



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC LETTER
"MOTU PROPRIO"
BONI PASTORIS

The office of Good Shepherd of the Lord's whole flock, which at the beginning of Our Pontificate We declared "*to be a matter especially dear to Us*" (cfr. A.A.S., vol. L, p. 886), while it makes Us constantly attentive to the Church's every need, bids Us consider with special care all the factors which, in the progress of modern civilization, exercise an influence on the spiritual life of man. Among these must be counted Radio, Television and Motion Pictures.

With the solemnity of an Encyclical Letter and in his Discourses, Our Predecessor, Pius XII, of immortal memory, has already more than once reminded the faithful and all well-intentioned men of the serious duty binding on them: they are to make use of these remarkable inventions according to the plan of God's Providence and the dignity of man, to whose growth in perfection those inventions ought to contribute.

With this in view the same Predecessor of Ours "*took measures to set up a special Commission in this Roman Curia*" (cfr. A.A.S., vol. 49, p. 768) to which he entrusted the faithful execution of the provisions and precepts contained in the Encyclical Letter *Miranda prorsus*, concerning questions touching faith, morals or the Church's discipline and falling within the scope of Radio, Television and Motion Pictures (*ibid.*, p. 805).

We are aware of the serious problems in the field of public morality, of the diffusion of ideas and of the education of youth, which have been proposed by the establishment of the aforementioned techniques affecting audio-visual means of communication, for they exert a very great influence on minds. We therefore desire to make Our own, and to confirm, the exhortations and commands of that same Predecessor of Ours, and to do what We can to turn into a positive instrument for virtue and good behaviour those means which the Divine Goodness has placed at man's disposal. All are aware of the power of Radio or Television or Motion Pictures to contribute towards a higher level of human culture, to promote art worthy of the name, and, especially, to spread truth.

While holding the office of Patriarch of Venice, We gathered around Us from time to time and gave fatherly advice to members of the Motion Picture profession and industry; and after Our elevation, in the mysterious designs of Divine Providence, to the Supreme Pontificate, We gave evidence of Our good will towards those who have the direction of Radio, Television and Motion Pictures (cfr. *Letter of the Secretariate of State*. n. 117, of Nov. 4, 1958, *to the President of the Pontifical Commission for Motion Pictures, Radio and Television*); and since then We have never failed to take advantage of each occasion offered to remind them to be loyal to the Christian ideal of their profession.

Nevertheless, with very real sorrow We must point Out the dangers and moral damage which have frequently been provoked by Motion Picture shows and by Radio and Television programmes by which Christian morals and the dignity of man itself may be ruined.

Hence We address Ourselves to each one of those responsible for such productions and broadcasts, and paternally and repeatedly urge them to abide by the laws of a sound and upright conscience as befits those on whom lies the very serious duty of training others.

At the same time, We bid Our Venerable Brethren, the Archbishops and Bishops, to exercise watchfulness and, with care based on experience, to provide for the various forms of apostolate suggested by the Encyclical Letter *Miranda prorsus* already mentioned, in particular, the erection of National Offices in each country for directing and co-ordinating whatever concerns Catholic participation in the field of Motion Pictures, Radio and Television (cfr. A. A. S., vol. 49, pp. 783-4). Among these projects We particularly commend those which are concerned with the formation of character and the development of cultural interests, such as the presentation of, and discussions concerning, those motion pictures which are distinguished for their artistic quality and their defense of morality.

Both what touches the right and authority of the Apostolic See and the very nature of the above-mentioned means of audio-visual communication demand unity of direction and execution. Consequently, *motu proprio*, with sure knowledge and after mature deliberation, by the fullness of the Apostolic Authority, by virtue of this Letter and in permanent form, We establish these norms by which the aforementioned Pontifical Commission, set up for Motion Pictures, Radio and Television, is to be bound in carrying out its task, at the same time modifying those rules which are contained in the laws hitherto existing of the same Commission (cfr. A.A.S., vol. 46, 783-4).

We therefore decree that the Pontifical Commission for Motion Pictures, Radio and Television have a fixed and permanent status as an Office of the Holy See, that its allotted scope be to examine the various problems connected with Motion Pictures, Radio and Television, and to provide assistance and direction in accordance with the precepts and directives set down in the Encyclical Letter *Miranda prorsus* and other commands issued in the future by the Apostolic See.

The task of this Pontifical Commission is as follows: to take cognizance of the tendencies and the actual content of the motion pictures issued and of radio and television programmes; to direct and assist the development of the work of International Catholic Organizations and of National Offices for Motion Pictures, Radio and Television: these concern particularly problems proposed by the classification of films according to moral category, as well as by radio and television programmes which aim at the spread of religious ideas; the instruction of the faithful, especially the young, concerning their duty as Christians, binding in conscience, with reference to these entertainments (cfr. A.A.S., vol. 49, pp. 780 et seq.); finally, to send reports to the Sacred Congregations and Offices of the Apostolic See, as well as to groups of Bishops and individual local Ordinaries, on the manifold and difficult questions connected with this subject.

On the other hand, the Sacred Congregations of the Roman Curia and the other Offices of the Apostolic See are to ask the opinion of this Commission before they order or permit anything which concerns Motion Pictures, Radio and Television, and they are to inform the said Commission of any instructions they may have given on their own authority.

The President heads the Pontifical Commission for Motion Pictures, Radio and Television. He shall present, every six months, a report on the activities of the Commission.

The following are members of the Commission: the Assessors and Secretaries of the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, of the Consistorial Congregation, of the Congregations for the Oriental Church, of the Council, for Religious, for the Propagation of the Faith, for Seminaries and University Studies, and the Substitute Secretary of Our Secretariat of State; in addition, others can be appointed according to Our wishes.

To assist him in his work the President shall have the Secretary of the Commission and other officials (cfr. A.A.S., vol. 43, *appendix fascicle 8*, p. [3]).

Assistance shall also be rendered to the Commission by the group of Consultors chosen by the Apostolic See, who are to be men of special competence in the apostolate of Motion Pictures, Radio and Television.

Finally, this Commission is to have its headquarters in the Vatican Motion Picture Library which We intend to establish in order to assemble Motion Pictures of interest to the Apostolic See.

Finally, this Commission is to have its headquarters in the Vatican City as an affiliate of Our Secretariat of State. All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

We gladly give Our blessing to the undertakings and work of this Pontifical Commission for Motion Pictures, Radio and Television, and already in the past, We have greatly prized its fruitful work.

These decisions We proclaim and establish, decreeing that this present Letter is and remains perpetually valid and effective; that it receives and possesses its full and complete effects; that it gives full authority now and in the future to those who are or will be concerned; and thus it is to be judged and defined according to law that from this moment, whatever may chance to be attempted to the contrary by anyone by any authority, knowingly or unknowingly, in these matters, is to be considered null and void.

Given at St. Peter's, Rome, under the seal of the Fisherman, on the 22nd day of February, in the year 1959, the first of Our Pontificate.

JOHN PP. XXIII

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