



Written by [Denise Behreandt](#) on November 10, 2008

Holocaust Group Opposes Sainthood for Pope Pius XII

The groups claim that Pope Pius XII did very little to prevent the Holocaust. According to the main Jewish group in France, "Pope Pius XII, worried about burning his bridges with Germany, never made a clear statement denouncing the singular monstrosity of the extermination of millions of Jews. Moreover, he did not do so after the war either, which is profoundly shocking." Echoing these sentiments is Elan Steinberg, vice president, of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and their Descendants (AGJHSD), who stated, "Beatifying Pius XII [a step toward Sainthood] would be a tragedy for Catholic-Jewish relations, which have become so warm in recent years."



The belief that the Catholic Church and especially Pope Pius XII did nothing to oppose the Holocaust or to save Jews during World War II, was, in fact, propaganda spread by the Soviets. In the face of the communist initiated smear campaign, subsequent Popes have resolutely defended Pius XII. Every pope since his death has defended and admired his "heroic virtues."

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Contrary to the "Black Legend" that Pius did nothing, during the war he acted, along with other Catholics, to save as many Jews as possible from the vile hands of the Nazis. Despite the Nazis' control of Italy, Pius worked in secret, under impossible odds, to oppose the Holocaust through the Catholic Church while carefully working to prevent his actions from worsening the situation faced by those suffering under the Nazi tyranny. Pius knew, under conditions he faced, that only secrecy would lead to success. "Whatever chance Pius XII had of aiding the victims of the war would have been lost if [the Vatican's] neutrality were violated," wrote eminent scholar Sister Margherita Marchione, PhD, in her book [Yours is a Precious Witness](#) about the Catholic Church and the Holocaust in Italy during the war. "A direct condemnation of Hitler would certainly have resulted in a more frightful loss of life."

Despite this, the Pope dared to criticize the tyranny encroaching upon the world nonetheless. During the 1942 Christmas season, he announced on a radio show that "hundreds of thousands who through no fault of their own, and solely because of their nation or race, have been condemned to death or progressive extinction." As Sister Marchione noted, "There are many examples in the writings of Pius XII found in the Actes of the Holy See that he was not silent or insensitive to the suffering in Europe during World War II."

In marked contrast to the attacks by left-leaning Jewish groups and individuals today on Pope Pius XII, many prominent Jewish organizations, rabbis, intellectuals, and politicians praised the pope and the Catholic Church during and after World War II for heroic efforts to save and protect Jews. [On her website](#), Sister Marchione has gathered many of their statements, including examples from Israeli Chief Rabbi Isaac Herzog, Albert Einstein, American financier Bernard Baruch, Gold Meir, Chief Rabbi of



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Rome Elio Toaff, and many others.

Rabbi Joachim Prinz, national president of the American Jewish Congress, for instance, said, on the death of Pope Pius XII in 1958: "Among his many, great contributions to mankind, the Pontiff will be remembered wherever men of good will gather for his profound devotion to the cause of peace and for his earnest efforts in the rescue of thousands of victims of Nazi persecution, including many Jewish men, women and children."

Vatican leaders have continued to emphasize that Pope Pius XII had to act with great prudence under the circumstances he faced. "It was precisely by means of a prudent approach that Pius XII protected Jews and refugees," said Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Pope Benedict's secretary of state. "If he had made a public intervention, he would have endangered the lives of thousands of Jews who, upon his directive, were hidden, in 155 convents and monasteries in Rome alone."

Pope Benedict, too, holds Pius XII in high regard. "When one draws close to this noble Pope," he has said, "one can come to appreciate the human wisdom and pastoral intensity which guided him in his long years of ministry, especially in providing organized assistance to the Jewish people."

But groups of Holocaust survivors around the world plan on lobbying the Pope's ambassadors in an international campaign to stop the sainthood process. According to Reuters, this effort "is believed to be the first time Holocaust survivors have organized a global campaign to lobby the Vatican."



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