

**CONTINUING THE BATTLE TO RESTORE THE TRUTH
ABOUT POPE PIUS XII'S EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF THE
JEWS DURING WORLD WAR II: THE CAMPAIGN TO HAVE
HIM RECOGNIZED AT VAD VASHEM**

Sister Margherita Marchione

Sister Margherita Marchione has been one of the leading academic defenders of Pope Pius XII against the untruthful, dishonest, and often scurrilous attacks against him in recent years by some writers who have claimed that he not only did not do enough to help the Jews during World War II, but actually somehow collaborated with the Nazis. Sister Margherita has published several books about Pius, showing that the original understanding of his efforts was indeed true: he worked intensively to do all in his power to protect the Jews and other groups. Indeed, his efforts surpassed that of most political leaders of the time. Currently, as the draft letter below indicates, she is on a campaign to solicit the testimony of Jews who were first-hand beneficiaries of his efforts, or those who know directly of such cases, in order to get Pius recognized at the Vad Vaschem Memorial in Israel as "Just Among the Nations." Two testimonials are apparently required and history tells us that many, many more than two Jews were saved by Pius's efforts. For her efforts to restore the reputation of Pius XII and to once again set the historical record straight about him. Sister Margherita will be honored in 2007 with the Society of Catholic Social Scientists' Blessed Frederic Ozanam Award for Catholic Social Action, named after the Society's patron. Below are four recent short articles that Sister Margherita wrote about Pius's efforts and leadership during the War and a sample letter in which she requests anyone who knows Jews who can provide testimony to contact her. There is also some biographical information about Sister Margherita.

Four Hundred Visas for Jews

Where are the four hundred Jews who were saved by Pope Pius XII in 1943? A marvelous glimpse into the way Pope Pius XII worked to help thousands of persecuted Jews may be found in *Consensus and Controversy*, a book by Margherita Marchione (Paulist Press, 2002, pp. 295-297). Writing to the author on March 19, 2001, Monsignor Giovanni Ferrofino, an eyewitness and participant, tells the story about *Four Hundred Visas for Jews*.

Among the papal representatives who followed the Pope's instructions to protect Jews is Archbishop Maurilio Silvani (1882-1946)—Titular Archbishop of Lepanto—who was named Nuncio to the Dominican Republic by Pius XII, May 23, 1942.

Several years ago, in a letter to Margherita Marchione, from Maussane-les-Alpilles, France, Monsignor Giovanni Ferrofino gave his personal testimony. He wrote: "During the war, I was at Port-au-Prince as secretary to Silvani who had collaborated with Pacelli in Bavaria when he was Secretary of State and during negotiations on the Concordat with Germany. In 1943, instructions came to Nuncio Silvani from Pius XII telling him to ask General Rafael Leonida Trujillo, dictator of the Dominican Republic, to grant four hundred visas to Jews. It was subsequently learned that these refugees had been refused admittance to the United States.

Nuncio Silvani immediately consulted the Dominican ambassador in Port-au-Prince. The ambassador said to his secretary: "Trujillo will never say 'No' to the Pope. But it is well known that the only way one can ask for such a favor is *in person*."

The capital of Santo Domingo was an overnight trip of some 80 difficult kilometers across rocky Haitian territory and then another 350 kilometers of rugged Dominican roads under a blazing sun. And the Nuncio was not well, but he set out at once.

Ferrofino writes: "I remember that trip like yesterday. It was traumatic. It would have been difficult at any time but with the Nuncio's illness, an illness that would eventually lead to his death, every hour was torture. When we arrived in the capital, the Foreign Minister very kindly offered use of an official car. We traced Trujillo down and found him on horseback inspecting the sugarcane plantations, the *cañaverales*. He was wearing his *Panama*. As he tipped his hat to us, he made a move to dismount. But the Nuncio shouted: 'Oh, no, General, remain on your horse. You already know why I am here.'"

Trujillo smiled, nodded and replied that he could not refuse the Pope. But he had conditions that Ferrofino describes. "The dictator told us: 'None of the four hundred can remain in the capital. They must live on the frontier and protect us from the clandestine immigration of Haitians. They will have land, houses, everything that is needed for a well-organized colony.'"

"We sent this information to the Vatican, and returned to Haiti. A few weeks later, the four hundred Jews arrived in Santo Domingo. It was not long after they were settled that a taxi from the Dominican capital came to the Nuncio's residence in Port-au-Prince. A couple stepped out of the taxi, identified themselves as two of the refugees, and asked to see Nuncio Silvani."

Ferrofino describes the meeting: “They thanked us and begged us to help them remain in Port-au-Prince. The wife was an attractive blond, ex-ballerina from the Vienna Opera House. ‘What would such a couple do in the capital,’ asked the Nuncio? ‘Start a ballerina school,’ came the reply. The Nuncio said: ‘I am not the most qualified person to tell you how to appeal to Trujillo for help to start a classical ballet school. Furthermore, as everyone knows, you must first win him over personally or by paying taxes. Trujillo never just gives anything to beautiful women.’

“I observed the two of them. There was no reaction from either the husband or the wife. They seemed stunned. They thanked us and left. But three years later, the Diplomatic Corps and all the members of the upper crust were invited to the opening of a new Ballet School named after Trujillo’s daughter, *Flor de Oro*. As for the others in the group of four hundred, one night, after having obtained passports from Mexico, they left clandestinely for Cuba and from that country, after a short stay there, they crossed the Mexican border and arrived safely in the United States, the land that had originally denied their entrance. All this happened, thanks to Pius XII.”

These Jews were certainly aware that no doubt Pius XII had provided the necessary funds for their trip as well as the visas for Santo Domingo. The fact remains that of the four hundred Jews with visas, 397 Jews eventually crossed the Mexican border and arrived in the United States of America.

It is also interesting to note that on September 19, 1942, Monsignor Paolo Bertoli, chargé d’affaires at Port-au-Prince, wrote to Cardinal Luigi Maglione, Vatican Secretary of State, informing him that General Trujillo was ready to offer hospitality to 3,500 Jewish children in France between the ages of three to fourteen. General Trujillo would organize the group and take care of expenses for their voyage. Again, thanks to Pius XII’s intercession.

Archbishop Maurilio Silvani was later appointed Nuncio to Chile. He sent a copy of letter No. 1261 on August 29, 1943, and stated: “The President of the ‘Comité representativo de la Colectividad Israelita de Chile’ begged me, on the 27th of this month, to send to the august Pontiff the expression of their gratitude for all that His Holiness is doing in defense of the Jews in France and during the course of this war [Rapp. nr. 587/29, A.E.S. 190/43].” From Santiago, the Nuncio also sent a letter dated October 5, 1943 to Cardinal Maglione with a copy of the October 3rd *El diario ilustrado* which he received from the President of the Committee, Samuele Goren. The article states: “...En estos trágicos días, nuestra mente evoca la elevada figura del Sumo Pontífice,

su Santidad Pio XII probado defensor de la causa de los perseguidos y en especial de millones de hermanos europeos nuestros que son víctimas inocentes de inhumanas masacres y crueles vejámenes. Recordamos con indignación que quienes infligen en los actuales momentos incontables sufrimientos al Santo Padre son las mismas fuerzas del mal que hacen ostentación del incalificable propósito de aprisionar tras las murallas de la Ciudad del Vaticano el incontenible soplo de la inmensa fuerza espiritual que emana del sitial de San Pedro....” [Rapp. nr. 3980/143 (A.E.S. 7145/43, orig.). See Vol. 9, p. 498.]

The entire world was deaf to Pius XII’s words before the war: “Everything can be saved with peace; nothing can be gained with war.” His was the outstanding religious voice that openly and consistently defied the Nazis. While some individuals betrayed their Jewish friends by revealing their destinations, the Pope’s so-called “silence” saved lives. Had he spoken out, would not many more lives have been destroyed? The Pope provided food and other necessities to the thousands of victims hidden in convents and monasteries. It is foolish to think that the assistance given Jews, in the Vatican and in Rome alone, would have been successful without his knowledge.

Critics who judge Pius XII’s honesty and loyalty must consider his *forma mentis*. He lived profoundly the spiritual drama of the victims. He served the cause of religion, defended the rights of humanity, invoked and defended peace and freedom for all; he was an indefatigable pastor, a teacher of justice, honor, loyalty; he provided money, ships, food; he placed his radio, his diplomacy, his convents, at the disposal of the refugees. What would survivors have preferred —words or actions? If he had condemned Hitler or Mussolini, would they have survived?

The historical record shows that Pope Pius XII, through his network of apostolic delegates throughout the world, was able to save the lives of thousands of Jews during the Holocaust. As early as April 4, 1933, Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli ordered the Apostolic Nuncio in Berlin “to intervene with the government of the Reich on behalf of the Jews and point out all the dangers involved in an anti-Semitic policy.” The Catholic Church, therefore, did not simply protest on behalf of Church interests during negotiations of the Concordat, but protested on behalf of persecuted Jews when the new Hitler regime announced a major boycott of Jewish businesses.

Did Hitler Want to Kidnap the Pope?

The Holocaust was a slaughter of monstrous proportions, the evil consequence of a demonic mind, that of Adolf Hitler, who planned to dominate the world, destroy Christianity, and foster a new Godless religion. A document, "Massacre Pius XII with the entire Vatican," found in 1998, proves that he also planned on kidnapping the pope. Forty years ago, in an article for the *New York Times*, James Feron noted that Jewish historian Pinchas Lapide, after two years of research, came to the conclusion that Pope Pius XII deserved a memorial forest in the Judean hills with 860,000 trees, the number of Jewish lives saved through papal efforts. He had obtained information from accounts of survivors in Israel, from privately published accounts and from the archives of Vad Vashem. Indeed, the Church was instrumental in saving more Jews than those saved by all other institutions and organizations combined. The pope depended on the local clergy to thwart Hitler's extermination policy.

"The book dramatizes one point above all others," Feron states, "that the pope's efforts were dependent on the strength and heroism of his churches in each country." Lapide traces the efforts of Roman Catholics to save the Jews and quotes a variety of sources to indicate that Papal Nuncios had received messages from the Vatican to contest the deportation of Jews. Lapide tells how Pope Pius XII sent his Papal Nuncio in Berlin to visit Hitler in Berchtesgaden to plead for the Jews. That interview ended when Hitler smashed a glass at the nuncio's feet. From Hitler's reaction the Pope was convinced that public pronouncements would have sealed the fate of many more Jews. After this incident, in retaliation, Hitler connived to kidnap Pope Pius XII.

Obviously during the war years, the Vatican, concerned about the Pope's safety, took measures to counter schemes of malice. In fact, Robert A. Graham, one of the four editors of the Vatican documents, wrote a two-part article, "Did Hitler Want to Remove Pius XII from Rome?" In this article written a quarter of a century ago and published in Italian in *Civiltà Cattolica* (1972, Vol. I, pp. 319-327 and pp. 454-461), one finds the historical evidence confirming the claim in the Milan newspaper *Il Giornale* (July 5, 1998).

References also appear in the memoirs, depositions, and testimonies of diplomats and military leaders such as Ulrich von Hassell, Ernst von Weizsäcker, Robert M. W. Kempner, Eitel Friedrich Moellhausen, Rudolf Rahn, and others; as well as officials of the SS, such as Eugenio Dollmann, Walter Schellenberg and Karl Wolff. Even Goebbels, Bormann and others among Hitler's most intimate associates were aware of the plot.

Ulrich von Hassell, in *The Von Hassell Diaries: The Story of the Forces Against Hitler Inside Germany, 1938-1944* (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1947; reprinted 1994), provides the day-by-day testament of a leader of the anti-Nazi German resistance. It documents Pius XII's active assistance to the anti-Nazi cause within Germany, and the esteem in which the Pontiff was held. Talks were arranged through the Pope for the purpose of laying a foundation for the discussion of peace terms after a change in the German regime. The confidential agent for Operation X was Dr. Josef Müller. Von Hassell records that a decision had been made in the event of the fall of Rome, that the pope would be carried away "for his own safety." "Our people are capable of this," he noted. Therefore, instinctively, everyone believes that the recent bombs on the Vatican (November 6, 1943) were ours."

Preparations for evacuation of Vatican personnel to accompany the Pope were made. Cardinal Edigio Vagnozzi, in an interview with the *New York Herald Tribune* of March 21, 1964, confirmed this fact. There was concern about the safety of Vatican documents. From 1941, reports concerning Poland between the Vatican and the Third Reich were microfilmed and sent to Monsignor Amleto G. Cicognani, apostolic delegate in Washington. Notes by Monsignor Domenico Tardini dated May 6, 1941, state that Germany had asked Italy to have the Pope leave "because in the new Europe there would be no place for the papacy." Pius XII's private papers were hidden close to his apartment. Allied diplomats living in the Vatican began burning their official documents in August of 1943.

Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen, in an interview with the *Catholic Sun* of Syracuse, NY, stated: "I expect Hitler to invade Rome. I believe his plan is to destroy St. Peter's. Perhaps the Holy Father will have to leave because of Hitler's ambitions. Pius XII's response was that he would never leave: "They would have to tie me and carry me away, because my wish is certainly to remain here."

Ambassador Diego von Bergen referred to reports stating that Germany was "concentrating her troops in Rome in order to occupy Vatican City at the opportune moment." Soon after, Cardinal Secretary of State Maglione sent a dispatch to Monsignor Gaetano Cicognani, apostolic nuncio in Madrid, asking him to alert the political and religious authorities in Spain about the dangers of a Nazi invasion and bombing of the Vatican. He was told to destroy the message. The Allies had landed in North Africa. Word was that Hitler intended to pass through Spain.

Speaking about the Vatican's neutrality, Hitler stated: "Do you think that bothers me? It will be easy to capture those rogues. You have the entire diplomatic corps.... In the end we will excuse ourselves. After

all, this is war.” Hitler suspected that the pope contributed toward the fall of Mussolini. In April 1943, Ambassador von Bergen was replaced by Ernst von Weizsäcker. His minister was Ludwig Wemmer who had no diplomatic experience and was now counselor for the anti-Catholic Martin Bormann. Goebbels states in his notes that Hitler intended to take the Vatican but he was dissuaded by Ribbentrop and by Goebbels himself. The biographer of Admiral Canaris, head of the Abwehr (Secret Military Service) wrote that during a meeting in Venice the Admiral was disgusted with the gangster-like plans to remove the king, the prince and even the pope. Such actions would make Germany’s future more unbearable at the end of the war.

Information was leaked to the Vatican. Dated April 15, 1946, in a two-page memorandum, Ambassador Weizsäcker speaks about a private audience and the plans to kidnap the pope: “In the beginning, the Reich government wanted to transfer the Curia to Liechtenstein. At first I did not take the matter seriously. During an audience the pope referred to the news that, in the event of a retreat, the Germans wanted the Curia to be evacuated. His Holiness said he heard this from Italians who had received this information from high German officials. Then he added with a smile: ‘I remain here.’ I asked him if I could use this information, but His Holiness did not agree. I respected his wishes.”

Weizsäcker’s official dispatches reveal his method of not saying the entire truth. For example, he wrote that on October 10, the London Radio had transmitted a declaration from the Republic of Salò (October 7), in which it stated that, “in Germany they were preparing for the pope’s lodgings.” Without mentioning that the pope had questioned him, the Ambassador telegraphed: “For some time, this news is circulating in Rome. It has been observed in the Vatican and has been effective. When this is mentioned that we wish to deport the pope, I deny it categorically. If the suspicions do not cease, an official notice might be good.” Two days later, Hilger of the Foreign Ministry answered: “We do not foresee any public denial of this information.”

According to Weizsäcker’s *Memoirs*, until the last days of the German occupation of Rome, he was unable to confirm the matter. He even consulted Kappler, head of the SS in Rome, Admiral Canaris, and one of Bormann’s assistants known as ‘Church Enemy No. 1’.

General Karl Friedrich Otto Wolff was one of the important officers of the SS in Italy during 1943-44. In his Nuremberg testimony he stated: “Since Weizsäcker and I were in agreement that this plan should not be executed, I assured him of my support and I used my influence with the competent German officials, so that this plan would not take place in Germany or in a neutral state like Liechtenstein....”

From March 1945, Wolff was the negotiator with Allen Dulles to end the war in Northern Italy. He recalled that during a private audience the pope said: “No matter what happens, I shall not leave Rome. My place is here and here I shall fight until the end for the Christian commandments of humanity and of peace.”

During an interview (*Oggi Illustrato*, September 19, 1963), Dollmann sustained his conviction that the idea of deporting the pope came from Bormann. The head of Himmler’s information bureau, Walter Schellenberg, wrote in his *Memoirs* that Berlin was considering a kind of “Avignon Captivity” for the pope. Such were the intentions of both Bormann and Goebbels. Schellenberg affirms that he dissuaded Himmler who then convinced Hitler; however, Goebbels notes in his diary that on July 27, 1943, he was the one who dissuaded Hitler from occupying the Vatican for its part in the downfall of Mussolini. Bormann, a professed enemy of the Church, wrote that the pope had nothing to fear from the Reich. Ordinarily the Nazis did not care about public opinion. Some claimed that the Germans hesitated when they could have easily kidnapped the pope, others that it was all British propaganda. But, as rumors continued, they began to fear the reaction of Catholics. Threats against Pius XII ended on June 5, 1944, when the last German soldiers silently left Rome. No longer did they want to capture him in order to “protect” him. Six weeks later a bomb exploded near Hitler’s headquarters. Papers were found with references to the rapport between Pius XII and the anti-Nazi German resistance.

The message found in the recently-discovered document, “Massacre Pius XII with the entire Vatican,” proves that Adolf Hitler intended to assassinate the Pope along with all the Vatican Cardinals. The document refers to the plan as “Rabat-Fohn.” It names the unit assigned to execute the plan to be the Eighth Division of the SS Cavalry, “Florian Geyer,” and the reason to be “The Papal Protest in Favor of the Jews.”

This information in the Milan newspaper confirms what some historians have always believed, that Hitler intended to kidnap the Pope. Its implications can no longer be denied. The source of the information is a letter to Vincenzo Costa, the Fascist leader in Milan, from Paolo Porta, the Fascist leader in Como. This letter reveals Hitler’s plan to kill the Pope and the Cardinals.

According to Porta, his information comes from a high SS official. In December of 1943, Hitler personally chose Heinrich Himmler and Heinrich Müller, the head of the Gestapo, to study and execute a plan that would eliminate the Pope. Porta writes further that “an SS division disguised in Italian uniforms that they had captured on

September 8th, along with Italian guns, would launch an attack at night against Vatican City. Appearing as partisans determined to liberate the Pope, they would massacre the clergy.”

At this point, the plan continues, new troops of the Panzer Division Hermann Göring and the parachutists would intervene to kill the disguised partisans and thus leave no witnesses to survive. Porta further explains that if the Pope were miraculously saved, he would then be deported to Germany under the pretext to save him. One can imagine the consequences: “The persecution of the Catholic Church would begin with mass deportations to Germany of all ecclesiastics in Italy and throughout the world. They are to be considered the cause of ignorance, of domination, of conspiracies....”

Porta did not know if this plan, to be executed in January of 1944, had been “definitely set aside.” But he does not doubt that the Pope deserves such treatment. Nor does Porta doubt the reason: Pius XII defended the Jews, he protested. His Holiness continued to raise his voice in favor of the oppressed. Undoubtedly, he was not Hitler’s friend. The Rabat-Fohn plan was prepared by Hitler in retaliation.

This plan was found in the archives of the Archdiocese of Milan by Professor Anna Lisa Carlotti with a letter dated September 26, 1944, requesting it “to be kept with the greatest secrecy.” This momentous finding led to the discovery of three documents hidden among the papers of Bishop Enrico Assi, a priest-activist of the Italian Resistance. In 1998, they were published in the *Annali di Storia moderna e contemporanea*.

Pius XII was not a “silent Pope.” He explicitly condemned the “wickedness of Hitler” citing Hitler by name, and spoke out about the “fundamental rights of Jews.” The wisdom of his words and actions is supported by the evidence. In his testimony at the Adolf Eichmann Nazi War Crime Trials, Jewish scholar Jenö Levai stated: “Pius XII—the one person who did more than anyone else to halt the dreadful crime and alleviate its consequences—is today made the scapegoat for the failures of others.”

Personally and through his representatives, Pius XII employed all the means at his disposal to save Jews and other refugees during World War II. As a moral leader and a diplomat forced to limit his words, he privately took action and, despite insurmountable obstacles, saved hundreds of thousands of Jews from the gas chambers. The Pope was loved and respected. Of those mourning his death in 1958, Jews—who credited Pius XII with being one of their greatest defenders and benefactors in their hour of greatest need—stood in the forefront.

Throughout World War II, Pius XII so provoked the Nazis that they called him “a mouthpiece of the Jewish war criminals.” Robert Kempner, the American deputy chief of the Nuremberg war crimes tribunal, stated: “All the arguments and writings eventually used by the Catholic Church only provoked suicide; the execution of Jews was followed by that of Catholic priests.” All experts who witnessed that era agree that, if Pius XII had stridently attacked the Nazi leaders, more lives would have been lost. In the case against Pius XII, who is not here to defend himself, one must examine the evidence. However, Adolf Eichmann in his memoirs confirms that the “Vatican vigorously protested the arrest of Jews!” In his introduction to the Eichmann trial, Israeli Attorney General Gideon Hausner said (April 18, 1961): “The Pope himself intervened personally in support of the Jews arrested in Rome.” Some historians continue to ignore the testimony of contemporary witnesses. Can historians prove that the charges against Pius XII are false? Did Hitler Want to Kidnap the Pope? The answer is, “Yes.” Truth and Justice demand a re-evaluation of the attacks against Pope Pius XII claiming “silence,” “moral culpability,” or “anti-Semitism.”

Eugenio Pacelli, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the Knights of Columbus

One of the more important meetings of the Knights of Columbus in 1936, was with His Eminence Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli, Vatican Secretary of State. In fact, in my book, *Shepherd of Souls: A Pictorial Life of Pope Pius XII* (p. 42), the caption reads: “Pacelli visits the Knights of Columbus Headquarters in New Haven, Connecticut. Seated left to right: Bishop Francis J. Spellman, Cardinal Pacelli, Supreme Knight Martin Carmody. Standing: John Conway, William J. McGinley, Enrico Galeazzi, representative of the Knights in Rome.” This historic meeting in the Knights’ Headquarters took place on October 13, 1936, immediately after Pacelli’s visit with Richard Cardinal Cushing in Boston.

My visit to the Knights of Columbus Museum in New Haven, was indeed a pleasant revelation. In the Papal Gallery one travels through history, using one-of-a-kind artifacts, 100 year-old films, rare pictures, and original art. The journey takes you through war and peace, crisis and pageantry. Not only did I learn about Pope Pius XII’s efforts on behalf of the persecuted Catholics in Mexico, but I was able to see an “original” letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. I also became aware that six Knights of Columbus priests were martyred during the

persecution of the Church in Mexico in the 1920s and 1930s. These six Knights were among twenty-five Mexican martyrs canonized in 2000. Their relics, preserved in an ornate silver cross, toured the United States in 2006.

Pacelli's official visit to the United States began when planes accompanied the *Conte di Savoia*, October 8, 1936, as the ship sailed into the New York Harbor past the Statue of Liberty. The Vatican diplomat had arrived safely and was given the official salute: fireboats sprayed the harbor with multicolored streams; warships fired volley after volley high into the sky; sailboats, steamers, yachts, barges, rowboats proudly showed the papal colors of yellow and white.

But there was more to this trip than pageantry; Cardinal Pacelli had business to conduct. First of all, he wished to cement closer ties between the Vatican and the world's largest democracy—where the Church was flourishing and growing. That meant overcoming the traditional suspicion Protestant America felt towards the Holy See and convincing President Franklin D. Roosevelt to establish diplomatic relations. Pacelli also intended to curtail the rantings of the anti-Semitic radio preacher Father Charles Coughlin—who had a weekly radio audience of millions. Speaking in the name (though not the spirit) of Catholic social justice doctrine, Coughlin had moved from supporting the New Deal to advocating a blend of socialism, populism, and anti-Semitism. He had begun to pepper his broadcasts with “facts” taken from Nazi propaganda papers, and to scapegoat Jews in particular for the economic woes of the U.S.A. Thankfully, it seems that Coughlin obeyed Pacelli and stopped his broadcasts.

By silencing Coughlin, Pacelli won the gratitude of President Roosevelt and sped the United States' recognition of the Vatican's independence from Italy. Another appeal Pacelli made to the president—that the U.S. throw open its doors to Jewish refugees—went unheeded. There was too much native hostility to Jews to take such a measure, President Roosevelt calculated. Pacelli was invited to a luncheon at Hyde Park after Roosevelt's re-election.

During this same trip, Pacelli met with two officials of the American Jewish Committee, Lewis Strauss and Joseph Proskauer. Reaffirming Benedict XV's condemnations of anti-Semitism, the Vatican Secretary of State promised to make their message more widely known. These facts are found in the archives of the American Jewish Committee, and are documented by Naomi Cohen in her official history of the AJC.

Soon after Pacelli's return to the Vatican, Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*, which directly condemned anti-

Semitism. With Pacelli's close cooperation, it was written in German for wider dissemination, and smuggled out of Italy, copied and distributed to parish priests in Germany, to be read on Palm Sunday, March 14, 1937. It was immediately confiscated, printers were arrested and presses seized. The following day the German newspaper, *Das Schwarze Korps*, called it "the most incredible of Pius XI's pastoral letters: every sentence in it was an insult to the new Germany."

Although he was the Vatican's chief diplomat, Pacelli declined ever to meet Adolf Hitler, whom Pacelli told confidantes he thought was demoniacally possessed. Indeed, Pacelli went out of his way to avoid the Führer. When Hitler made a trip to Rome and expressed the desire to visit the Vatican Museum, it was closed to the public. Pius XI and Cardinal Pacelli retired to Castelgandolfo for the duration of Hitler's visit.

Joseph P. Kennedy, U. S. Ambassador to Great Britain from 1938 to 1940, wrote to President Franklin D. Roosevelt on April 19, 1938 and enclosed a strictly confidential Memorandum he had received from Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli. The Vatican secretary of state expressed his personal views that "the Nazi program struck at the fundamental principle of freedom of religion...." He assured Kennedy that any political compromise with the Nazis was "out of the question."

Elected the 262nd Pope, March 2, 1939, Eugenio Pacelli took the name of his predecessor and is known as Pope Pius XII. In his first address to the cardinals the following day, he spoke about true and lasting peace: "We invite all men to have peace in their consciences; calm in the friendship of God; to have peace in their families, united and brought into harmony by the sacred love of Christ; and, lastly, to have peace between nations by the interchange of fraternal assistance...."

Ten days after his election, Pope Pius XII received the papal tiara (March 12, 1939). His coat-of-arms showed the symbol of peace: a dove with an olive branch. His motto indicated peace to be a fruit of justice: *Opus justitiae pax* (Is. 34, 17). His first radio message to the world was, "Peace, gift of God, desired by all upright men, the fruit of love and justice." Immediately after his election, Pius XII issued a call for a peace conference of European leaders. Pius XII's peace plan was based on five points: the defense of small nations, the right to life, disarmament, some new kind of League of Nations and a plea for the moral principles of justice and love.

This was clearly expressed in Pope Pius XII's last minute appeal to head off the outbreak of World War II (August 24, 1939): "I appeal again to governments and their peoples; to governments that they lay aside threats and accusations and try to settle their differences by

agreement; to their peoples, that they may be calm and encourage the efforts of their government for peace. It is by force of reason and not by force of arms that justice makes progress. Empires not founded on justice are not blessed by God. Immoral policy is not successful policy... Nothing is lost by peace. Everything may be lost by war... Let men start to negotiate again.”

When all diplomatic resources were exhausted, Pius XII wrote to President Roosevelt (August 22, 1940): “Although the horrors of the war increase and Our sorrow deepens with every passing day, We are redoubling Our prayers and Our endeavors to find a practical way to such a peace as will bear within it the promise of permanency, and free men from the heavy incubus of insecurity and of perpetual alarms. In Our unceasing search for that peace which will be no longer, as so often in the past, a parenthesis of exhaustion, between two phases of conflict, but rather, by the grace of God, a golden era of Christian concord dedicated to the spiritual and material improvement of humanity, We feel a distinct sense of comfort in the thought that We shall not be without the powerful support of the President of the United States.”

Although Pius XII begged the Allies to spare Rome and the Vatican, he did not succeed. The magazine, *Ecclesia*, records his charity during the bombing of Rome, when American bombers dropped tons of explosives on July 19, 1943. As Bishop of Rome, he hastened to console and comfort his people. When he learned that the Tiburtina section was bombed, hundreds were buried under the ruins, dead or injured, and the Church of San Lorenzo bombed, he sent his secretary to withdraw all his personal funds from the bank, ordered his chauffeur to accompany him without the official escort, and hastened to the area. In the midst of panic and confusion, the car rushed through the streets of Rome.

The San Lorenzo Piazza was unrecognizable. The ancient Church was in ruins, totally destroyed. The Pope left the car and began to walk among the people as they knelt down for his blessing. In the midst of the destruction, as everyone around him was crying, he began the prayer for the dead, *De profundis clamavi a te...* (“From the depths of my heart, I cry to you; hear me, O Lord!”) and invoked the Madonna. His white cassock was stained with the blood of those to whom he administered the Last Rites.

His Holiness returned to the Vatican after witnessing the harrowing scene of death leaping from the skies and stalking pitilessly through unsuspecting homes striking down women and children. He immediately sent a letter to President Roosevelt (July 19, 1943), reminding him of the assurances given that “the neutral status of the Vatican City as well as of the Papal domains throughout Italy will be

respected....The war continues to multiply these sufferings a hundred-fold for so many millions of peace-loving, innocent men and women that Our paternal heart can find no rest except in constant, increasing efforts to dry the tears of aging mothers, of widows and orphaned children, and to hold back by every means at Our disposal the mounting flood that threatens to bury completely beneath its raging waters once fair lands of Europe and Asia.”

Again, as in previous letters, on August 30, 1943, Pius XII appealed to Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States of America. The Knights of Columbus exhibit honoring Twentieth Century Popes includes this autographed letter:

Your Excellency:

Recent events have naturally focused the world’s attention for the moment on Italy, and much has been said and written on what policy she would or should now follow for her own best interests. Too many, We fear, take for granted that she is entirely free to follow the policy of her choice; and We have wished to express to Your Excellency Our conviction that this is far from true. Of her desire for peace and to be done with the war, there can be no doubt; but in the presence of formidable forces opposing the actuation or even the official declaration of that desire she finds herself shackled and quite without the necessary means of defending herself.

If under such circumstances Italy is to be forced still to bear devastating blows against which she is practically defenseless, We hope and pray that the military leaders will find it possible to spare innocent civil populations and in particular churches and religious institutions the ravages of war. Already, We must recount with deep sorrow and regret, these figure very prominently among the ruins of Italy’s most populous and important cities. But the message of assurance addressed to Us by Your Excellency sustains Our hope, even in the face of bitter experience, that God’s temples and the homes erected by Christian charity for the poor and sick and abandoned members of Christ’s flock may survive the terrible onslaught. May God in His merciful pity and love hearken to the universal cry of His children and let them hear once more the voice of Christ say: Peace!

We are happy of this occasion to renew the expression of Our sincere good wishes to Your Excellency.

From the Vatican, August 30, 1943. Pius pp.XII

The letter is prominently displayed in this extraordinary collection of papal memorabilia. In order to understand its importance—only one of many communications between the Pope and the President of the United States—it is necessary for the reader to know that Roosevelt knew of and respected the Pope for three reasons: Pacelli's many efforts to block the Nazis at every turn, his tireless work for a just peace for every nation, and his constant efforts to help suffering and endangered civilians. This is amply demonstrated in my book, *Crusade of Charity: Pius XII and POWs* (Paulist Press, 2006).

Three Jews and a Pope

Some Jewish organizations continue to state that the Catholic Church did not condemn Hitler. From England, Israel and the USA, three Jewish historians have refuted this distorted portrayal of world history: Martin Gilbert, Michael Tagliacozzo, and David Dalin. All three have taken issue with Daniel Goldhagen, John Cornwell, James Carroll and other writers of the past century.

Why would German leaders state: "The Pope has repudiated the National Socialist New European Order... and makes himself the mouthpiece of the Jewish war criminals." When Pius XII learned about the Nazi round-up on October 16, 1943, why did he immediately send an official, personal protest through the papal Secretary of State Cardinal Luigi Maglione to German Ambassador Ernst von Weizsäcker? This protest was published in the Vatican's official "Actes." Why did the Pope provide false identification papers to potential victims? Why did he order Vatican buildings, churches, convents and monasteries to open their doors and find hiding places for Jews and other refugees? Israeli Foreign Minister Golda Meir stated: "When fearful martyrdom came to our people in the decade of Nazi terror, the voice of the Pope was raised for the victims." Nor can Albert Einstein's statement be ignored: "Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler's campaign for suppressing the truth" (*Time Magazine*, 1940).

When Eugenio Pacelli was elected to the papacy on March 2, 1939, Jewish newspapers in the United States, Canada, Great Britain and Jerusalem welcomed his election. When Italy's anti-Semitic laws went into effect, Pius XII responded by appointing several displaced Jewish

scholars to posts in the Vatican library. *The Kansas City Jewish Chronicle* (March 29, 1940), concluded that the pope's actions showed "his disapproval of the dastardly anti-Semitic decrees." The Vatican protested the deportations of Jews.

After the Allies liberated Rome in June 1944, Pius XII protested the deportations of Hungarian Jews. *The American Israelite* (July 27, 1944) wrote: "With Rome liberated, it has been determined, indeed, that 7,000 of Italy's 40,000 Jews owe their lives to the Vatican." In the summer of 1945, twenty thousand Jewish refugees from Central Europe presented the following petition to Pope Pius XII: "Allow us to ask the great honor of being able to thank, personally, His Holiness for the generosity he has shown us when we were being persecuted during the terrible period of Nazi-Fascism."

Pius XII was sympathetic to Zionism and the creation of a Jewish state, both before and after he was Pontiff. On July 30, 1944, Pius XII told the newly-appointed high commissioner for Palestine "of his intention not to interfere with the Jewish aspiration to create a national State in Palestine, saying that he was animated with great sympathy for the Jews" (*The Tablet of London*, Oct. 25, 1958). And in 1945, during a meeting with Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, Pius XII told his Jewish audience approvingly: "Soon, you will have a Jewish state" (*The Jerusalem Post*, October 10, 1958).

One wonders why the *New York Times* heralds books that cast Pope Pius as a racist and hypocrite. Compare *New York Times* book reviews, editorials and news articles that question Pope Pius's respected reputation with *New York Times* articles and editorials that praised Pius' efforts on behalf of the Jews. Why not cite the 1943 *New York Times* editorial? "...This Christmas more than ever, the Pope is a lonely voice crying out of the silence of a continent." Pope Pius XII was widely admired.

Testimonials abound. In 1985, Cardinal Pietro Palazzini was honored by Israel's Vad Vashem as a "Righteous Gentile." In an interview with him in 1995, he explicitly stated that Pius XII ordered him to save Jews. His testimony is also clearly expressed in his memoirs (*Il clero e l'occupazione di Roma*, 1995).

The Pope's peace efforts, his denunciation of Nazism, his defense of the Jewish people, have been clearly documented. Recently Rabbi David Dalin stated that "to deny the legitimacy of the collective gratitude of Jews to Pius XII is tantamount to denying their memory and experience of the Holocaust itself, as well as to denying the credibility of their personal testimony and judgment about the Pope's role in rescuing hundreds of thousands of Jews from certain death at the hands of the Nazis."

It is very significant that Pope Pius XII had the nearly unanimous praise of all his contemporaries, a fact mostly ignored by his detractors. Among countless other Jewish authorities, Pius XII received praise from Moshe Sharett, Israeli Chief Rabbi Isaac Herzog, and Pinchas Lapide.

Testimonials of survivors of the Holocaust also make it perfectly clear that the Pope was not anti-Semitic or indifferent to the fate of the Jews and that he did everything possible to help them. In a letter to me, dated June 18, 1997, historian and Holocaust survivor, Michael Tagliacozzo, clearly expressed his sentiments: "Pacelli was the only one who intervened to impede the deportation of Jews on October 16, 1943, and he did very much to hide and save thousands of us. It was no small matter that he ordered the opening of cloistered convents. Without him, many of our own would not be alive." Again, August 8, 2004, Tagliacozzo reiterated his convictions: "...Even if gratitude was expressed directly to the Institutions who protected them, the merit goes to Pope Pacelli who, on October 16, 1943, gave orders to open the doors of the parishes, convents and monasteries to save the Jews from deportation."

Several years ago in an interview, Sir Martin Gilbert, perhaps the foremost contemporary Jewish historian, noted that "Christians were among the first victims of the Nazis and that the Churches took a very powerful stand. ..." After years of research that began in 1959, Gilbert wrote *Never Again: The History of the Holocaust* that contains an extraordinary chapter on Pius XII's humanitarianism. Here Gilbert thanks the Vatican for what was done to save Jewish lives.

But how long will honest scholars condone statements by those who defame Pope Pius XII? Today even hardened detractors of Pius XII generally consider that, throughout the Second World War, the pope was hailed as a towering moral hero in the face of cataclysmic terror: a man solicitous on behalf of Jews and Gentiles alike who worked tirelessly for peace. His charity and love prevailed. Through diplomacy, personal contact with Heads of State, and the underground railroad, he protected the Jews and other victims of the Nazis in a way that no other leader with mighty war weapons could provide.

Marc Saperstein, professor of Jewish history and director of the program in Judaic studies at George Washington University, clearly stated in an article, "A Medieval and a Modern Pope" (*The Washington Post*, April 1, 1998): "The suggestion that Christian doctrines or practice led directly to the Nazi death camps is misleading and inappropriate. ... The fundamental responsibility for the Holocaust lies with the Nazi perpetrators. Not with Pope Pius XII. Not with the church. Not with the teachings of the Christian faith."

One of the evils that has enveloped the media is the fact that recent smear campaigns, mounted by misguided Jews and misinformed Catholics, are being used in what is really an intra-Catholic argument about the direction of the Church today. Books, articles and media reports have leveled sweeping attacks while clearly overlooking historical sources and factors. If he had denounced Adolf Hitler more explicitly, the Nazis would have responded with even more ferocity. Personally and through his representatives, Pius XII employed all the means at his disposal to save Jews and other refugees during World War II. As a moral leader and a diplomat forced to limit his words, he privately took action and, despite insurmountable obstacles, saved hundreds of thousands of Jews from the gas chambers. The Pope was loved and respected. Of those mourning his death in 1958, Jews—who credited Pius XII with being one of their greatest defenders and benefactors in their hour of greatest need—stood in the forefront.

Since World War II, an overwhelming number of members of the Jewish community have heaped thanks and praise on Pope Pius XII for his concern and assistance to the Jews in their difficult years. Recently, three Jews have come to the defense of Pius XII: Rabbi David Dalin, professor of history at Ave Maria University; Historian Sir Martin Gilbert whose books have contributed immensely to the history of the Holocaust; Michael Tagliacozzo, historian and Holocaust survivor. Perhaps the greatest testimony was Hitler himself who consistently complained that Pope Pius XII was “a mouthpiece of the Jewish war criminals.”

The truth of the matter is that Pope Pius XII condemned Hitler and protested more than 60 times. Politically the pope could do nothing; however, in a humanitarian effort to save the lives of Jews and other victims of Nazism, he did more than any other world leader!

Letter from Sister Margherita:

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May 30, 2006

Dear Friend,

You are acquainted with the tragedy of the Jews persecuted by the Nazis during the Second World War. Those who witnessed the charity of Pope Pius XII were amazed by his interest in saving the victims. Thousands of letters addressed directly to His Holiness were sent by family and friends. But their story cannot be told without your help. I appeal to you for help in promoting the truth about Pope Pius XII.

When the Jews were persecuted during the Nazi occupation of Rome, Pope Pius XII gave orders to give hospitality in the Vatican and in all Vatican extraterritorial buildings—convents, monasteries and churches as well as in the pontifical apartments in Castelgandolfo—in order to save as many lives as possible.

At least indirectly, many Jews owe their safety to Pope Pacelli. Unfortunately, some who escaped the fury of the Nazis during the Holocaust do not recognize the fact that it was the Pope who saved them. How could free access be provided to the Vatican, to the “Bambino Gesù” hospital, or to the Pontifical Villa in Castelgandolfo without the Pope’s approval? How could one have access to the Pope’s bedroom which was converted into a delivery room, according to the testimony of the director of the Pontifical Villa, without the Pope’s permission?

Among the fifty babies born in the Pope’s apartment, to honor him one mother named her twins: Pio Eugenio and Eugenio Pio. Common sense, rather than historical proof, demonstrates that the Pope did not limit himself to saving people, but he encouraged others to do so and also expected his collaborators throughout the world to do so.

In Castelgandolfo alone, there were 10,000 refugees who had to eat at least twice a day and had to be protected and cared for. The Vatican and the Pope were only interested in saving people and did not keep lists or an archive of the people saved. That is why we turn to you, dear Friend, to share with us any information of persons of Jewish extraction who were saved by the Vatican.

We would like to ask Vad Vashem in Israel to honor the memory of Pius XII and to add his name to the list of “Just Among the

Nations.” To succeed we must have the testimony in writing by a person who knows that a Jew was helped directly by the Pope. For example, thanks to the intervention of the Holy Father, a sick Jewish child (and mother) who fled from the Nazis, was transferred to the Bambino Gesù Hospital which had the privilege of extraterritoriality. During their stay the child’s father, who was living in the Vatican, came to visit her regularly sent by the Pope in a large black automobile with the Vatican license and flags of the Holy See.

You may know a Jew who is willing to provide his or her testimony which must be signed by a notary. Send it to me by e-mail (Sr.Margherita.Marchione@ATT.NET), by regular mail, or by FAX (973-539-9327). Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sr. Margherita Marchione, Ph.D.

Sister Margherita Marchione

Margherita Marchione is Professor *Emerita* of Italian Language and Literature at Fairleigh Dickinson University, and an internationally known author of more than fifty books on Clemente Rebora, Giuseppe Prezzolini, Philip Mazzei, Peter and Sally Sammartino, Pope Pius XII and others. She participates in radio and television programs in Europe and in the United States. Besides honorary citizenship in Poggio a Caiano (Prato) and Pontecagnano (Salerno), among her numerous honors, she is a Knight of the Star of Solidarity of the Republic of Italy and a member of the New Jersey Literary Hall of Fame. Sister Margherita received the papal award, *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Cross*, for her work in promoting the truth about Pope Pius XII. Among the first to answer the modern critics of Pius XII, Sister Margherita declares her unambiguous support for Pius XII at the outset of all her books. In her judgment, not only has the wartime Pontiff been defamed, but there is more than enough evidence to prove that he was a genuine saint.

Fulbright Scholar Margherita Marchione received her M.A and Ph.D. from Columbia University as well as several honorary degrees. She is included in the *Congressional Record* as well as in such biographical references as *Dictionary of American Scholars*, *Contemporary Authors*, *World Who’s Who of Women*, *Past and Promise: Lives of New Jersey Women*, and *Lives of Contemporary American Nuns*.

A member of the Religious Teachers Filippini, Sister Margherita is Treasurer at Villa Walsh in Morristown, New Jersey, where she resides. She is among the best-known—and passionate—supporters of Pope Pius XII. Sister Margherita has published several books in defense of Pius XII: *Yours Is a Precious Witness: Memoirs of Jews and Catholics in Wartime Italy* (1997), *Pius XII: Architect for Peace* (2000), *Consensus and Controversy: Defending Pius XII* (2002), and *Crusade of Charity: Pius XII and POWs (1939-1945)* (2006), all published by Paulist Press (New York/Mahwah, NJ), as well as *Shepherd of Souls: A Pictorial Life of Pius XII* (2002) containing over 260 photographs and sketches of the wartime Pontiff. The stated purpose of these books is to provide “definitive, conclusive and inspirational proof of Pius XII’s efforts to protect the victims of Nazism.” In *The Fighting Nun: My Story*, Chapter Eleven, “Defending Pius XII” (Cornwall Press, London/Cranbury, NJ, 2000), Sister Margherita refutes John Cornwell and defends the honor of the Pontiff. Her books collect first-hand eyewitness accounts of Pius XII’s contemporaries, English translations of primary material (from diplomatic and Vatican sources) available nowhere else, and reveal the utter hatred the Nazis had for Pius XII because of his defense of persecuted Jews and uncompromising stand on behalf of Christian principles. These books have drawn considerable attention from historians and religious leaders of many faiths.