Letter from Gustav Stresemann, Reich Chancellor, to Cardinal Faulhaber, Oct. 13, 1923

Source: L. Volk, ed., *Akten Kardinal Michael von Faulhabers, 1917-1945* [“Faulhaber Papers”] vol. 1, pp. 316-318, entry no. 145

Translation from the original German:

Your Eminence,

May I hereby express my deepest gratitude for the very good news that Herr Baron von Geier and Herr Dr. Mittelmann brought me. In the eight weeks that I have been at the summit of the Reich Government, I have learned much of great sadness from the German States, and the outer- and inner-political pressure of the responsibility upon me has been nearly unbearable. The courage to take on responsibility in Germany has sunk to a lowest ebb. The concept of self-sacrifice for the State is overshadowed by an egoism that leaves us doubting the character of our people. Sometimes I have had the feeling as if, in my effort to steer the ship of state through the conflagration, I am standing all alone, and I can expect nothing of positive cooperation, but only negative criticism from those who otherwise are close to me. In this situation, which oppresses my soul extraordinarily, the news of Your Eminence’s standpoint was a great encouragement. Thus, as in my opinion the rising again of the German people can only grow up from a moral idea, so those who have positions of responsibility in the leadership of the state can only achieve something if along with their conscience their soul is strengthened through the conviction that outstanding friends of the Fatherland stand near them in their way of thinking and support them with their power and their desires. For that I am obligated to thank Your Eminence in an upright and heartfelt manner.

If I might direct a request to Your Eminence in connection with this, it would be that you take a public stand with the great influence of your personage for the concept of moral renewal of the people even beyond what has been accomplished to now. Everywhere we see only destructive and subversive tendencies at work. Never has the unity of the Reich been so severely threatened as presently, for there often intrudes into the relationship of the States to the Reich, in place of the ideal source of power in which the Reich concept is rooted, a self-seeking that asks whether the individual States can only succeed if they free themselves from the whole. Never was the self-seeking of the parties greater than this, as they repeatedly consider the issue of whether they would lose this or gain that in taking this or that position. Never was the opposition among interests livelier than now, never were we so far removed from that viewpoint to which Germany owed its rising up again in Napoleonic times. In that time the Prussian Government could dare to reduce the salaries of its officials by one-third. In those days the King sold his gold tableware to improve the finances of the Reich, and the East Prussian nobility took out mortgages on their property to save the existence of the State. Today many believe that we have lost the greatest war in the history of the world, few work, and more than ever are able to make greater claims upon the State. What does technical legislating matter, what do parliamentarianism and governing matter, compared to the great question of the reawakening of the moral strengths of the people, without which we will not overcome strong foreign pressure and domestic political anxieties!

In the struggle for the soul of the people the Catholic Church and its leaders have always been able to exercise a great influence. In that regard I see it as one of the least favorable results of the World War, however, that the previously often prominent distinctions of the denominations have faded now and the great common idea of a Christian concept of life has stretched its hand out beyond these distinctions into all the issues that concern the Fatherland. If Your Eminence would have the kindness to involve yourself in the service of matters of this moral rebirth of the people, then Your Eminence would be heard far beyond the bounds of your co-religionists, by the entire German people. We need speeches to the German nation that show us the way from the depths to the heights, out of darkness into light, that show us the way from division to unity and that enable us once again to live with faith in the future.

If Your Eminence is not inclined to refuse this appeal, then please be convinced that the Reich Government will consider it a matter of honor to place all possible support at the disposal of this work, and I ask that you consider me at your disposal in this regard.

If Your Eminence should travel to Berlin, I would consider it a great honor to have Your Eminence as a guest in my home and to present openly to Your Eminence the thoughts that motivate me, and also thereby perhaps bring up the many misimpressions that in my view arise from Bavaria to my deep regret.

Herr Dr. Mittelmann is entrusted with my intentions, and I ask Your Eminence to receive him in the most cordial manner and to let him have your answer.

Please accept, Your Eminence, the expression of my most marked respect and complete devotion, with which I have the honor to be, Your Eminence’s gratefully devoted,

/s/ Dr. Stresemann