<p>German Bishops’ Joint Pastoral Letter, June 7, 1934, translation from the original German:

<p>Dear Faithful!

<p>The Holy Father has gifted Catholic Christianity and the entire globe with a Holy Year, announced in his Apostolic Constitution of April 2nd this year. Holy Years stand as milestones on the broad expanse of the centuries along the path of divine love and mercy. Divine love wishes to be imparted then more than other times, wider than ever are the spiritual treasuries of the Church opened, full of the incalculable merits of Christ and his saints. The explicit occasion for the proclamation of the Holy Year has been provided by the 1900th anniversary celebration of the passion and death of Jesus Christ and the solemn memorial of all the events that were closely associated with Christ’s sacrifice on Golgotha: the institution of the most holy sacrament of the altar, the first communion of the Apostles and their consecration as priests, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the conferring upon the Apostles of the power to forgive sins, the establishment of the Primacy of Peter, then the Ascension of the Lord, the sending of the Holy Spirit, the glorious commencement of apostolic preaching. If ever a centenary celebration was justified, it is doubtless the one decreed by the Pope for the year 1933 and now presently extended for the year 1934. There are underlying events that no other centenary anniversary can point to – events that are proceeding according to Pius XI’s words, the true rebirth of the world, the beginning of all blessings of the Christian life and of Christian civilization, whose ripe fruits we are tasting. This is the deep meaning of this Holy Year.

<p>According to the view of the Holy Father, the Holy Year should be a mission time for all Catholic Christians . . .

<p>Dear faithful, in earnest consideration of these thoughts, how bitter the pain is to us Bishops, and how agonizing the anxiety about it, that precisely in recent years currents and movements have arisen in our Fatherland and grown stronger, which turn themselves directly against the above-mentioned great events of Jesus Christ and against the fundamental truths of the Catholic Church, and – not satisfied with that – toward the goal of founding a new religion and a German national church, which they want to found with a “new faith,” as they say, with the “myth of the blood.” . . .

<p>As children of the Church of Christ, taught by Christ’s word, we believe in a God, a true and living God, who is creator and Lord of heaven and earth. This God is not an image created by human hands, like the idols of the ancient pagans, nor an image of the spirit of man that is born from blood and race and “becomes and grows in people,” as modern representative of a new paganism say. . . .

<p>With the vow of our baptism we are obligated to faith in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, our Lord: who out of love for us men and for our salvation, took on human nature; who suffered and died on the cross to save us from sin and guilt; Chris, whose glorious resurrection is our pledge of victory over death and hell; Christ, who sometime will come again to judge the living and the dead. Today, however, false prophets are arising in our Fatherland who deny the divinity of Christ and teach another way than what Christ teaches by word and example. . . .

<p>As baptized Christians we have obligated ourselves to faith in the Holy Spirit and the Holy Catholic Church. The third person of the Godhead, the “Spirit of truth (John 14:17), speaks to us through the holy books of the Old and the New Testament . . .

<p>Christ has endowed his Church for all peoples and for all times . . .

<p>Those who are bringing us a national church want to set us free from Rome, from the Rock of Peter, on which however Christ, the Son of God, has built his Church; they want to separate us from this Church, which according to the words of Saint Paul “is the pillar and foundation of the truth” (I Tim. 3:15). Certainly if “blood and race” are supposed to be the basis and determining factors of faith and religion, as the new pagans maintain, then the State would take the place of the communion of all believers, that is the place of the Church, as the collective power of the members of our people. Then its claim to “totalitarianism” would be justified in the sense of understanding that it means a claim of complete rule over all human relationships, so that all rights of the individual, all rights of the family and all human association is completely subjected to its rule.

<p>Such is this neo-pagan doctrine, then, you recognize it, beloved, and have often heard complaints about it from your pastors, a radical denial of Christianity in the entirety of its doctrine, its morals, its richness of mercy. . . .

<p>Sincerely bound to love for the Church and love for our German people and Fatherland with the faithful who are entrusted to us, we protest against such subversive activity against Christianity and the Church, and especially emphatically because it seeks to contravene the intentions of the Reich Government that have been proclaimed repeatedly in clear words, and if it were to succeeds, it would destroy all hope of a secure continuation of our form of government and a prosperous future for our suffering people. The authority of the State must inevitably collapse if it is no longer founded on the authority of God, from whom alone all authority has its origin” (Romans 13:1), which therefore can also only demand obedience “as a matter of conscience” when it is in conformity with the will of God. If in human society belief in God and fear of God wither away, and God’s authority, which binds the conscience, is disrespected, then sovereign power becomes involuntarily borne human caprice, and obedience becomes superficially produced slavish fear. Truly the gates and doors are then opened to uproar and anarchy and security and order are continually in danger.

<p>When such dangers threaten, we Bishops may not remain quiet. . . . We may not timidly remain quiet when we see that not only private individuals but public persons are found among the bearers and proclaimers of neo-pagan ideas, to whom far-reaching influence and powerful means are at their disposal.

<p>And now the antithesis: While neo-paganism is recruiting aggressively, our Catholic press no longer has the freedom to address candidly the great issues of the day in the light of Catholic doctrine and moral teaching and to ward off the attacks upon Christianity and the Church. Sunday, the day for God and the family, is continually so severely caught up in the demands of state-recognized organizations for compulsory ceremonies and deployments, that no time remains for prayerful participation at mass and for nurturing Christian family life. . . .

<p>Dear faithful! To speak totally clearly, we Bishops will not cease to warn you against those empty slogans that confuse your faith and can weigh down your conscience.

<p>You have heard and read: Dogmas are made up by men. But we, your Bishops, say to you: Dogmas, articles of faith, are divine concepts, divine laws, which are taken from divine revelation by the Church in its teaching office under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and are presented to us to believe. Thus dogmas are not made up by men.

<p>You have heard and read: Whenever you put on a uniform, you cease to be Catholic or Protestant. To that we Bishops say: However loyally you must nurture comradely service and mutual respect, nevertheless religious conviction is not something that you put on and take off like your coat and hang up on a nail during your duty hours. . . .

<p>You have heard and read: You can even without faith in Christ, the Son of the living God, and without faith in the Gospel of Christ, confess a positive Christianity. We, your Bishops, say to you: Positive Christianity is only present when you confess Christ, God’s Son, the savior of the world who became man, and believe in his whole Gospel and acknowledge all his commandments. . . .

<p>You have heard and read: Morality is what serves the interests of the Volk. Morality is what corresponds to the demands, the goals and the well-being of the race. . . .

<p>You have heard and read: You can place yourself under an unconditional oath. We, your Bishops, observe as a precaution: An oath is a solemn invocation of God and thus can never obligate you to fulfill it in a way that would violate a commandment of God. One can take on an obligation under oath such as the oath taken by officials or by soldiers, for loyal work in a profession, for obedience toward the rightful authorities. But whenever an order shall require something that violates God’s commandments and conscience, then what applies is what the Fulda Bishops Conference expressed in November 1919 in a solemn statement about the law of the Weimar Constitution: “In what concerns the oath to be taken to the constitution, Catholics will obviously not be obligated by it to anything that conflicts with a divine or ecclesiastical law and thus with their conscience.”

<p>You have heard and read: Christianity was a misfortune and a corruption of the race for our Germanic ancestors. But we, your Bishops, say to you: The introduction of Christianity among the Germans was a precious gift from heaven . . .

<p>Dear faithful! You may perhaps hear it said, as it has often been said, that the Bishops’ standing up for the faith of our fathers, their warnings about the heresies of neo-paganism and the slogans of its representatives is an uncalled-for “meddling in politics.” Conscious of our religious mission and the obligations of our holy office, we reject this untrue misinterpretation of our conduct. . . .

<p>Thus we reject it as an untruth, whenever Catholic Bishops are portrayed in speeches or writings as representatives of worldly interests or political hacks striving for power. . . .

<p>Dear faithful! Last year we joyfully greeted the Reich Government’s announcement of its decision and steadfast desire to respect and to defend the rights and the freedom of the Church. In sincere love for our German people, in upright recognition of the Government’s measures to stop godless propaganda and public immorality, in trusting their intent to make the force of Christianity the weight-bearing foundation of the new *Volk*-order, we were and are ready to set about the unhindered work that has been guaranteed for us on the part of the Church for the salvation of people, for the true good of our people. . . .

<p>Dear faithful! Thus we have expressed anew in a serious time openly and candidly the painful anxieties that fill us in view of the undisguised attacks of neo-paganism against God and his truth, against Christ and the religion of the cross, against the Church and her task of sanctifying humanity. . . .

<p>Remain true to the religion of your fathers! Be assured that Christ, the God-man and savior of the world, remains with his Church, to which he gave the promise that the gates of hell will not prevail against it. . . .

<p>The Apostle spoke these comforting words: “Cast all your cares upon the Lord” (I Peter 5:7)….

<p>May almighty God bless you, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit!

<p>Given at Fulda in the St. Boniface Church, on June 7, 1934.

<p>Signed,

<p>Adolf Cardinal Bertram, Archbishop of Breslau

<p>Source: Breslau <em>*Amtsblatt</em>* [Official Bulletin for the Clergy], no. 9 of June 25, 1934, reprinted in Stasiewski, <em>German Bishops’ Papers</em>, vol. 1, pages 704-715. Italian translation published in <em>L’*Osservatore Romano</em>*, Aug. 4, 1934. Spanish translation published in <em>*Criterio</em>* (Buenos Aires), Aug. 30, 1934.</p><br>