

Pastoral Sermon by Cardinal Frings against the Film *Die Sünderin* (February 28, 1951)

Abstract

In the postwar period, conservative-Christian moral ideas were slowly getting pushed aside, though the churches and certain segments of the political establishment and the public were still defending them vigorously. In February 1951, the cardinal of Cologne, Josef Frings, spoke out against the film *Die Sünderin* [*The Woman Sinner*], which caused a huge scandal because of a brief moment of nudity by actress Hildegard Knef.

Source

Dear Members of the Archdiocese!

To my great distress, the infamous film *Die Sünderin* [*The Woman Sinner*] will now also be shown in Cologne, the capital of our archdiocese, all protests by the relevant authorities notwithstanding.

As the spiritual leader, I cannot remain silent about this. The public offense must not remain unopposed. At least those who have still preserved their spiritual health, who still have a sense of decency, of the dignity of women and the honor of girls, shall know that the Church stands behind them and will try everything possible to render such a challenge and public insult to the moral sensibility of the Christian population impossible in the future.

I expect that our Catholic men and women, and even more so our healthy Catholic youth, will, in justified outrage and Christian unanimity, stay away from the movie theaters, which, by abusing the name of art, are putting on a performance that amounts to a subversion of the moral notions of our Christian people. A Christian who watches this film in spite of all this, even if he believes that he can do so without a direct threat to his personal moral integrity, causes offense and shares the responsibility for an irresponsible glorification of evil.

I thank the owners of the theaters who preferred to give up monetary profit rather than incur guilt toward the spiritual health of our nation, which is already sorely tested.

This admonition shall be read from all pulpits in the archdiocese soon after its receipt and, at any rate, on Sunday, March 4.

Cologne, February 28, 1951

Joseph Cardinal Frings

Archbishop of Cologne

Source: Pastoral Sermon by Cardinal Frings against *Die Sünderin* (February 28, 1951), *Kirchliches Mitteilungsblatt für das Dekanat Herne*, no. 10, from March 11, 1951. HSTA/Bestand NW 158/244, Blatt 58; reprinted in Klaus-Jörg Ruhl, ed., *Frauen in der Nachkriegszeit 1945–1963*. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag, pp. 115–16.

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