



# The Holy See

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ENCYCLICAL LETTER  
OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS XII  
BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE POPE

TO OUR VENERABLE BRETHERN THE PATRIARCHS, PRIMATES, ARCHBISHOPS,  
BISHOPS AND OTHER ORDINARIES IN PEACE AND COMMUNION WITH THE  
APOSTOLIC SEE ON MOTION PICTURES, RADIO AND TELEVISION

## *MIRANDA PRORSUS*

### INTRODUCTION

Those very remarkable technical inventions which are the boast of the men of our generation, though they spring from human intelligence and industry, are nevertheless the gifts of God, Our Creator, from Whom all good gifts proceed: "for He has not only brought forth creatures, but sustains and fosters them once created".<sup>1</sup>

Of these inventions, some increase and multiply the strength and power of men; others improve their conditions of life; while others - and these particularly concern the mind - reach the mass of the people themselves, either directly or through the pictures and sounds they produce, and convey to them in a form easy to understand, the news, thoughts and usages of every nation, and by these means provide, as it were, food for the mind especially during the hours of rest and recreation.

With regard to this last type of invention, in our own age the greatest impetus has been received by the arts connected with Motion Pictures, Radio and Television.

## REASONS FOR THE CHURCH'S INTEREST

From the time when these arts first came into use, the Church welcomed them, not only with great joy, but also with a motherly care and watchfulness, having in mind to protect Her children from every danger, as they set out on this new path of progress.

This watchful care springs from the mission She has received from the Divine Saviour Himself ; for, as is clear to all, these new forms of art exercise very great influence on the manner of thinking and acting of individuals and of every group of men.

There is, in addition, another reason why the Church considers a matter of this kind to be particularly Her concern: Hers is the duty, and for a much stronger reason than all others can claim, of announcing a message to every man: this is the message of eternal salvation; a message unrivalled in its richness and power, a message, *in fine*, which all men of every race and every age must accept and embrace, according to the saying of the Apostle of the Gentiles: "To me, the least of all the saints, is given this grace, to preach among the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to enlighten all men that they may see what is the mystery which hath been hidden from eternity in God, who created all things".<sup>2</sup>

## PREVIOUS PAPAL UTTERANCES

It is therefore not surprising that they who exercise the supreme authority of the Church, have treated of this important matter with the intention of providing for the eternal salvation of those who are "not redeemed with corruptible things of gold and silver... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled";<sup>3</sup> and they have weighed carefully all the questions with which Motion Pictures, Radio, and Television today confront Christians.

More than twenty years have passed since Our predecessor of happy memory, Pius XI, making use of "the remarkable invention of Marconi", issued the first message by Radio "to all nations and to every creature".<sup>4</sup>

A few years later, this same predecessor of Ours sent to the Hierarchy of the United States of America that memorable Encyclical Letter entitled *Vigilanti Cura*.<sup>5</sup> In that letter, while giving wise principles concerning films, adapted to existing needs, he said this: "Here is a matter for which immediate provision is absolutely necessary: we must ensure that all progress made, by God's favour, both in human knowledge and in technical skill, shall in practice so serve God's glory, the salvation of souls and the extension of Christ's kingdom, that we all, as the Church bids us pray, may so pass through temporal goods that we may not lose what is eternal." <sup>6</sup>

And We Ourselves, in the course of Our Supreme Pontificate, have often, when opportunity offered, dealt with this same question, giving appropriate directives not only to Bishops, but also to various branches of Catholic Action and to Christian educators. And, further, We have gladly admitted to Our presense those whose special profession it is to practise the art of the Motion Pictures or Radio or Television. To these, after We have made clear Our admiration for the notable progress they have achieved in those arts, We have pointed out the obligations by which each is bound; and at the same time, beside the great merit they have won, We set out the dangers into which they can easily fall, and the high ideals which ought to enlighten their minds and direct their wills.

We have also, as you know, taken steps to set up in the Roman Curia a special Commission,<sup>7</sup> whose task it is to make careful study of the various questions connected with Motion Pictures, Radio and Television which touch on the Catholic Faith and Christian morals. From this Commission, Bishops and all other interested parties can expect to obtain appropriate directives.

Very often We Ourselves have made use of the modern remarkable inventions by which We can unite the worldwide flock with its Supreme Pastor, so that Our voice, passing in sure and safe flight over the expanse of sea and land and even over the troubled emotions of souls, may reach men's minds with a healing influence, in accordance with the demands of the task of the supreme apostolate, confided to Us and today extended almost without limit.<sup>8</sup>

## RESULTS OF THE PAPAL TEACHING

We are not a little comforted since We know that the addresses on this subject, both Our own and those of Our late predecessor of happy memory, Pius XI, have had considerable influence in directing the arts of Motion Pictures, Radio and Television to the task of recalling men to the pursuit of the perfection of their individual souls, and thus, to the promotion of God's glory.

For, by your diligent and watchful care, Venerable Brethren, the initiative was given to works by which an apostolate on these lines was not only encouraged in individual dioceses and nations, but also embraced whole peoples by means of united efforts and plans.

Not a few statesmen as well as those who are engaged in the professions or in business, and most of those, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, who attend shows of this kind, gave evidence of their sane thinking on this important matter; and, at the cost of trouble and even material loss, made efforts that not only the dangerous evils should be avoided, but that the sacred commandments of God should be obeyed and the dignity of the human person kept safe.

Yet We must, alas, repeat that sentence of the Apostle of the Gentiles: "Not all obey the Gospel";<sup>9</sup>

for, in this matter, there are not wanting those who neither understand nor recognise the teaching function of the Church; some even oppose it by every possible means. They are, as you know, those who are moved by an inordinate desire for gain; or, deceived by errors, they do not have a balanced view on human dignity and freedom; or finally, they give full acceptance to a false opinion about the real meaning of art.

Though the manner of acting of these men fills Our mind with grief, yet We cannot fail in Our duty and turn aside from the right path; We hope that there will be said likewise of Us, those words which His enemies used of Our Divine Redeemer: "We know that thou art a true speaker, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man".<sup>10</sup>

### REASONS FOR THIS LETTER

Just as very great advantages can arise from the wonderful advances which have been made in our day, in technical knowledge concerning Motion Pictures, Radio and Television, so too can very great dangers.

For these new possessions and new instruments which are within almost everyone's grasp, introduce a most powerful influence into men's minds, both because they can flood them with light, raise them to nobility, adorn them with beauty, and because they can disfigure them by dimming their lustre, dishonour them by a process of corruption, and make them subject to uncontrolled passions, according as the subjects presented to the senses in these shows are praiseworthy or reprehensible.<sup>11</sup>

In the past century, advancing technical skill in the field of business frequently had this result: machines, which ought to serve men, when brought into use, rather reduced them to a state of slavery and caused grievous harm. Likewise today, unless the mounting development of technical skill, applied to the diffusion of pictures, sounds and ideas, is subjected to the sweet yoke of the law of Christ,<sup>12</sup> it can be the source of countless evils, which appear to be all the more serious, because not only material forces but also the mind are unhappily enslaved, and man's inventions are, to that extent, deprived of those advantages which, in the design of God's Providence, ought to be their primary purpose.<sup>13</sup>

Consequently, since We, as a father, have daily pondered with ever greater anxiety, the essential nature of this problem and have considered the salutary benefits - so far as films are concerned - which have resulted during more than two decades from the Encyclical Letter *Vigilanti cura*, yielding to the petitions of the Bishops and those laymen who make a study of these arts, We wish by this letter to give directives and instructions with regard to both sound broadcasting and television.

Therefore, after We have made earnest prayer to God, and sought the help of His Virgin Mother, We address you, Venerable Brethren, whose wise pastoral care is well known to Us, with a view not only to setting forth clearly the Christian doctrine in this matter, but to undertaking suitable plans and initiatives. And so, with all the force at Our command, We desire to impress upon you how the flock, committed to the care of each one, should be protected against any errors and harm from whatever source, which the use of the arts under discussion can introduce - with serious risk - to the practices of Christian life.

## 1. GENERAL INSTRUCTION

### PUBLICISING CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

We are aware that each of these three arts of the Motion Pictures, Radio and Television, in fostering the development of mind and spirit, sets its own special problems to be solved in the field not only of the arts, but of technology and economics. But before We deal with the particular questions affecting each, We think it right to outline briefly the principles which concern the diffusion to the greatest possible extent, of the benefits which are destined both for human society in general and for individual citizens.

### THE "GOOD SEED"

Since God is the supreme Good, He at all times pours out His gifts on men who are objects of His special loving care. Of these gifts, some are to assist the material life on earth, but others concern the spirit; and, clearly, the former are subject to the latter in much the same way as the body should be subject to the soul with which, before God can communicate Himself by the beatific vision, He is united by faith and charity which "is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us".<sup>14</sup>

And further, since He longs to see in man the image of His own perfection, <sup>15</sup> He even wills him to be made a sharer in this supreme generosity, and has linked him with His own activity as the proclaimer of those good tidings, making him become their donor and dispenser to his brethren and to the whole human race. From the beginning of time, it has been man's natural and normal tendency to share with others the treasures of his mind by means of symbols whereby he daily tried to develop a more perfect means of expressing his material problems. Thus, from the drawings and inscriptions of the most ancient times down to the latest technical devices, all instruments of human communication inevitably have as their aim the lofty purpose of revealing men as in some way the assistants of God.

Hence, in order that the plan of God's Providence may be put more surely and fruitfully into effect, by virtue of Our Apostolic authority, We constituted, in an Apostolic Letter 16 "the Archangel Gabriel, who brought to the human race the long-desired news of man's Redemption, heavenly patron" of those arts by which men can employ electrical forces to transcribe words at very great speed to others at a distance, can hold converse from places widely apart, send messages by wireless, and view pictures of objects and events brought before them as if they were immediate spectators, though they are, in fact, far away.17 For, when We made choice of this heavenly patron, it was Our intention that all employed in these arts might fully understand the nobility of the task entrusted to them, for into their hands have been placed these useful instruments by which the priceless treasures of God may be spread among men like good seed which bring forth fruits of truth and goodness.

### "EVIL SEED"

For as We consider those honourable and lofty purposes to which this technical skill should be directed, the question presents itself: why do these same arts sometimes become the means, and, as it were, the paths leading to evil? "Whence then hath it cockle?"18

All evil, of course, which is opposed to right moral principles, cannot have its origin in God, Who is complete and absolute Good; nor does it come from the techniques themselves, which are His precious gifts. It can be only from the fact that man, endowed as he is with free will, can abuse those gifts, namely, by committing and multiplying evil, and thus associating himself with God's enemy, the prince of darkness: "An enemy hath done this".19 Consequently true human liberty demands that we use, and share with others, all these resources which can contribute to the strengthening and perfecting of our nature.

### TRUE FREEDOM OF COMMUNICATION

But since the Church is the teacher of the doctrine which leads to salvation, and has all that is necessary for the attainment of holiness, She is exercising an inviolable right when She teaches what has been committed to Her by divine command. It ought to be the duty of all public officials to recognise this sacred right, with the result that She should be given ready access to those arts by which She may spread truth and virtue.

Indeed, all true and active sons of the Church, since they recognise the priceless gift of the Redemption, are bidden to ensure, to the extent of their power, that the Church may use these technical discoveries in so far as they may assist the sanctification of souls.

Yet when We assert and claim these rights for the Church, it is not Our desire to deny to the State the right of spreading by the same means, that news and those teachings which are really necessary or useful for the common good of human society.

And further, let it be permitted even to individual citizens - due regard being paid to actual circumstances and the safeguarding of principles which promote the common good - to contribute according to their capacity to the enriching and development of their own and others' intellectual and spiritual culture.

### ERRORS CONCERNING FREEDOM OF COMMUNICATION

Contrary, however, to Christian teaching and the principal end of these arts is the will and intention of those who desire to use these inventions exclusively for the advancement and propagation of political measures or to achieve economic ends, and who treat Our noble aim as if it were a mere business transaction.

In like manner, approval cannot be given to the false principles of those who assert and claim freedom to depict and propagate *anything at all*, even though there has been established beyond dispute in these past years both the kind and the extent of the damage to both bodies and souls which has had its source in these principles. There is no question here of the true liberty of which We have spoken above, but rather of an uncontrolled freedom, which disregards all precautions, of communicating with others anything at all, even though it be contrary to sound morals and can result in serious danger to souls.

The Church encourages and supports everything which truly concerns a fuller enrichment of the mind - for She is the patron and fostermother of human knowledge and the noble arts; therefore She cannot permit the violation of those principles and laws which direct and govern man in his path to God, his final end. Let no one, then, be surprised if, in this matter, where many reservations are necessary, the Church acts with due thought and discretion, according to that saying of the Apostle: "But prove all things: hold fast that which is good. From all appearance of evil refrain yourselves".20

Those, therefore, are certainly to be blamed who openly declare that public communication of matters which impede, or are directly opposed to, principles of morality, should be encouraged and carried out so long as the method is in accord with the laws of the liberal or technical arts. In a short discourse, on the occasion of the fifth centenary of the death of Fra Angelico, We recalled to the minds of Our hearers that "it is true that an explicitly moral or religious function is not demanded of art as art"; but "if artistic expression gives publicity to false, empty and confused forms, - those not in harmony with the Creator's design; if, rather than lifting mind and heart to

noble sentiments, it stirs the baser passions, it might, perhaps, find welcome among some people, but only by nature of its novelty, a quality not always of value and with but slight content of that reality which is possessed by every type of human expression. But such an art would degrade itself, denying its primary and essential element: it would not be universal and perennial as is the human spirit to which it is addressed".21

### COMPETENCE OF PUBLIC AUTHORITY AND OF THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

Beyond all doubt, public administrators are strictly bound to be watchful over these modern arts also: nor should they look on this matter from a merely political standpoint, but also from that of public morals, the sure foundation of which rests on the Natural Law, which, inspired testimony assures us, is written in our hearts.22

It cannot be asserted that this watchful care of the State's officials is an unfair limitation on the liberty of individual citizens, for it is concerned with, not the private citizen as such, but rather the whole of human society with whom these arts are being shared.

"We are well aware", as We have already said on another occasion, "that there is a widespread opinion among men of our time who are unreasonably intolerant of the intervention of public authority, that censorship is to be preferred which comes directly from the Industry itself";23 but though the persons professionally engaged in these arts can, in a praiseworthy manner, support the action of public officials and render ineffective the evils which can easily damage true morality, yet those rules and safeguards which issue from the former ought in no way to be opposed to the serious duty of the latter.

Hence, both Our late predecessor and We Ourselves readily praised those who, in accordance with the task committed to them in this sphere, published suitable safeguards and rules without in any way prejudicing what belongs to the competence of public authority. For We think that, then only can these new arts make their proper and natural contribution to the right fashioning of the minds of those who use them, if the Church, the State, and those engaged in these professions, pooling their resources in an orderly way, cooperate with each other to secure the desired end; if the opposite happens, i. e. if these arts, without set laws or any moral safeguards, embark on a downward and uninhibited path, they will certainly restrict the people's true development and weaken their morals.

### SIGHT AND SOUND COMMUNICATION



Among the various technical arts which transmit the ideas of men, those occupy a special place today, as We said, which communicate as widely as possible news of all kinds to ears and eyes by means of sounds and pictures.

This manner of spreading pictures and sounds, so far as the spirit is concerned, is supremely adapted to the nature of men, as Aquinas says: "But it is natural to man to come to things of the understanding through things of sense ; for all our knowledge has its origin in a sense".<sup>24</sup> Indeed, the sense of sight, as being more noble and more honourable than other senses,<sup>25</sup> more easily leads to a knowledge of spiritual things.

Therefore, the three chief technical methods of telecommunication, i. e. those of the Motion Pictures, Radio and Television, deal not only with men's recreation and leisure - though many who "listen-in" and view, seek this alone, - but especially with the propagation of those subjects which, while aiding both mental culture and spiritual growth, can powerfully contribute to the right training and shaping of the civil society of our times.

Much more easily than by printed books, these technical arts can assuredly provide opportunities for men to meet and unite in common effort; and, since this purpose is essentially connected with the advancement of the civilization of all peoples, the Catholic Church - which, by the charge committed to it, embraces the whole human race - desires to turn it to the extension and furthering of benefits worthy of the name.

Indeed, this should be the first aim of the arts of the Motion Pictures, Radio and Television: to serve truth and virtue.

### IN THE SERVICE OF TRUTH AND VIRTUE

Let them be at the service of truth in such a way that the bonds between peoples may become yet closer; that they may have a more respectful understanding of each other; that they may assist each other in any crisis: that, finally, there may be real cooperative effort between the State officials and the individual citizens.

To be at the service of the truth demands not only that all refrain from error, from lies, from deceit of all kinds, but also that they shun everything that can encourage a manner of living and acting which is false, imperfect, or harmful to another party.

But above all, let the truths, handed down by God's revelation, be held sacred and inviolable. Rather, why should not these noble arts strive particularly to this end, that they spread the teaching of God and of His Son, Jesus Christ, "and instil into minds that Christian truth which

alone can provide the strength from above to the mass of men, aided by which they may be able with calmness and courage, to overcome the crises and endure the severe trials of the age in which we now live?" [26](#)

Moreover, these new arts should not only serve the truth, but also the perfecting of human life and morals. Let them make an active contribution to this in the three ways We are now going to write about: namely, in the news published, in the instruction imparted, in the shows presented.

### NEWS

News of any event, even if nothing but the bare fact is related, has yet an aspect of its own which concerns morality in some way. "This aspect, affecting human morals, must never be neglected ; for news of any kind provokes a mental judgment and influences the will. The news-reader who worthily fulfils his task, should crush no one by his words, but try rather to understand and explain as best he can, the disasters reported and the crimes committed. To explain is not necessarily to excuse; but it is to suggest the beginning of a remedy, and consequently, to perform a task at once positive and constructive".[27](#)

### INSTRUCTION

What We have just written has doubtless more force when it is a question of imparting instructions; documentary films, radio broadcasts, and television for schools provide ideas and open up new possibilities here, not only with regard to those who are still young, but also with regard to those of mature years. Yet every precaution must be taken that the instructions given are in no way contrary to the Church's teaching and its sacred rights, or impede or frustrate the proper duty of educating the young within the home circle.

Similarly, it is to be hoped that these new arts of publicity, whether exercised by private citizens or controlled by rulers of states, will not spread doctrines while suppressing all mention of God's name and taking no account of His divine law.

However, We are fully aware, alas, that in some nations amid which atheistic Communism is rampant, these methods of telecommunication are directed in the schools to root out all religious ideas from the mind. Indeed, anyone who considers this situation calmly and without prejudice, cannot fail to see that the consciences of children and youths, deprived of divine truth, are being oppressed in a new and subtle way, since they are unable to learn that truth revealed by God, which, as our Redeemer declared, makes us free;[28](#) and that by this cunning method a new attack

is being made on religion.

But We earnestly desire, Venerable Brethren, that these technical instruments, by which eyes and ears are easily and pleasantly attracted to events happening far away, should be employed to a particular end, namely, to provide men with a broader cultural background in the knowledge necessary for the fulfilment of their duties, and above all, in Christian principles. If these principles are neglected, there can be no progress worthy of the name, even in merely human matters.<sup>29</sup> We desire, therefore, to pay due tribute of praise to all those who, whether by films or sound broadcasting or television shows, direct their efforts towards this most honourable goal.

### SHOWS

Further, it must be noted that, apart from the published news and the instructions delivered, these new arts can contribute considerably towards the true good of men by shows as well.

The programmes have generally something which has reference not only to entertaining men and giving them news, but also to the training of their minds. With complete justice, then, Our predecessor of happy memory, Pius XI, called the film theatres the "schools of events";<sup>30</sup> for they can be called schools in this sense, that the dramatic plot is joined with scenes in which the vivid pictures which are portrayed by the moving light, are synchronised with sounds of voices and music in a most fascinating manner, with the result that they reach not only the intelligence and other faculties, but the whole man, and, in some way, link him to themselves, and seem to sweep him into a participation in the plot presented.

Although the arts of the Motion Pictures, Radio and Television include, in some fashion, various types of spectacle already long in use, yet each expresses a new product, and thus a new kind of spectacle which is aimed not at a few chosen spectators, but at vast throngs of men, who differ among themselves in age, way of life and culture.

### MASS EDUCATION

In order, then, that, in such conditions, shows of this kind may be able to pursue their proper object, it is essential that the minds and inclinations of the spectators be rightly trained and educated, so that they may not only understand the form proper to each of the arts, but also be guided, especially in this matter, by a right conscience. Thus they will be enabled to practise mature consideration and judgment on the various items which the film or television screen puts before them, and not, as very frequently happens, be lured and arbitrarily swept away by the

power of their attraction.

If there is lacking this mental training and formation, enlightened by Christian teaching, then neither reasonable pleasures which "everyone readily admits are necessary for all who are involved in the business and troubles of life",<sup>31</sup> nor the progress of mental development can be kept safe.

The sound policy of Catholics who have encouraged, especially in recent years, the need to educate the spectators in this way, is most praiseworthy; and several plans have been launched which aim at making both youths and grown-ups willing to examine adequately and competently the benefits and the dangers of these shows, and give a balanced decision on them. This, however, should not provide an excuse for attending shows which are contrary to right morals; rather, it ought to lead to pointing out and choosing those only which are in accord with the Church's commandments on the grounds of religion and of the moral law, and which follow the instructions issued by the ecclesiastical Offices in this matter.

Provided these plans, in accordance with Our hopes, correspond to pedagogical principles and right rules of mental development, We not only give them Our approval, but also heartily commend them ; and thus We desire them to be introduced into every type of school, Catholic Action groups, and parish societies.

Right training and education of the spectators in this fashion will ensure, on the one hand, a lessening of the dangers which can threaten harm to morals ; and, on the other hand, permit Christians, through the new knowledge they acquire, to raise their minds to a contemplation of heavenly truths.

While speaking on this point, We desire to praise in a particular manner those preachers of the divine word who make right use also of the means provided by Motion Pictures, Radio and Television to this end. They are aware that they are in duty bound to preserve the integrity of morals of those peoples to whom they minister and lead towards the path of truth ; and thus they share with them the genuinely salutary benefits and inventions which our times have introduced. We therefore desire that those who wield authority, either in Church or State, should in a special way support the activity and enterprise of these preachers.

### **ENTERTAINMENTS FOR YOUTH**

Yet it must be noticed that, in exercising control in this matter, the right training and education of the spectators, of which We have spoken, is not in itself sufficient. Each of the shows must be suited and adapted to the degree of intelligence of each age, the strength of their emotional and

imaginative response, and the condition of their morals.

This, indeed, assumes a very great importance because sound radio and television shows, since they easily penetrate right into the domestic circle, threaten to undermine the protective barriers by which the education of the young must be kept safe and sound until such time as advancing age gives the necessary strength to enable them to overcome the buffetings of the world. For this reason, three years ago, We wrote thus to the Bishops of Italy: "Should we not shudder if we reflect attentively that by means of television shows, even within home surroundings all can inhale that poisoned air of "materialistic" doctrines which diffuse notions of empty pleasures and desires of all kinds, in the same way as they did over and over again in cinema halls?"<sup>32</sup>

We are aware of the initiatives which have been encouraged not only by public authorities but also by private groups who are engaged in the education of youth; We mean those undertakings and plans by which they make every possible effort to withdraw young people from those shows which are unsuited to their age, though they are too often being attended, with resulting serious harm. Whatever is being done in this praiseworthy cause, We heartily approve; yet it must be noticed that, even more than the physiological and psychological disturbances which can arise therefrom, those dangers must be guarded against which affect the morals of youth, and which, unless turned aside and forbidden in due season, can greatly contribute to the damage and overthrow of human society itself.

Concerning this matter, We make a father's appeal to the young so dear to Us, trusting that - since it is a question of entertainment in which their innocence can be exposed to danger - they will be outstanding for their Christian restraint and prudence. It is their grave obligation to check and control that natural and unrestrained eagerness to see and hear *anything*; and they must keep their mind free from immodest and earthly pleasures and direct it to higher things.

### THE WORK OF THE CHURCH - NATIONAL OFFICES

Since the Church knows well that, from these new arts which directly affect the eye and ear, very many benefits as well as very many evils and dangers can arise, according as men make use of them, She desires to perform her duty in this matter also - in so far as it concerns directly, not culture in general, but religion in particular and the direction and control of morals.<sup>33</sup>

With a view to carrying out this task more fittingly and easily, Our predecessor of immortal memory, Pius XI, declared and proclaimed that "it is absolutely essential for Bishops to set up a permanent National Office of supervision whose business it would be to encourage decent films, but to give to others a recognised classification, and then to publish their judgment and make it known to priests and faithful";<sup>34</sup> and that it was necessary, he added, that all Catholic initiative

with regard to the Motion Pictures be directed to an honourable end.

In several countries, the Bishops, with these directives before their eyes, decided to set up Offices of this kind not only for matters connected with Motion Pictures, but also for Radio and Television.

As We consider, then, the spiritual advantages which can spring from these technical arts, together with the need to protect the integrity of Christian morals which such entertainments can easily endanger, We desire that, in every country, if the Offices referred to do not already exist, they be established without delay; these are to be entrusted to men skilled in the use of these arts, with some priest, chosen by the Bishops, as adviser.

Moreover, Venerable Brethren, We urge that in each country, these Offices dealing with Motion Pictures, or Radio or Television should depend on one and the same Committee, or at least, act in close cooperation. At the same time, We urge the faithful, particularly those who are vigorous members of Catholic Action, to be suitably instructed so that they may perceive the need to give willingly to these Offices their united and effective support.

And since there are a number of questions on this subject not capable of easy explanation and solution in individual countries, it will certainly be very useful if the National Offices of each country unite into an International Association to which this Holy See, after due consideration, will be able to give approval.

We have no doubt, Venerable Brethren, that you will produce fruitful and salutary results from what you will do, at some cost in toil and inconvenience, to obey these directives. But the result will be more easily and aptly attained if the particular rules, which We are going to set out in the course of this Encyclical Letter with regard to the Motion Pictures, Radio and Television separately considered, are carefully put into practice.

## **2. MOTION PICTURES**

Motion Pictures, which came into existence some sixty years ago, must today be numbered among the most important means by which the ideas and discoveries of our times can be made known. Concerning their various processes and their power of attraction, We have, when occasion offered, already spoken.<sup>35</sup> Out of this growth, particularly in the case of films which reproduce a definite story expressed in a vivid manner by pictures and sounds, there has also sprung up a great industry in which not only craftsmen, labourers and technicians, but also financial groups unite their activities; for private individuals cannot easily carry through such an extensive and complex operation. Hence, in order that the cinema may remain a worthy instrument by which men can be guided towards salvation, raised to higher things, and become really better,<sup>36</sup> it is

absolutely necessary for each of those groups just referred to, exercising a true sense of responsibility, to cooperate readily with each other to produce and distribute films which can win approval.

To all those who practise vigilance and act intelligently concerning film shows, We have already more than once made clear the seriousness of the subject, while exhorting them to produce, in particular, the kind of "ideal film" which can certainly contribute to a well balanced education.<sup>37</sup>

Do you, Venerable Brethren, take a special interest in seeing that, through the individual National Offices, which must be subject to your authority, and about which We have written above, there shall be imparted to the various classes of interested citizens information on the matters to be viewed, - the advice and the directives by which, in accordance with the different times and circumstances, this most noble art, which can so much help the good of souls, may be as far as possible advanced.

### FILM CLASSIFICATION

For this purpose, "let tables or lists be composed and printed in a definite arrangement, in which films distributed will, as frequently as possible, be listed so as to come to the notice of all";<sup>38</sup> and let this be done by a Committee of reliable men, which will depend on each of your National Offices. These men, of course, should be outstanding for their doctrine and practical prudence since they have to pass judgment on each film according to the rules of Christian morality.

We most earnestly exhort the members of this Committee to devote in a suitable manner to these topics, deep and prolonged study and devout prayer; for they have to deal with a most important matter which is closely bound up with the Christian concept of life, and consequently, they must have a sound knowledge of that power which is exerted by the cinema, and which varies according to the different circumstances of the spectators.

As often as they have to judge the moral aspect of a cinema programme, they should attentively revise within themselves those directives already many times given by Us, as occasion offered; and particularly when We spoke of the "ideal film", of the points which concern religion, and at the same time of representation of evil deeds: it should never ignore or be opposed to human dignity, to the modesty of the home surroundings, to holiness of life, to the Church of Jesus Christ, to human and civil types of association.

Moreover, let them remember that the task allowed to them of classifying and passing judgment on each film programme, aims especially at giving clear and appropriate guidance to public opinion, with the intention of leading all to value highly the rules and principles of morality, without

which the right development of minds and true civilization become meaningless terms.

Unquestionably, therefore, one must repudiate the manner of acting of those who, from excessive indulgence, admit films which, for all their technical brilliance, nevertheless offend right morals; or, though they appear on the surface to conform to the moral laws, yet contain something which is contrary to the Catholic Faith.

But if they have clearly and publicly indicated which films can be seen by all, by the young, by adults; and those, on the other hand, which are a moral danger to the spectators; and finally, those which are entirely bad and harmful, then each will be able to attend those films only, from which "they will come out with minds happier, freer and better";<sup>39</sup> and they will be able to avoid those which can be harmful to them, and doubly so, of course, when they will have been a means of gain for traffickers in evil things, and given bad example to others.

Repeating the timely instructions which Our predecessor of happy memory, Pius XI, published in his Encyclical Letter, entitled *Vigilanti Cura*,<sup>40</sup> We earnestly desire that Christians be not only warned with care, as frequently as possible, on this topic, but that they fulfil the grave obligation of acquainting themselves with the decisions issued by Ecclesiastical Authority on matters connected with Motion Pictures, and of faithfully obeying them. The Bishops, if they deem it appropriate, will be able to set aside a special day each year devoted to this matter, on which the faithful will be carefully instructed concerning their duty, particularly with regard to Film shows, and urged to offer earnest prayers to God about the same.

To make it easy for all to be familiar with these decisions and to obey them, these directives, together with a short commentary on them, must be published at some suitable time, and distributed as widely as possible.

### FILM CRITICISM

To this end, Catholic Film critics can have much influence; they ought to set the moral issue of the plots in its proper light, defending those judgments which will act as a safeguard against falling into so-called "relative morality", or the overthrow of that right order in which the lesser issues yield place to the more important.

Quite wrong, therefore, is the action of writers in daily papers and in reviews, claiming to be Catholic, if, when dealing with shows of this kind, they do not instruct their readers concerning the moral position to be adopted.



## THEATRE MANAGERS

There is a duty of conscience binding the spectators who, each time they buy a ticket of admission, - as it were casting a vote - make choice of good or bad motion pictures; a similar duty, and even more so, binds those who manage movie theatres or distribute the films.

We are well aware of the magnitude of the difficulties which today confront those engaged in the Motion Picture industry because of - in addition to other considerations - the great increase in the use of television. Yet, even when confronted by these difficult circumstances, they must remember that they are forbidden in conscience to present film programmes which are contrary to the Faith and sound morals, or to enter into contracts by which they are forced to present shows of this kind. But since in many countries, men engaged in this industry have bound themselves not to exhibit, for any consideration, film programmes which might be harmful or evil, We trust that the excellent initiative will spread to all parts of the world, and that no catholic in cinema management will hesitate to follow such sane and salutary proposals.

We must also utter a vigorous warning against the display of commercial posters which ensnare or give scandal, even though, as sometimes happens, such publicity refers to decent films. "Who can say what harm is wrought in minds, especially of the young, by these pictures, what base thoughts and impure pleasures are aroused, how much they contribute to the corruption of public morals with consequent damage to the well-being of the State itself?" [41](#)

## CATHOLIC HALLS

Consequently, in cinema halls subject to ecclesiastical authority, since there have to be provided for the faithful, and particularly for the young, shows which are suitable to upright training and in keeping with the surroundings, it is clear that only those films may be exhibited which are entirely beyond reproach.

Let the Bishops, keeping a watchful eye on these halls, - including those of exempt religious, - to which the public has access, warn all ecclesiastics on whom the responsibility falls, to observe faithfully and exactly the rules laid down in these matters, and let them not be too much taken up with their personal advantage if they wish to play their part in this ministry which the Holy See considers of the highest importance. We especially advise those who control these Catholic halls, to group themselves together - as, with Our full approval and consent, has been done in a number of places - the more effectively to put into practice the recommendations of the respective National Offices, and support common advantages and policies.

## FILM DISTRIBUTORS

The counsel which We have given to theatre managers We wish to apply also to the distributors who, since they sometimes contribute financially to the making of the actual films, have obviously a greater opportunity and, consequently, are bound by a more serious obligation, of giving their support to reputable films. For distribution cannot be in any sense reckoned as a technical function of the business, since films - as We have often stated - are not only to be regarded as articles for sale, but also, and this is more important, to be considered as food for the mind and, as it were, a means of spiritual and moral training for the ordinary people. So distributors and hirers share to the same degree in merit and responsibility according as something good or evil results from the screen.

## ACTORS

Since, therefore, there is question of bringing the Motion Picture industry into line with sounder policies, that is no slight responsibility which rests on the actors; they, indeed, remembering their dignity as human beings and as experienced artists, should know that they are not permitted to lend their talents to parts in plays, or to be connected with the making of films, which are contrary to sound morals. But an actor, having gained a famous name by his talent and skill, ought to use that renown which he has justly won in such a way that he inspires the mind of the public with noble sentiments; in particular, he should remember to give a notable example of virtue to others in his private life. When addressing professional actors on one occasion in the past, We made this assertion: "Everyone can see that, in the presence of a throng of people listening open-mouthed to your words, applauding and shouting, your own feelings are stirred and filled with a certain joy and exaltation".<sup>42</sup> But if it can be said that someone is fully justified in feeling these emotions, yet it does not follow that Christian actors may accept from their audience expressions of praise which savour of a type of idolatry, since, in this case also, Our Saviour's words apply: "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Who is in heaven".<sup>43</sup>

## PRODUCERS AND DIRECTORS

But the heaviest responsibility - though for a different reason - falls on the directors and producers. The awareness of this burden is not an obstacle to noble undertakings, but rather ought to strengthen the minds of those who, endowed with good will, are influential by reason of their money or natural talent in the production of films. In addition, it often happens that film producers and directors meet a serious difficulty when the circumstances and demands of their art come into

contact with the precepts of religion and the moral law. In that case, before the film is printed, or while it is being produced, some competent advice should be sought and a sound plan adopted to provide for both the spiritual good of the spectators and the perfection of the work itself. Let these men not hesitate to consult the local established Catholic Motion Pictures Office, which will readily come to their assistance by delegating some qualified ecclesiastical adviser to look after the business, should this be necessary, and so long as due precautions are observed.

And the result of this confidence which they place in the Church, will not be a lessening of their authority or popularity; "for the Faith, until the end of time, will be the bulwark of the human person"<sup>44</sup> and in the production of the works themselves, the human person will be enriched and perfected in the light of Christian teaching and correct moral principles.

Nevertheless, ecclesiastics are not permitted to offer their cooperation to film directors without the express consent of their superiors, since, obviously, to give sound advice in this matter, special excellence in the art and a more than ordinary training are essential, and a decision on these cannot be left to the whim of individuals.

We therefore give a fatherly warning to Catholic film directors and producers, not to permit films to be made which are opposed to the Faith or Christian morals; but if, - which God forbid - this should happen, it is the duty of the Bishops to admonish them, and, if necessary, to impose appropriate sanctions.

But We are convinced that, to bring the Motion Pictures to the heights of the "ideal film", nothing is more effective than for those engaged in film production to act in conformity with the commandments of Christian law.

Let those responsible for making films approach the sources from which all the highest gifts flow, let them master the Gospel teaching, and make themselves familiar with the Church's traditional doctrine on the certainties of life, on happiness and virtue, on sorrow and sin, on body and soul, on social problems and human desires; they will then obtain new and excellent plots which they may adopt, and they will feel themselves inspired by a fresh enthusiasm to produce works of lasting value.

Those initiatives and practices, therefore, must be encouraged and extended by which their spiritual life is nourished, and given strength and development; but particular attention must here be paid to the christian training of those young people who are planning to enter the cinema world professionally.

To conclude these instructions with regard to the Motion Pictures, We urge State officials not on any account to lend support to the production or making available of films of a low type, but, by establishing suitable regulations, to lend their aid to the providing of decent film programmes

which can be commended, particularly when they are intended for youth. When such large sums are being spent on public education, let them direct their attention to this also: that reasonable assistance be given to this matter, which is essentially a part of education.

But since in certain countries, and also in international festivals, prizes are established and rightly awarded to those films which are recommended for their educative and spiritual value, We trust that all good and prudent men, following Our counsels, will strive to ensure that the applause and approval of the general public will not be wanting, as a prize for really worthwhile films.

### 3. RADIO

No less carefully do We desire to express to you, Venerable Brethren, the anxiety which besets Us with regard to that other means of communication which was introduced at the same period as the cinema: We refer to Radio.

Though it is not endowed to anything like the same extent with scenic properties and other advantages of time and place, as is the cinema industry, sound radio has yet other advantages, not all of which have yet been exploited.

For, as We said to the members and directors of a broadcasting company, "this method of communication is such that it is, as it were, detached from and unrestricted by conditions of place and time which block or delay all other methods of communication between men. On a kind of winged flight much swifter than sound waves, with the speed of light, it passes in a moment over all frontiers, and delivers the news committed to it".<sup>45</sup>

Brought to almost complete perfection by new inventions, wireless telegraphy brings outstanding advantages to technical processes, since, by means of a ray, pilotless machines may be directed to a determined place. But We rightly think that the most excellent function which falls to Radio is this: to enlighten and instruct men, and to direct their minds and hearts towards higher and spiritual things.

But there is in men, though they may be within their own homes, a deep desire to listen to other men, to obtain knowledge of events happening far away, and to share in aspects of the social and cultural life of others.

Hence it is not remarkable that a very large number of houses have, within a short period of time, been equipped with receiving sets, by which, as it were through secret windows opening on to the world, contact is made night and day with the active life of men of different civilizations, languages and races. This is brought about by the countless wireless programmes which cover news,

interviews, talks, and items conveying useful and pleasant information derived from public events, the arts, singing, and orchestral music.

For as We said recently, "how great is the advantage enjoyed, how great the responsibility laid on men of the present day, and how great the changes from times gone by when instruction in truth, commandments of brotherly love, promises of everlasting happiness, came slowly to men through the Apostles, treading the rough paths of that former age; whereas, in our day, the divine message can be conveyed to tens and hundreds of thousands of men at one and the same time".<sup>46</sup>

It befits Catholics, then, to make use of this privilege of our day, and to draw extensively from the rich fund of doctrine, recreation, art and also of the divine Word, which sound broadcasting brings to them, since they can thus increase and widen their range of interests.

Everyone knows what a great contribution good radio programmes can make to sound education; yet from the use of this instrument there arises an obligation in conscience as in the other technical arts, since it can be employed to achieve good or evil. Those words, then, written in Scripture, can be applied to the art of Radio: "By it we bless God and the Father ; and by it we curse men, who are made after the likeness of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing".<sup>47</sup>

### DUTY OF THE LISTENER

The first duty of the radio listener is that of choosing carefully and deliberately from the programmes offered; these must not be permitted to enter the home indiscriminately, but access should be given them on the same principles as are observed in a deliberate and prudent invitation to a friend. A person would act wrongly if he made no selection in introducing friends into his home. So radio programmes which are given entrance there, must be such as encourage truth and goodness, and do not draw members of the family away from the fulfilment of their duty, whether to individuals or to society; they should be such as strengthen them to carry out these duties properly, and, in the case of children and youths, cause no harm, but rather assist and extend the salutary control of parents and teachers.

Let the Catholic Offices for Radio set up in each country, making use of Catholic daily papers and reviews, endeavour to inform the faithful beforehand on the nature and value of the programmes. It will not always be possible to give such advance notice; and often, these will only be summary views, where the content of the programme cannot be known easily beforehand.

Parish priests should warn their flocks that they are forbidden by divine law to listen to radio programmes which are dangerous to their Faith or morals, and they should exhort those engaged

in the training of youth, to be on the watch and to instill religious principles with regard to the use of radio sets installed in the home.

Moreover, it is the duty of the Bishops to call on the faithful to refrain from listening to stations which are known to broadcast a defence of matter formally opposed to the Catholic Faith.

Another duty which binds listeners, is to make known to the directors of the programmes their wishes and justifiable criticism. This obligation arises clearly from the nature of sound radio, which is such that a wholly one-sided policy may come into existence, namely, that directed by the speaker to the listener. Although those systems of surveying public opinion, which are increasing in these days, to find out the degree of interest aroused in the listeners by each programme, are doubtless useful to those who direct the programmes, yet it can happen that popular appreciation, more or less vigorously expressed, can be attributed to trivial or transient causes, or to enthusiasms with no rational basis, so that a judgment of this kind cannot be taken as a sure guide for action.

That being the case, radio listeners ought to rouse themselves to obtain a well-balanced opinion among the general public, by which, while observing proper methods, these programmes are - according to their merits - approved, supported, rebuked, thus bringing it about that the art of Radio, considered as a method of education, "may serve the truth, good morals, justice and love".<sup>48</sup>

To bring about this effect is the task of all Catholic societies which are zealous for securing the good of Christians in this matter. But in those countries where local circumstances suggest it, groups of listeners or viewers can be organized for this purpose, under the supervision of the National Motion Pictures, Radio and Television Offices established in each country.

Finally, let listeners to the Radio be aware that they are obliged to encourage reputable programmes, and particularly those by which the mind is directed towards God. In this age in particular, when false and pernicious doctrines are being spread over the air, when, by deliberate "jamming", a kind of aerial "iron curtain" is being created with the express purpose of preventing the entry of truth which would overthrow the empire of atheistic materialism, in this age, We say, when hundreds of thousands of the human race are still looking for the dawning light of the Gospel message, when the sick and others likewise handicapped look forward anxiously to taking part in some manner in the prayers and the ceremonies of the Mass of the Christian community, should not the faithful, especially those who make daily use of the advantages of the Radio, show themselves eager to encourage programmes of this kind?

### **RELIGIOUS PROGRAMMES**

We are fully aware of the effort already made in some countries, and now being made, to increase the Catholic programmes from Radio stations. Many, from among both clergy and laity, have been in the front of the fight, and by vigorous exertions, have secured for religious radio programmes a place befitting divine worship, which is more important than all human affairs taken together.

But in the meantime, while We ponder to what extent Radio can assist the work of the sacred ministry, and while We are moved strongly by the command of our Divine Redeemer, "Going into the whole world, preach the Gospel to every creature", [49](#) We feel We must exhort you paternally, Venerable Brethren, to strive - according to the need and resources of your respective localities - to increase in number and make more effective programmes dealing with Catholic affairs.

Since a properly dignified presentation of liturgical ceremonies, of the truths of the Catholic Faith, and of events connected with the Church, by means of Radio, obviously demands considerable talent and skill, it is essential that both priests and laymen who are selected for so important an activity should be well trained in suitable methods.

This end would clearly be assisted if, in countries where Catholics employ the latest radio equipment and have day-to-day experience, appropriate study and training courses could be arranged, by means of which learners from other countries also could acquire that skill which is indispensable if radio religious programmes are to attain the best artistic and technical standards.

It will be the function of the National Offices to encourage the various types of religious programmes within their territory and to organize and coordinate them with each other; they will, in addition, offer their cooperation, as far as possible, to the directors of the other Radio stations, due care being observed that nothing creeps into these transmissions contrary to sound morals.

With regard to ecclesiastics, including exempt religious, who are engaged in Radio or Television stations, it will be the Bishops' duty to impart suitable directives, the carrying out of which will be committed to the various National Offices.

### **CATHOLIC RADIO STATIONS**

We should like particularly to speak words of encouragement to Catholic radio stations. We are fully aware of the almost countless difficulties which have to be faced in this sphere; yet We trust that this apostolic work which We value so highly, will be pursued by them with energy and with mutual collaboration.

For Our part, We have arranged for the extension and perfecting of the Vatican Radio Station which has done excellent work for the Church, the salutary activity of which, as We declared to the

Catholics of Holland who contributed to it so generously, has well responded to "the ardent desires and the vital needs of the whole Catholic world".50

### PROGRAMME RESPONSIBILITY

Moreover, We desire to extend Our thanks to all upright directors and producers of radio programmes for their fair assessment of the needs of the Church to which many of them have borne testimony, either by freely assigning a suitable time for the propagation of God's Word, or by supplying the necessary equipment. By this way of acting, they are certainly sharing in the special reward of apostolic work, even though it is being carried out over the air, according to Our Lord's promise: "Who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet, will receive the reward of a prophet".51

In these days, technical excellence in radio programmes requires that they be in conformity to the true principles of the art; hence their authors and those engaged in preparing and producing them must be equipped with sound doctrine and a well-stored mind. Consequently, We earnestly invite them also, as We did the members of the Motion Picture industry, to make full use of that superabundance of material from the storehouse of Christian civilization. Finally, let the bishops remind State officials that it is part of their duty to exercise appropriate diligence in safeguarding the transmission of programmes relating to the Catholic Church, and that special consideration should be given to holy days and to the daily spiritual needs of Christians.

### 4. TELEVISION

It remains, Venerable Brethren, to speak briefly to you about Television, which, in the course of Our Pontificate, has in some nations taken tremendous steps forward, and in others is gradually coming into use.

The ever growing development of this art, which beyond all doubt is an event of great importance in human history, has been followed by Us with lively interest and high hopes, but also with serious anxiety; and while on the one hand, We have, from the beginning, praised its potentialities for good and the new advantages springing therefrom, We have also, on the other hand, foreseen and pointed out the dangers, and the excesses of those who misuse it.

There are many characteristics common to both Television and Motion Pictures, for in both, pictures of the movement and the excitement of life are presented to the eye ; often, too, Television material is derived from existing films. Moreover, Television shares, in a sense, in the



nature and special power of sound broadcasting, for it is directed towards men in their own homes rather than in theatres.

We consider it superfluous in this place to repeat the warnings with regard to film and radio programmes, which We have already given concerning the obligations binding, in this matter, on spectators, listeners, producers and State officials.

Nor need We again refer to the care and diligence which must be observed in the correct preparation and encouragement of the different types of religious programmes.

### CATHOLIC PROGRAMMES

It is well known to Us with what deep interest vast numbers of spectators gaze at television programmes of Catholic events. It is obvious, of course, - as We declared a few years ago 52 - that to be present at Mass portrayed by Television is not the same as being actually present at the Divine Sacrifice, as is of obligation on holy days. However, from religious ceremonies, as seen on Television, valuable fruits for the strengthening of the Faith and the renewal of fervour can be obtained by all those who, for some reason, are unable to be actually present; consequently, We are convinced that We may wholeheartedly commend programmes of this kind.

In each country, it will be for the Bishops to judge of the suitability of televised religious programmes, and commit their execution to the established Office, which, of course, as in similar matters, will be active and alert to publish information, to instruct the minds of the audience, and to organize and coordinate everything in a manner in keeping with Christian morals.

### SPECIAL PROBLEMS ON TELEVISION

But Television, besides the common element which it shares with the other two inventions for spreading information, of which We have already spoken, has a power and efficacy of its own. For, by the art of Television, it is possible for the spectators to grasp by the eye and the ear, events happening far away at the very moment at which they are taking place, and thus to be drawn on, as it were, to take an active part in them; and this sense of immediacy is increased very much by the home surroundings.

This special power which Television enjoys, of giving pleasure within the family circle, is to be reckoned of very great importance, since it can contribute a great deal to the religious life, the intellectual development and the habits of those who make up the family; of the sons, especially,

whom the more modern invention will certainly influence and captivate. But if that saying, "a little leaven corrupteth the whole mass"<sup>53</sup> corresponds at all to the truth, and if physical growth in youths can be prevented, by some infectious germ, from reaching full maturity, much more can some base element of education steal its way into the fibres of the religious life, and check the due shaping of morals. Everyone knows well that, very often, children can avoid the transient attack of a disease outside their own home, but cannot escape it when it lurks within the home itself.

It is wrong to introduce risk in any form into the sanctity of home surroundings; the Church, therefore, as her right and duty demand, has always striven with all her force to prevent these sacred portals suffering violence, under any pretext, from evil television shows.

Since Television certainly has this among other advantages, that both old and young can easily remain at home, it can have considerable influence in strengthening the bonds of loyalty and love within the family circle, provided the screen displays nothing which is contrary to those same virtues of loyalty and chaste love.

There are, however, some who completely deny that, at least at the present time, these lofty demands can be put into practice. For they repeatedly assert that the contract made with the spectators in no way permits any part of the time allotted to television to be left unoccupied; further, that they are forced by the necessity of always having a variety of programmes ready to hand, to put on shows sometimes which were originally intended only for the public theatre; and finally, that television is an affair not just for the young but for grown-ups as well. We admit that in this matter difficulties readily occur; nevertheless, their solution should not be postponed to some future date, for the practice of this art, hitherto not controlled by the reins of prudent counsel, has already inflicted serious harm on individuals and on human society; the extent of this damage up to the present time can be gauged only with difficulty.

But in order that the unravelling of these difficulties may advance side by side with the increasing use of Television in each country, the most urgent efforts should be devoted to the preparation of the different shows, ensuring that they correspond to ethical and psychological requirements as well as to the technical aspects of Television.

For this reason We paternally exhort Catholics, well-qualified by their learning, sound doctrine and knowledge of the arts, - and in particular clerics, and members of Religious Orders and Congregations - to turn their attention to this new art and give their active cooperation, so that whatever benefits the past and true progress have contributed to the mind's development, may be also employed in full measure to the advantage of Television.

In addition, it is essential that producers of television films take care not only to preserve intact religious and honourable principles, but also to be on special guard against the danger which the young may perhaps fall into, if they are present at shows intended for grown-ups. With regard to

similar performances which are put on in cinemas and theatres, in order to preserve the common good, appropriate precautions have been deliberately taken in almost all civilized countries, with the object of keeping young people away from immoral entertainments. But it is common knowledge that television - and with greater reason - needs the benefits and safeguards of alert vigilance. It is praiseworthy that, in some countries, items forbidden to the young are excluded from the television programmes; but if it happens that certain places admit such, then, at least, definite precautions are absolutely essential.

It is useless for anyone to suppose that excellent principles and an upright conscience on the part of those engaged in these arts are sufficient either to ensure that nothing but good flows from the small white screen, or to remove all that is evil. In this matter, then, prudence and watchful care are especially demanded of those who make use of television. Due moderation in its use, prudence in admitting the children to viewing according to their different ages, a balanced judgment based on what has been seen before, and finally, exclusion of children from what are in any sense improper spectacles: all these are the duties which weigh heavily on parents and on all engaged in education.

We do not overlook the fact that the directives We have just given in the last section, can sometimes produce serious difficulties and considerable inconveniences; for the awareness of their role as educators will often demand that parents give clear example to their offspring, and also bid them deny themselves - not without some personal sacrifice - some programmes they would like to see. But who thinks the burden on parents is too heavy when the supreme good of the children is at stake?

This being so, - as We declared in a letter to the Italian Bishops - "it is a most pressing need that the conscience of Catholics with regard to television should be formed by the sound principles of the Christian religion";<sup>54</sup> the more so, in order that this kind of art may not be at the service of error or the squares of vice, but may prove to be rather a help" to educate and train men, and recall them to their higher state".<sup>55</sup>

## CONCLUSION

### TO THE CLERGY

We cannot conclude this Letter, Venerable Brethren, without recalling to your mind the importance of the function committed to the priest for encouraging and mastering the inventions which affect communication, not only in other spheres of the apostolate, but especially in this essential work of the Church.

He ought to have a sound knowledge of all questions which confront the souls of Christians with regard to Motion Pictures, Radio and Television. As We said in a discourse to those taking part in a Study Week for the bringing up to date of pastoral practice in Italy at the present time, "The priest with `the care of souls' can and must know what modern science, art and technique assert whenever they touch on the end of man and his moral and religious life".<sup>56</sup> Let him learn to use these aids correctly as often as, in the prudent judgment of ecclesiastical authority, the nature of the ministry entrusted to him and the need of assisting an increasing number of souls demand it. Finally, if these arts are employed by the priest to advantage, his prudence, self-control and sense of responsibility will shine out as an example to all Christians.

### SUMMING UP

We decided to lay before you, Venerable Brethren, Our thoughts and anxieties, which you, of course, also share, concerning the grave dangers which can beset Christian Faith and morals if the powerful inventions of Motion Pictures, Radio and Television are perverted by men to evil uses.

We have not, however, passed over the benefits and advantages which these modern instruments can bring. To this end, with the precepts of the Christian Faith and Natural Law to enlighten Us, We have explained the principles which must guide and regulate both the action of the directors of the means of publicity, and the conscience of those who use them. And for the same reason, namely, that the gifts of Divine Providence may secure the good of souls, We have paternally exhorted you not only to exercise a watchful care, but also to use positive action and authority. For it is the function of those National Offices, which on this occasion also We have commended to you, not only to preserve and defend, but, more especially, to direct, organize and assist the many educational projects which have been begun in many countries, so that by means of this difficult and extensive province of the arts, the christian ideas may be ever more widely spread.

But since We have firm confidence in the ultimate triumph of God's cause, We do not doubt that these precepts and instructions of Ours - which We entrust for due execution to the Pontifical Commission for Motion Pictures, Radio and Television - can rouse new enthusiasm for the apostolate in this sphere, which promises such a plenteous and fruitful harvest.

Relying on this hope, which Our well-founded knowledge of your pastoral zeal very much strengthens, We impart with all Our heart, as a pledge of heavenly graces, the Apostolic Benediction on you, Venerable Brethren, as well as on the clergy and people committed to your care and in particular on those who work actively to bring our desires and instructions to fulfilment.

From St Peter's, Rome, the eighth day of September, the feast of Our Lady's Nativity 1957, the

nineteenth year of Our Pontificate.

## PIUS XII POPE

### NOTES

- 1 S. IOAN. CHRYS., *De consubstantiali, contra Anomoeos*: P.G., 48, 810.
- 2 *Ephes.* III,8-9
- 3 *I Petr.* I, 18-19.
- 4 Radiophonicum nuntium *Qui arcano*, d. 12 Februarii, a. 1931: A. A. S., vol. XXIII, 1931, pag. 65.
- 5 Epist. Enc. *Vigilanti cura*, d. 29 Iunii, a. 1936: A. A. S., vol. XXVIII, 1936, pag. 249 sq.
- 6 *Ibid.* pag. 251.
- 7 Cfr. A. A. S., d. 16 Decembris, a. 1954, vol. XLVI, 1964, pag. 783-784.
- 8 Cfr. Sermo ad catholicos Hollandiae, d. 19 Maii, a. 1950 habitus: *Discorsi e Radiomessaggi di S. S. Pio XII*, vol. XII, pag. 75.
- 9 *Rom.* X, 16.
- 1 Matth. XXII, 16.
- 0 Cfr. Sermo ad cultores cinematographicae artis ex Italia Romae congregatos, d. 21 Iunii, a. 1955: A. A. S., vol. XLVII, 1955, pag. 504.
- 1 Cfr. Matth., XI, 30.
- 2 Cfr. Sermo ad radiophonicae artis cultorum coetum, d. 5 Maii, a. 1950 ex omnibus Nationibus Romae habitum: *Discorsi e Radiomessaggi di S. S. Pio XII*, vol. XII, pag. 54.
- 3 *Rom.* V, 5.
- 4 Cfr. Matth. V, 48.
- 5 Litt. Apost. d. 12 Ianuarii, a. 1951: A. A. S., vol XLV, 1952, pag. 216-217.
- 6 *Ibid.* pag. 216.
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