

# The Franciscan Sisters of Christ the King

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<https://ssp.org/franciscansisters>

## Summer 2021

### CONVENT NEWS AND VIEWS...



Who is that bishop? Why is he in our newsletter? His name is Clemens August Graf von Galen (pronounced GAH-len. Graf is German for Count.) In a world

where one must learn Catholic social principles almost exclusively in textbooks, at a time when so many people struggle to discern how to apply and defend those principles, it is inspiring to read about the life of a holy and courageous Bishop who “fought the good fight” against the Nazi powers of evil in a way that only a Bishop could. The book is *The Lion of Münster* by Father Daniel Utrecht of the Oratory. We can hardly summarize the incredible story in this short newsletter, but we will try, in hopes that many will read more.

Bishop von Galen said of the aristocratic family into which he was born, “We Galens aren’t great-looking and maybe we’re not very smart, but we’re Catholic to the marrow.” His noble, joyful, and truly Catholic parents imparted to him their own simplicity, a quality he exuded his entire life. They also taught him to think as well as to pray, a trait which served him well.

He received the mark of the priesthood on May 28, 1904. When transferred to Berlin, he found himself among faithful who had moved to the city for work and had grown apathetic to religion, imbibing many of the errors of socialism. In order to bolster their Faith, he encouraged young men to live in a Kolping House. The Kolping Society was established in the mid-1800s by Father Adolph Kolping for Catholic workers. A Kolping house gave a place for German working men to live, to support one another, to cleanse their beliefs from errors. It had an element of a worker’s union to it as well. The Kolping Society still exists worldwide today, even in the United

States. Father von Galen lived with the men in a Kolping house he built with his inherited fortune.

The Bishop’s consecration took place on October 28, 1933. His prayer life, though written about in the book, does not receive frequent mention. There were no recorded visions, ecstasies, or other such notable events, save one miracle attested to after his death: the instantaneous cure of a child in India suffering from acute appendicitis. We do know that during his life, he prayed the prayers of a priest and Bishop. His actions bespeak those powerful prayers.



One might expect that he openly denounced the Nazis from the very beginning, and that he continued with constant, open attacks until the very end. He did not. Though described as a fighter and not a negotiator, von Galen did consider the ways of the enemy before taking action. At first, he quietly instructed his priests how to counter the evil ideas and false theology the Nazis had set out to propagate. He gave them five means to bolster the Faith of the flock: schools, the pulpit, visits to the homes of parishioners, frequent days of recollection and retreats, and the forming of small study groups to consider various topics of doctrine and Church History. He then instructed his priests to pray and do penance, reminding them that Our Lord once told his apostles that some demons can only be cast out by prayer and fasting.

By 1936, Bishop von Galen believed very firmly that the Bishops should go public in denouncing the violations of rights perpetrated by the government. However, he also firmly believed that the Bishops had to present a united front. As it happens in life, they did not all agree on how to proceed. Cardinal Bertram, the eldest of the episcopal leadership and a man who lived through the atrocities of the

*Kulturkampf*, still hoped quiet diplomatic petitions would succeed. Bishops von Galen and von Preysing favored pointed, public denouncing of the evil. This was not a question of doctrine, merely one of tactics.

The men kept their disagreements private. Bishop von Galen stated that he felt he should not push too hard, because he did not know for certain if his tactics were really the ones to use. In January of 1937, a small delegation travelled to Rome at the pope's invitation to discuss the matter. The result was a decision to go public, and Pius XI put out the encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*—"With Burning Anxiety." Bishop von Galen asked a local printer if he would risk printing copies of the encyclical. The printer courageously agreed, with the consequence of losing the business his family had run for 300 years. He did not get the property back until 1950. Many other printers took equal risks in order to secretly publish his sermons and letters, as did members of The White Rose resistance movement, who found his courage inspiring.



The first time His Excellency ascended the pulpit to denounce the Nazis, those present reported an audible tremor in his voice. He knew the risk. He expected to lose his life. Afraid or not, he lived his motto: "Nec Timore, Nec Laudibus." Neither fear nor praise would stop him from accomplishing his mission as a bishop. He did it. Records uncovered after the war revealed that Nazi officials twice ordered his execution. They never followed through, presumably to keep control over the province. Hitler hissed that he would take care of von Galen after the war, following the advice of Goebbels, who said that "revenge is better served up cold."

Bishop von Galen has received criticism from historians, who think that he should have taken more public action against the Nazis. However, the Bishop knew that public protest might not always meet with success, and that he had to weigh each new situation carefully before deciding how to proceed. For example,

a Nazi attack on the Jews took place during his absence from Münster. Upon his return, a delegation of Jews approached him and asked him if he would publicly denounce the evil. He told them he would do it, but asked if they were certain if in doing so he would not cause more harm than good. The Jews gave the



*The enormous Bishop von Galen walks next to a diminutive Nazi schoolmaster. The photograph came to be called "Church and State." Of the three known instances in which the Nazis changed their policies due to protest, two took place in Münster thanks to his inspiring example.*

matter serious consideration, and returned to him with the decision that it was not in their best interest for him to make a statement.

The Bishop wrote of his willingness to accept certain restrictions, but he drew the line at schools: *We could manage to come to terms with the suppression of our organizations, with prohibition of processions and pilgrimages, even with an end of State financial support for the Church. But with a compulsory State school that makes our children into pagans? In my opinion, we must give our utmost in battle against this. And the necessity of this battle must be so clear to our Catholic people and remain so pressing in their sight that thousands will leap into the breach if the first leaders fall in the battle!*

Among his many writings and sermons against the Nazi regime, perhaps the most inspiring is the "anvil sermon." Here are some excerpts:

*Keep steadfast! At present we are not the hammer, but the anvil. Others, most of them strangers to our way of life or rebels against it, are hammering on us, are trying by violent means to reform our nation, ourselves, our youth, to bend us away from the straightforward relationship to God.*

*We are the anvil not the hammer! But take a look in the blacksmith's shop! Ask the smith and let him tell you: what is formed on the anvil takes its shape not only from the hammer, but also from the anvil. The anvil cannot hit back and doesn't have to: it only has to be firm and hard. If it is sufficiently tough, firm, hard, then usually the anvil lasts longer than the hammer. No matter how vehemently the hammer strikes,*

*the anvil stands in peaceful firmness, and will long serve to form what is being forged.*

He goes on to list all who are being forged by the hammer and anvil, ending with the youth of the country:

*We are the anvil, not the hammer! Sadly, you cannot spare your children, that noble but as yet unhardened and unformed raw metal, from the hammer strokes of hatred of the faith, hatred of the Church. But the anvil also does its work in forming the metal: let your parental home, your parental love and loyalty, let your exemplary Christian life be the hard, tenacious, firm, immovable anvil, which parries the weight of the enemy's blows, which continually strengthens the as yet weak power of the young people and confirms in them the holy will never to stray from the path that leads to God*

He emphasized the following: *We Christians do not make revolutions! We will remain loyal to our duty, in obedience to God, out of love for our German nation and fatherland....But against the [Nazi] enemy within, who torments and strikes us, we cannot fight with weapons. There remains only one means of fighting for us: strong, stubborn, tough resistance.* The sermon is worth reading in its entirety.

In another sermon he spoke of Our Lord weeping over Jerusalem and consequently, Germany: *Thus [says our Lord] would I protect you, shelter you, defend you against every kind of trouble. I would. You would not! That is why Jesus weeps, that is why this strong man weeps, that is why God weeps. Over the foolishness, the unrighteousness, the crime of this not-willing. And over the calamity which would come from it, which His omniscience saw coming, which His justice must decree, if man sets his not-willing against the commandments of God, all the warnings of his conscience, all the loving invitations of the divine Friend, the best of Fathers...*

His Excellency carefully listed the ways in which the Nazi government “non-willed,” violating each of the Ten Commandments. Addressing the Fifth Commandment, he denounced the mass murder of the sick and mentally ill, digging down to the root: materialism. “It is judged that they can no longer produce goods...What does one do with such old machines? They are scrapped...We are not dealing with machines...Do you, do I, have the right to life only as long as we are

productive, only so long as others acknowledge that we are productive?” He pointed out that soon the government could label anyone as “unproductive” and pronounce a death sentence. Indeed, in reading the biography, one might feel a little haunted by the specters of Nazi ideology which loom ever-present in our own times.

After the war, the Bishop received news of his appointment as Cardinal via the media before the official letter arrived. His trip to Italy with Bishop Frings rivals some of the most interesting travel-race stories, fraught with obstacles such as bombed out roads and rails, high water and lack of cooperation from occupying Allied Forces. They would not have made it had the French not rescued the situation. On the day he received the Cardinal's hat, he was clearly the favorite, even more than the American Cardinal Spellman, who in his turn arranged for a more agreeable return trip for the Germans.



Cardinal von Galen (center), Cardinal Frings (left), and Cardinal von Preysing (right.) in an American military airplane. Our Sister Clare was surprised to see her grandfather's cousin in the photo, the grinning American Colonel in the corner. A New Yorker from Cardinal Spellman's archdiocese, he happily served as escort and translator for the Cardinals on their return trip from Rome. The plane was grounded in Paris due to weather, and they took a train for the rest of the return journey.

The beloved von Galen died from appendicitis just over a month after receiving the Cardinal's hat. He had already started drafting plans for the restoration of Germany according to Catholic doctrine and Catholic social principles. Why Our Lord took His faithful servant home at that moment is a mystery. Perhaps He did not want a shroud to fall over Bishop von Galen's war efforts. This inspiring story of a Lion-hearted man who risked all for his flock gives us hope. May his life and example inspire us to defend the Faith with courage and prudence. *Nec Laudibus, Nec Timore!* We encourage you to read *The Lion of Münster!*

# Our Lady of Telgte



Cardinal von Galen made many pilgrimages to the shrine of Our Lady of Telgte, and his cardinal's ring rested beside the statue until the ring was stolen in 1969. The miraculous image dates back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and is one of the earliest known Pietas. Desiring the conversion of Europe, an ancestor of von Galen, Prince-Bishop Christoph von Galen, built the shrine chapel in 1654 following the Thirty Years War. The war, fought between Catholics and Protestants, centered in Germany and ended in the disastrous Peace of Westphalia, which opened the door to religious indifferentism. The bishop entrusted the care of the shrine to the Franciscan Order. Pope St. Pius X ordered the crowning of the statue by the Archbishop of Cologne. Telgte is a stop on the Westphalian Way of the Compostela pilgrimage. During WWII, pilgrims would pose as hikers to make their devotional journey to Telgte. An apparition of Our Lady, which inspired the carved wood statue, is associated with a linden tree (basswood) which still lives. The tree is called Maria Linden.

Our thanks to Father Daniel Utrecht for his advice and assistance with information about historical photographs and Our Lady's statue



*I desire that this act of renewal of my Holy Profession be valid and agreeable before the Holy Trinity, that it last forever and be expressed again and again with every pulsation of my heart, so that as long as I live, I renew it constantly, and keep it faithfully until the end.*

April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021



Sr. Mary Elizabeth Rose with her SSPX Sister-sisters, Sr. Marie Laurence, who just took 1<sup>st</sup> vows, and Gemma, a pre-postulant.

High School trip- at the St. Louis Arch.



Thank you to the high school girls who helped us expand our library. We received a donation of larger, used bookshelves from a local law firm.



High school girls also helped us weave privacy slats into the new chain-link fence. The fence will provide a privacy barrier between us and the new school building which will be erected close to our property. We plan to replace the northeast corner of our convent roof next.

**To make an electronic donation, please go to:**  
<https://www.paypal.com/us/fundraiser/charity/1297193>

Our ceremony on August 2<sup>nd</sup> is at 9am. Vistors may return from 2 p.m. until 4 p.m. Due to space constraints, this year's post-ceremony banquet is reserved for family and invited guests only. Thank you for your understanding!