

*Pius nonetheless acted on an individual basis to save many Jews and others with church ransoms, documents, and asylum."*

The charity and work of Pope Pius XII during World War II so impressed the Chief Rabbi of Rome, Israel Zolli, that in 1944 he was open to the grace of God which led him into the Catholic faith. As his baptismal name, he took the same one Pius had, Eugenio, as his own. Later Israel Eugenio Zolli wrote a book entitled, Why I Became a Catholic.

But Pope Pius XII was not completely silent either, especially in his Christmas messages. His 1941 and 1942 Christmas messages were both translated and published in **The New York Times** (Dec. 25, 1941, p. 20 & Dec. 25, 1942, p. 10). To prevent retaliation, he did not refer to Nazism by name, but people of that era still understood him, including the Nazis. According to **The New York Times** editorial on December 25, 1941 (Late Day edition, p. 24):

*The voice of Pius XII is a lonely voice in the silence and darkness enveloping Europe this Christmas... he is about the only ruler left on the Continent of Europe who dares to raise his voice at all... the Pope put himself squarely against Hitlerism... he left no doubt that the Nazi aims are also irreconcilable with his own conception of a Christian peace.*

Also **The New York Times** editorial on December 25, 1942 (Late Day edition, p. 16) states:

*This Christmas more than ever he is a lonely voice crying out of the silence of a continent... Pope Pius expresses as passionately as any leader on our side the war aims of the struggle*

*for freedom when he says that those who aim at building a new world must fight for free choice of government and religious order. They must refuse that the state should make of individuals a herd of whom the state disposes as if they were lifeless things.*

Both editorials recognize and highly praise Pius' words against Hitler and totalitarianism.

Now there were traitors in the Church who were Nazis or helped Hitler. There were Catholics who committed sins of bigotry. There were also Catholics, who, out of fear or indifference, sinned through silence. The Church is full of sinners for whom Christ died. We killed Jesus with our sins (Is. 53: 5-6). But Pope Pius XII and many Catholics did not remain "silent." Could 860,000 Jewish lives be saved by "silent" indifference? In our own day, there are people who claim to be Catholic but promote and participate in abortion, assisted-suicide and artificial birth control. In the next century, will the world also falsely accuse the Church and the Pope for being silent during the "culture of death" holocaust?

---

NIHIL OBSTAT:  
Reverend John T. Folda, S.T.L.  
Censor Librorum

IMPRIMATUR:  
Most Reverend Fabian W. Bruskewitz, D.D.,  
S.T.D.  
Bishop of Lincoln, Nebraska  
May 27, 1998

### **The Evangelization Station**

Hudson, Florida, USA

E-mail: [evangelization@earthlink.net](mailto:evangelization@earthlink.net)

[www.evangelizationstation.com](http://www.evangelizationstation.com)

Pamphlet 461

## **Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust**

*If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first... Remember the word I spoke to you, 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.*

**John 15:18-20**

---

In recent years, the media have accused the Catholic Church of either helping the Nazis or being silent during the Holocaust. As an example, the January 26, 1998 issue of **Time** magazine on page 20 claims that the Catholic Church apologized for "*collaborating with the Nazis during World War II.*" Even the new Holocaust Museum in New York unjustly criticized Pope Pius XII for being silent during World War II. The Church has recently spoken on this topic.

The Israeli consul, Pinchas E. Lapid, in his book, Three Popes and the Jews (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1967) critically examines Pope Pius XII. According to his research, the Catholic Church under Pius XII was instrumental in saving 860,000 Jews from Nazi death camps (p. 214). Could Pius have saved more lives by speaking out more forcefully? According to Lapid, the concentration camp prisoners did not want Pius to speak out openly (p. 247). As one jurist from the Nuremberg Trials said on WNBC in New York (Feb. 28, 1964), "*Any words of Pius XII, directed against a madman like Hitler, would have brought on an even worse catastrophe... [and] accelerated the massacre of Jews and priests.*" (Ibid.) Yet Pius

was not totally silent either. Lapide notes a book by the Jewish historian, Jenoe Levai, entitled, The Church Did Not Keep Silent (p. 256). He admits that everyone, including himself, could have done more. If we condemn Pius, then justice would demand condemning everyone else. He concludes by quoting from the Talmud that *"whosoever preserves one life, it is accounted to him by Scripture as if he had preserved a whole world."* With this he claims that Pius XII deserves a memorial forest of 860,000 trees in the Judean hills (pp. 268-9). It should be noted that six million Jews and three million Catholics were killed in the Holocaust.

We must remember that the Holocaust was also anti-Christian. After Hitler revealed his true intentions, the Catholic Church opposed him. Even the famous Albert Einstein testified to that. According to the December 23, 1940 issue of **Time** magazine on page 38, Einstein said:

*Being a lover of freedom, when the revolution came in Germany, I looked to the universities to defend it, knowing that they had always boasted of their devotion to the cause of truth; but, no, the universities immediately were silenced. Then I looked to the great editors of the newspapers whose flaming editorials in days gone by had proclaimed their love of freedom; but they, like the universities, were silenced in a few short weeks...*

*Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler's campaign for suppressing truth. I never had any special interest in the Church before, but now I feel a great affection and admiration because the Church alone has had the courage and persistence to stand for*

*intellectual truth and moral freedom. I am forced thus to confess that what I once despised I now praise unreservedly.*

In another, similar statement, Einstein referred explicitly to the Catholic Church (Lapide, p. 251). This is an extraordinary testimony by an agnostic German scientist of Jewish heritage. Even though there were traitors in her ranks, the Church still opposed the Nazi movement.

The December 23, 1940 issue of **Time** magazine contains an interesting article about Christians living in Germany, both Catholic and Protestant, who opposed and suffered under the Nazis. On page 38, it claims that by late 1940 over 200,000 Christians were prisoners in Nazi concentration camps, with some estimates as high as 800,000. On page 40, it reports on the Archbishop of Munich, Michael Cardinal von Faulhaber, who led the Catholic opposition in Germany against the Nazis. In an Advent 1933 sermon, he preached: *"Let us not forget that we were saved not by German blood but by the blood of Christ!"* in response to Nazi racism. In 1934 the Cardinal *"narrowly missed a Nazi bullet"*, while in 1938 a Nazi mob broke the windows in his residence. Even though he was over seventy and in poor health, he still led the Catholic German resistance against Hitler.

Not trusting the new regime, the Vatican signed a Concordat with the Reich on July 20, 1933 in an attempt to protect the Church's rights in Germany. But the Nazis quickly violated its articles. In Lent 1937 Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical "Mit brennender Sorge" (With burning sorrow) with the help of German bishops and Cardinal Pacelli (later Pope Pius XII). It was smuggled into Germany

and read in all German Catholic churches at the same hour on Palm Sunday 1937. It did not explicitly mention Hitler or Nazism, but it firmly condemned the Nazi doctrines. On September 20, 1938, Pius XI told German pilgrims that no Christian can take part in anti-Semitism, since spiritually all Christians are Semites.

The recent slander against the Church and Pope Pius XII can be traced back to 1963 with Rolf Hochhuth's play, "The Deputy." In this play Hochhuth criticized Pius for being silent and portrayed his silence as cold indifference. Even though fiction, people took it as fact.

Pope Pius XII was a diplomat and not a radical preacher. He knew that he first needed to preserve Vatican neutrality so that Vatican City could be a refuge for war victims. The International Red Cross also remained neutral. Secondly, he knew how powerless he was against Hitler. Mussolini could quickly shut off electrical power to Vatican Radio during his broadcast (Lapide, p. 256). Finally the Nazis did not tolerate any protest and responded severely. As an example, the Catholic Archbishop of Utrecht in July 1942 protested in a pastoral letter against the Jewish persecutions in Holland. Immediately the Nazis rounded up as many Jews and Catholic non-Aryans as possible and deported them to death camps, including Blessed Edith Stein (Lapide, p. 246). Pius knew that every time he spoke out against Hitler, the Nazis could retaliate against the prisoners. His best attack against the Nazis was quiet diplomacy and behind-the-scenes action. According to **The 1996 Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia** (V8.01) under Pius XII, *"Wishing to preserve Vatican neutrality, fearing reprisals, and realizing his impotence to stop the Holocaust,*