: Pulpit of St Lambert's Church, where Bishop Clemens August preached his sermons on 13th July and 3rd August 1941.

Page 27: Chancel of the Liebfrauenkirche after rebuilding, where Bishop Clemens August preached his sermon of 20th July 1941.

Page 37: Chancel of St. Paul's Cathedral after rebuilding.

Photograph on the back: Pope John Paul II praying at Cardinal von Galen's tomb, 1st May 1987.