Cardinal Bertram, Archbishop of Breslau, Germany to the Bishops who are Members of the Fulda German Bishops Conference, March 19, 1933

The Diocesan Ordinariates are receiving, for understandable reasons, urgent inquiries from the reverend pastoral clergy, whether the transformation of public life will yield an occasion for a change in the position of the Church toward the National Socialists. By way of introduction, may I be allowed to take note of the following:

A transformation in political power relationships cannot be the basis for changing a position that has been decided for ecclesiastical reasons. Just as, in those places where Social Democrats are ruling, the Church does not need to revise its position toward Social Democracy; the collaboration of the Center Party in allowable matters does not touch upon the Church’s principled position.

Because it is being rumored in a tendentious manner that the Church will revise its attitude toward the National Socialists, Herr Vice Chancellor von Papen brought up the question in his visit yesterday. I indicated in this regard: The one who needs to revise is the Fuhrer of the National Socialists himself; because the Fulda Bishops Conference declared its attitude in 1932 based on essentially compelling reasons: because

1. Portions of the official program itself, as it is written and as it must be understood without strained interpretation, contain heresies,
2. Because declarations of numerous leading representatives and publicists of the Party contain positions of an anti-religious character, namely hostile to the fundamental doctrines and requirements of the Church, and these declarations have encountered no rejection or contradiction from the supreme Party leadership; this is the case with respect to attitudes toward questions of denominational schools, Christian marriage, etc.
3. That is the unanimous judgment of the Catholic clergy and the loyal Catholic champions of Church interests in public life, that if the Party attains hotly contested sole rule in Germany, the darkest prospects will loom for the ecclesiastical interests of Catholics.

At that I gave a copy of my submission to the Reich President from the 10th of this month (copy enclosed for all Bishops) with the comment: The Reich President has responded that he has shared my submission with the Reich Chancellor and wants to discuss it with him. My desire is to receive a fully satisfactory response to my submission.

With this introduction, I would not like to recommend the issuance of a general declaration to the Catholic people. The situation really does not yet appear sufficient clarified for that.

On the other hand, an instruction to the pastoral clergy may be urgently desired. As content for such, the following may serve as points of reference:

I.

As has been clearly explained, the previous guidance from the Bishops applies only so long and so far as the reasons and concerns, which have been shared with the clergy, continue. If these fall away, the applicability stops. This falling away has not yet been convincingly demonstrated.

II.

. . .

Source: Limburg Diocesan Archive, reprinted in Stasiewski, Bernhard, ed., *Akten Deutscher Bischöfe über die Lage der Kirche, 1933-1945* [Papers of the German Bishops about Church Matters] (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1968), vol. 1, p.11.