

Vatican Silent On Miracle Cures Through Pius XII

By G. K. BRUNST
Rome — (NC) — The Vatican is maintaining complete silence regarding press reports attributing "miraculous" cures to the intercession of His Holiness Pope Pius XII.

"Who would dare say that the Pope's profoundly spiritual personality is incapable of having effects on people that surpass human understanding?" a Vatican source asked.

"But on the other hand it should be clearly understood that neither the Holy Father nor the Vatican has the slightest control over such reports and assertions."

"WE KNOW for a fact that the Holy Father experienced a vision of Our Lord. It has been stated by Osservatore della Domenica that the revelation of this supernatural experience caused the Pontiff pain. But there is nothing to be said regarding those unverifiable reports which have cropped up since then and may be published in the future."

The latest "miracle" rumor, published by a Milan Illustrated weekly, Epoca, alleges that a child born blind—the report does not give its name, age, sex or hometown—regained its eyesight after it had been embraced by the Pontiff.

Nobody knows whether the re-

Reds Deplore Religion Gains In USSR

Washington — (NC) — A recent Soviet broadcast in Russian for home consumption warned of a strengthening of religious beliefs in the USSR since World War II, and declared that religion "kills the best human qualities," the U. S. Information Agency reports.

M. F. Korbysyn of the Soviet Ministry of Culture attacked observance of religious holidays as "one of the most harmful remnants of the past," according to the agency.

"THE COMMUNIST Party, which is founded upon the only correct world outlook — Marxism-Leninism — cannot remain neutral in its attitude toward religion," USIA quoted Korbysyn. "It would not be to think that religious beliefs will die a natural death. Such views are anti-Marxist and anti-party; religious beliefs are long-lived, are an enormous force and can become stronger."

During the war, the people turned in greater numbers to religion and "the weakness of atheistic propaganda during and after the war also contributed to the strengthening of religious beliefs," the Soviet official declared. He added that "simultaneously churchmen and members of various sects intensified their propaganda."

KORBYSYN then reminded Communist Party agents that while the Soviet constitution has a phrase about "freedom of conscience," it also calls for "freedom of anti-religious propaganda" by the state, USIA reported.

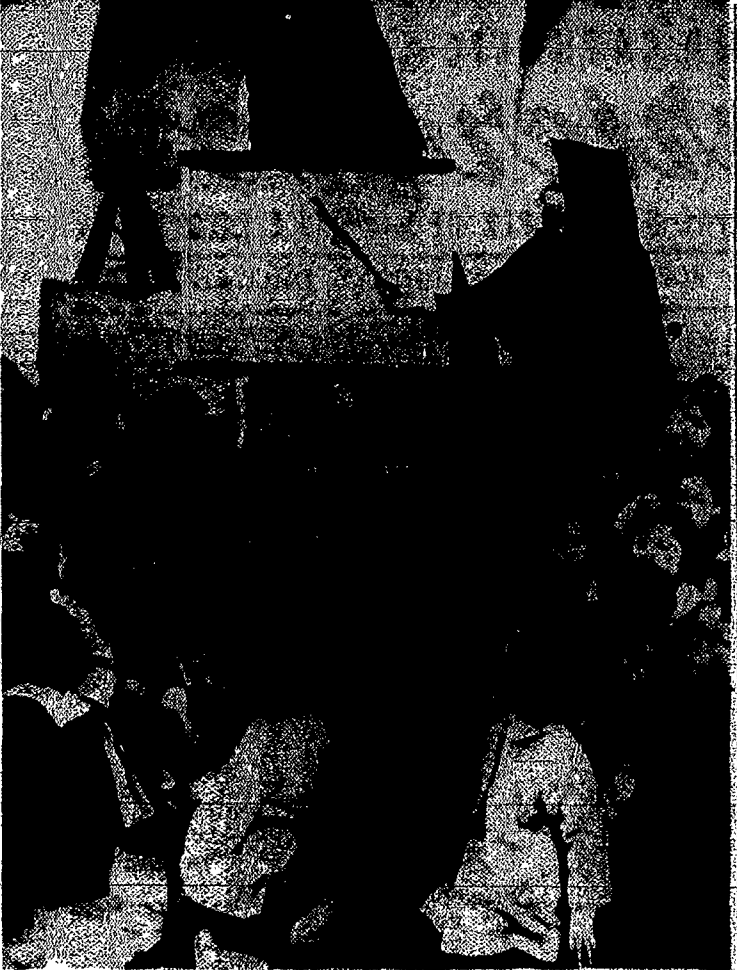
He stressed that religious ideology "continues to be an obstacle on the road to construction of communism," even if religious people do not oppose the state through overt action.

Italian President Honored by Pope

Vatican City — (NC) — The Order of the Golden Spur, one of the highest Papal honors, has been given by Pope Pius XII to Italian President Giovanni Gronchi on the eve of his first official visit to Vatican City.

The award was presented to President Gronchi by Archbishop Giuseppe Pletta, Papal Nuncio to Italy.

At the same time Osservatore Romano, Vatican City daily, praised the president as "a statesman whose ideals and love of peace—in both the political and social field—have been inspired by religious faith and Christian social thought."



Nun Teaches in Holy Land

Nazareth, Israel—A Sister of St. Joseph teaches the English alphabet to Arab children at a Catholic mission school here (RNS Photo)

Protestant Mayor Defends Catholics Against Critics

Willemsstad, Holland — (NC) — Mayor C. van der Hooft, himself a Protestant, has defended a Catholic procession here against criticism by the church-council of the Dutch Reformed Community.

The council said in a letter that citizens had been forced to see Catholics "in their songs very clearly paying divine honors to 'Mother Mary' during the festive reception of a statue of Our Blessed Lady of Fatima."

THE CITIZENS also heard the bell of the city tower ring a welcome to the statue, the council added. The Protestant group protested against the mayor allowing such a manifestation.

Mayor van der Hooft, in a letter published by the Protestant church paper, answered that to ban the procession would have been against the constitution. As to the city bell, the mayor said the parish priest asked permission for its use, since the parish has no bell of its own.

"This bell," the mayor said, "is not a private property of the Protestant majority of our municipality, but belongs to the whole of it."
"IT MUST BE known to you," Mayor van der Hooft went on,

Vatican Raps 'Freedom Story On Primate

Vatican City — (NC) — Observators' Romans flatly rejected press reports talking about the "liberation" of His Eminence Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski, Epimate of Poland. It said that, even if the reports were true, they do not indicate the slightest change in communism's attitude toward the Catholic Church.

Referring to articles appearing in the American and Italian press the Vatican City newspaper said in a front-page editorial that they indicated an attempt is being made "by various more or less clear sources to confuse minds, in accordance with the well-known practice which relies on the short memory of a distracted public opinion."

OSSERVATORE recalled the history of Polish persecution beginning with the 1850 Church-state agreement which was "imposed upon the Bishops" and ending with Cardinal Wyszynski's arrest in September, 1953.

"Now," it said, "newspapers speak about a 'liberation.' In reality, there has been no liberation whatsoever. All that is known is that the Archbishop of Gniezno and Warsaw is presently locked up in a college belonging to the Sisters of Nazareth at Komarna, in the Beskid Mountains near the Slovak border. It is also known that Bishop Michael Klepac of Lofz received permission to visit him. That is all."

Cardinal Wyszynski remains always interned and impeded. The only thing new is that today is known where he is, or at least where he was some weeks back. But who can guarantee he has not been moved once again?"

Spain Aids U.S. Hurricane Victims

Madrid — (NC) — Needy Spanish Catholics showed their gratitude for relief food supplies received from the United States by themselves extending a helping hand to Americans in distress.

Turned over here to U.S. Ambassador John Cabot Lodge by Jesus Gracia Valcancal, president of the Spanish Caritas, or national Catholic Welfare organization, was a check for one million pesetas (\$25,000) for the relief of recent hurricane victims in the northeastern area of the United States.

This represented offerings from 2,000,000 Catholics throughout Spain who have received food gifts from the United States, largely through Catholic Relief Services—National Catholic Welfare Conference.

Refugee Reveals Red Prison Horror

Saigon, South Vietnam — (NC) — Augustine Luong is one of many Vietnamese refugees who for the first time in years can look forward to spending Christmas in freedom.

In a refugee village north of Saigon he told his story to the N.C.W.C. News Service.

He is 25 but, like most Vietnamese, looks younger than his years. Unlike most Vietnamese, he rarely smiles.

FIVE YEARS ago he had his young wife, his two children, one a 4-year-old boy, the other a baby in arms, and his parents with him. He was a young farmer in northern Vietnam and he belonged to the local self-defense militia. He is a Catholic and lived in a 75 per cent Catholic village. He joined his neighbors in defending the village against the Communist Vietnamese.

Early in 1951 he was captured. For three and a half years he was held in various Vietnam prison camps until after the Geneva armistice of July, 1954.

He was not treated as a prisoner of war, or even as a human being.

He was chained. That is, his wrists and ankles were enclosed in iron rings. His fellow prisoners on each side of him were held in the same way. The iron rings were attached to a long iron rod that held the whole row of prisoners together. Nobody could turn, even slightly on one side unless the others turned, too.

Sometimes their feet were thrust into holes in a long wooden plank with the same effect. As well, Luong had an iron collar around his neck. This collar was chained to the wall behind him.

For 18 months the prisoners fastened on each side of him was a Vietnamese Catholic priest. There were four Vietnamese priests in prison with him.

CATHOLICS WERE treated worse than others and priests "worst" of all," he said. "Priests were given the hardest and dirtiest labor to do."

When the priest-prisoners were brought out to work, their ankles were loaded with chains so heavy that they could only shuffle one-foot slowly and painfully after the other.

One priest, Father Duc, died of gangrene. Luong was in the same room with him for five

months. Then the sick priest was moved into a nearby shack where the dying were literally thrown in a heap, one on top of another.

There were 250 prisoners crowded into one room about 35 feet by 25. Luong said. In one prison camp where there were about 400 prisoners, they died at the rate of two a day.

HE WAS TORTURED 36 times, four times with electricity. He used to hope that the Vietnamese would use electricity again, because under it he lost consciousness.

When he was released after the armistice, he returned to his home village. His wife had died of anxiety and grief. His father had gone into hiding when the son was taken and had died of hardship. His mother and two boys were there to welcome him in a war-pounded village now ruled by the victorious Communists.

Last Christmas was Luong's first outside prison since 1950. But he had found out that under Vietnam the people are always prisoners.

AN OLD PRIEST from a nearby village was allowed to come and celebrate midnight Mass. But nobody was allowed to go to confession. "If someone tried to speak privately with the priest, he would be accused of plotting against the authorities. The Communists staged a 'party' before Mass and made people eat candy—a 'gift' from the government—a little after midnight, by tricking them about the time. The purpose was to make them break their fast and prevent them from receiving Holy Communion.

There was a crib near the altar, but beside it the Communists put the picture of Ho Chi Minh, the Vietnam president. The priest was not allowed to preach, but a Communist agent gave a Communist talk.

DURING THE eight months following his release from prison camp, Luong succeeded in assisting at Mass only twice.

Last April he escaped to the south. His mother and two boys escaped at the same time. They did not dare travel together, but they are together now.

In 1945, Luong said, he read about Communism and decided that it was evil. Now he knows from experience, too.

Expelled Bishop Warns On Communist Propaganda

Rome — (RNS) — Bishop Alfonso C. M. Ferroni O.F.M. of Laohokow, China, recovering in a hospital here from more than four years of mistreatment in Chinese Communist prisons, warned Italians against letting themselves be fooled by Communist propaganda.

Denying Communist claims that there is freedom of religion in China, he said that everyone must conform in word and action to the Communist program.

"YOU ARE safe only so long as you think as they do," the prelate said. "If you don't, you are a traitor! They regard silence as agreement, but a man cannot remain silent always."

Because the Communists believe Catholicism "wants to destroy" their program, they fight every evidence of religion, he said, even turning their relentless campaign against their own countrymen who are priests.

Some of the latter have "given in" some have "accepted the Communist idea" under this pressure and "all the others are either in prison or doing forced labor," Bishop Ferroni said.

HE REPORTED that the Communists "organize schools and hold meetings and lectures all the time where they constantly beat, beat, beat on the same central idea."

"They know that if they keep doing this long enough something is bound to give," the bishop added.

Bishop Ferroni, a native of Rignano, was the last European-born Catholic prelate to be released from China.

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