**Cardinal Clemens von Galen “Against Nazi Euthanasia”**

Fellow Christians! In the pastoral letter of the German bishops of June 26, 1941, which was read out in all the Catholic churches in Germany on July 6, 1941, it states among other things: It is true that there are definite commandments in Catholic moral doctrine which are no longer applicable if their fulfillment involves too many difficulties.

However, there are sacred obligations of conscience from which no one has the power to release us and which we must fulfill even if it costs us our lives. Never under any circumstances may a human being kill an innocent person apart from war and legitimate self-defense. On July 6, I already had cause to add to the pastoral letter the following explanation: for some months we have been hearing reports that, on the orders of Berlin, patients from mental asylums who have been ill for a long time and may appear incurable, are being compulsorily removed. There is a general suspicion verging on certainty, that these numerous unexpected deaths of mentally ill people do not occur of themselves but are deliberately brought about, that the doctrine is being followed, according to which one may destroy so-called 'worthless life,' that is, kill innocent people if one considers that their lives are of no further value for the nation and the state.

German men and women, section 211 of the Reich Penal Code is still valid. It states: 'He who deliberately kills another person will be punished by death for murder if the killing is premeditated.'

However, I have been assured that the Reich Interior Ministry and the office of the Reich Doctors' Leader, Dr. Conti, make no bones about the fact that in reality a large number of mentally ill people in Germany have been deliberately killed and more will be killed in the future.

The Penal Code lays down in section 139: 'He who receives credible information concerning the intention to commit a crime against life and neglects to alert the authorities or the person who is threatened in time...will be punished.'

When I learned of the intention to transport patients from Marienthal in order to kill them, I brought a formal charge at the State Court in Münster and with the Police President in Münster by means of a registered letter.

I have received no news concerning intervention by the Prosecutor's Office or by the police...Thus we must assume that the poor helpless patients will soon be killed.

For what reason? Not because they have committed a crime worthy of death. Not because they attacked their nurses or orderlies so that the latter had no other choice but to use legitimate force to defend their lives against their attackers. No, it is not for such reasons that these unfortunate patients must die but rather because, in the opinion of some department, on the testimony of some commission, they have become 'worthless life' because according to this testimony they are 'unproductive national comrades.' The argument goes: they can no longer produce commodities, they are like an old machine that no longer works, they are like an old horse which has become incurably lame, they are like a cow which no longer gives milk.

We are not dealing with machines, horses and cows whose only function is to serve mankind, to produce goods for man. No, we are dealing with human beings, our fellow human beings, our brothers and sisters. With poor people, sick people, if you like unproductive people. But have they for that reason forfeited the right to life? Have you, have I the right to live only so long as we are productive, so long as we are recognized by others as productive?

If you establish and apply the principle that you can kill 'unproductive' fellow human beings then woe betides us all when we become old and frail! If one is allowed forcibly to remove one's unproductive fellow human beings then woe betide loyal soldiers who return to the homeland seriously disabled, as cripples, as invalids. If it is once accepted that people have the right to kill 'unproductive' fellow humans--and even if initially it only affects the poor defenseless mentally ill--then as a matter of principle murder is permitted for all unproductive people, in other words for the incurably sick, the people who have become invalids through labor and war, for us all when we become old, frail and therefore unproductive.

Then, it is only necessary for some secret edict to order that the method developed for the mentally ill should be extended to other 'unproductive' people, that it should be applied to those suffering from incurable lung disease, to the elderly who are frail or invalids, to the severely disabled soldiers. Then none of our lives will be safe any more. Some commission can put us on the list of the 'unproductive,' who in their opinion have become worthless life. And no police force will protect us and no court will investigate our murder and give the murderer the punishment he deserves.

Woe to mankind, woe to our German nation if God's Holy Commandment 'Thou shalt not kill,' which God proclaimed on Mount Sinai amidst thunder and lightning, which God our Creator inscribed in the conscience of mankind from the very beginning, is not only broken, but if this transgression is actually tolerated and permitted to go unpunished.