

Biography Of Pope Pius

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Lehrman. The next year he was named Papal Legate for the fourth time to represent the Holy Father at the International Eucharistic Congress in Budapest.

ELECTED POPE

In February, 1939, Pius XI, who had been in poor health for several years, died. As Cardinal Pacelli, he was elected to the papacy. The Pope's death and took charge of the arrangements for the Conclave to choose his successor. In accordance with Pius XI's ruling that as many as 18 days may elapse between a Pope's death and the Cardinals' meeting, the Conclave was scheduled for March 1, enabling American Cardinals to take part in a Papal election for the first time.

Before the Conclave met the Nazi and fascist presses started vicious campaigns in an attempt to influence and even dictate the choice of the new Pontiff. Their main target was Cardinal Pacelli. His name headed a list of "political" and "anti-fascist" names unacceptable candidates in the eyes of the Nazi press. The Nazi press of Germany called him a member of a Vatican "war party" and a "traitor" belonging to a degenerate generation of a dying bourgeoisie.

But the campaigns were futile. On March 2, on the third ballot, he received the votes of 61 of the 62 Cardinals in Conclave. Only his own vote had been cast for another candidate. So on his 63rd birthday, in one of the shortest Conclaves in history, Cardinal Pacelli was elected Supreme Pontiff and chose the name Pius XII. He was the first Papal Secretary of State to be elected Pope since Clement IX in 1667.

His election, the first to be announced to the world by radio, was everywhere hailed with enthusiasm. In the Eternal City, St. Peter's Square, to greet their first native Pontiff in over two centuries, beyond Rome his election was exceptionally popular since he was personally known by many thousands of persons in many countries. He had passed 12 years in Germany, spent most of his vacations in Switzerland, and visited England, France, Spain, Austria and Hungary in Europe and Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and the U.S. in the new world.

WORK FOR PEACE

But probably the chief reason for his popularity was the general feeling and hope that he would continue his predecessor's work for peace. The hope was justified. In his first statements, Pope, the day after his election, he declared: "The fairest of all God's gifts, passing all understanding, is the peace that all men of feeling cannot but strive for, the peace, in fine, which arises from justice and charity."

Pius XII was crowned March 12, 1939, in ceremonies of great pomp and splendor. The heads of some 40 states sent representatives, including for the first time the President of the U.S. After his coronation the Pope's thoughts again turned to peace when he said: "Nothing is lost by peace, all may be lost by war. . . . May the strong and mighty listen to us and use their power not for destruction but for construction."

The Holy Father's words, however, went unheeded. Barely six months after his election German troops invaded Poland and World War II began. On the eve of the invasion His Holiness had made a final effort to avert the conflict. Calling the envoys of Great Britain, France, Poland, Germany and Italy into audience, he sent a message through them to the heads of their governments asking them to "abstain from taking any steps capable of aggravating the present tension." But to no avail.

WORLD WAR II

World War II was an enormous trial for Pius XII. War itself, with its death and suffering, grieved him. And the destruction of many ancient Christian shrines, such as the 14th-century-old Monte Cassino Abbey, only deepened his anguish.

Nor was he far from personal danger. The fate of Rome, although declared an "open city," long hung in the balance. When bombs finally did fall on the Eternal City he showed his great courage and went out into the city to give encouragement to the people, thus earning anew his age-old title of Defender of the City.

While the Holy Father suffered greatly for his children, he was never content merely to sympathize with them. With the coming of the war he had tried so hard to prevent, he lent his every effort and taxed every resource of the Church to mitigate its horrors and bring it to a speedy end.

On Christmas Eve, 1939, he presented the warring nations with a set of conditions on which they might have brought their conflict to an honorable close and

established a just and lasting peace. His conditions were independence for all nations, strong and weak, large and small; liberation of all nations from the slavery of armaments; reconstruction of international institutions so as to remove past deficiencies; earnest examination of the real needs and just demands of nations and peoples, including ethnic minorities, and a sincere and effective return to the immutable principles of Divine Law. In succeeding Christmas messages during and after the war, these points were clarified and expanded.

WAR SUFFERERS

To alleviate some of the sufferings of war prisoners and their families the Holy Father established the Vatican Information Service. Its branch offices in countries throughout the world gave to countless persons their first and in many cases their only news of relatives taken prisoner of war. The Service was entirely free and was used by people of all races, nationalities and religions. Several million messages were channeled through the Service during the war, including more than half a million to the U.S.

In addition to setting up the Information Service the Pope also gave large sums of money to relieve war-caused distress. He gave nearly \$1,000,000 for Polish relief. English Bishops got more than \$100,000 to restore bombed churches. He sent more than \$60,000 to heavily damaged Malta. These, however, are but a few of his gifts; even larger amounts were sent to France, Belgium and the Netherlands. Another Papal war charity was the feeding of the destitute in and around Rome. Allied authorities reported that the Vatican had provided a meal a day for 40,000 people, thus preventing thousands of deaths from starvation.

While the Allied armies were in Rome, His Holiness showed himself willing to receive all who wished to call on him. One day alone he saw 8,000 soldiers. By the end of the war it was estimated that he had been seen by 120,000 Allied troops, most of them American. He did not, moreover, just see his visitors and let himself be seen. He addressed each audience and usually spent some time afterwards speaking to individuals.

1946 CONSISTORY

Because of the difficulty of gathering Consistories during the war, by 1945 the College of Cardinals had fallen to only 34 members. In December of that year, less than six months after the end of hostilities, Pius XII named 32 new Cardinals. It was the largest single elevation in history. The largest preceding Consistory had been in 1917 when Leo XIII named 31 Cardinals. But for the fact that one of the new Cardinals died before the February, 1946, Consistory, the Sacred College would have been brought up to its full strength of 70 members for the first time since the early 18th century.

Seeing a chance to create, as he put it, "a Catholic map of the world," the Pope raised to the rank of Cardinal a large number of non-Italians, reducing Italians in the College to a minority for the first time in 500 years. Only four of the 32 new Princes of the Church were Italian. The remaining 28 came from 18 countries, including China and Portuguese Africa. Thus for the first time all continents were represented in the Senate of the Church. With the naming of four American Cardinals the U.S. for the first time had five members of the College.

In 1947 His Holiness, through the Apostolic Constitution, *Provida Mater Ecclesia*, gave canonical recognition to secular institutes. Secular institutes, which were originated in the 19th century, are associations of men and women who continue their normal lives in the world without living the community life of religious, but who consecrate their lives to God. Members of some institutes take private vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. All members follow the rules of their respective institutes.

DEFEATS REDS

When the battle Pius XII had fought against nazism and fascism ended with the war, that against communism was intensified with the coming of peace. For while the war had caused the defeat of the totalitarianism of the Right, it had made that of the Left stronger than ever.

In 1948 communism set out boldly to capture Catholic Italy, presumably as the first step in its march to conquer all Western Europe. The Italian election of that year was one of the crucial events of the Pius XII's reign. With an estimated 2,000,000 members the Italian Communist Party was widely considered the largest outside of Russia itself. Its leaders were confident they could take over the country and many neutral observers thought so, too.

The Reds, however, suffered a



Seven year old Eugenio Pacelli began first grade in neighborhood Rome school.



Eugenio Pacelli, as a twelve year old boy (at left in photo) had frail health. Parents encouraged him to outdoor hikes in countryside near Rome.



Newly ordained in 1899, future Pope Pius XII was first assigned as an assistant pastor of his own parish church in Rome.



As Archbishop Pacelli, future Pope served in Berlin, negotiated two concordats.

not all who call themselves amounts of food, clothing and articles of first hand by spoken medicine were distributed among and popular writings and Arab D.P.'s, both Christian and y good example."

In October, 1957, he told the Second World Congress of the Apostolate, meeting in Vatican City, that the Church will not relax against her avowed enemy, communism, and that she will use the weapons of Christ with the lady as her army, to fight to the end.

In July, 1958, the Pope urged a special novena for peace, asking prayers for the intention of the persecuted Church which is supplied by the communists in a large part of the world.

In September, 1958, the Pope made public his third special message to the Chinese Catholics, written in June. Repeating his emphasis in the 1952 and 1954 messages, he urged Catholics in that Red country not to be fooled by communist efforts to establish an independent church.

THE HOLY LAND

In addition to his troubles with communism, Pius XII also faced a period of unrest in the Holy Land during the postwar years. In the war between the Arabs and the new state of Israel that broke out in the spring of 1948, many Christian shrines and churches were destroyed or destroyed and free Christian access to the Holy Places endangered.

In October, 1948, the Pope issued an Encyclical, *In Multiplici*, calling for the internationalization of Jerusalem and vicinity and the protection of Christian rights there. In 1947 the United Nations had made a similar recommendation, but nothing was done to implement it. In 1949 His Holiness issued another Encyclical, *Redemptoris Nostri*, calling anew for Jerusalem's internationalization, while the U.N. reaffirmed its 1947 stand and voted to put it into effect. Again, however, no concrete steps were taken on Jerusalem is still divided between Jew and Arab, while the question of Christian access to the Holy Places remains to be settled.

During the Arab-Israeli war hundreds of thousands of Arabs fled their homes in Palestine and sought refuge in neighboring countries. Distressed by their sad plight, the Holy Father appealed to the world's Catholics to come to their assistance. To administer the aid they contributed he set up the Pontifical Mission for Palestine, through which "large" all the people of the world may

feel themselves . . . moved to conform their lives with the moral teachings of the Church and Christian virtue."

The Holy Year began Christmas Eve, 1950, when the Holy Door of St. Peter's, walled up during the 25-year intervals between Holy Years, was opened by the Pope with three symbolic taps of a silver hammer. During 1950 more than 3,000,000 pilgrims from the four corners of the earth flocked to Rome to receive the Holy Year indulgences and witness the many special events that took place there.

Among the most important of these events were the eight canonizations and eight beatifications at St. Peter's. There were also international congresses of Catholic scholars, missionaries, journalists, musicians and many other groups as well as exhibitions and competitions in such fields as Church art, architecture and literature. In addition to the events in Rome, numerous Holy Year observances were held in many other cities throughout the world.

ASSUMPTION DOGMA

Highlight of the Holy Year was the Supreme Pontiff's proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It was the first Papal definition of a doctrine in nearly a century. The last had been Pius IX's proclamation of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception in 1854. The most recent previous doctrine to be added to the body of defined truth was that concerning Papal infallibility, proclaimed in 1870 by the Vatican Council.

In defining the Assumption dogma the Pope added a new element to the Catholic creed. He rather proclaimed as an article of faith what had been the constant belief of Catholics since the Church's foundation.

The proclamation was read November 1 before the largest number of prelates ever to gather in St. Peter's and a huge throng of more than half a million pilgrims packing the Basilica and the square outside. Countless millions of others heard it broadcast by radio in nearly a score of languages.

When the Pope presided at the Holy Door's closing on Christmas Eve, 1950, the Holy Year in Rome came to an end. Catholics of all nations were given a chance to gain the Holy Year indulgences in 1951 without traveling to Rome by making a pilgrimage to churches designated by the

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When bombs fell on the Eternal City during World War II, Pope Pius was quick to arrive on the scene to console the victims. His

white cassock was blood-spattered. Vatican funds aided war victims throughout the world at his commands.

resounding defeat. The Pope had calmly reminded the nation's Catholics of their duty to vote and to vote for a party that was not anti-Christian. The faithful went to the polls almost without exception and dealt communist expectations a severe blow by electing a strongly anti-Red parliament.

RED PERSECUTION

But while the advance of communism appeared to have been halted in the West, Reds struck heavy blows at the Church as they took over country after country in Eastern Europe. His Holiness saw the persecution mount, first here, then there, but always following the same pattern. Churches and schools were closed, the Catholic press banned and the faithful, discriminated against until their very lives were in danger.

These persecutions reached a peak in the imprisonment or banishment of Cardinal Mindszenty in Yugoslavia, Cardinal Wyszynski in Poland and Archbishop Beran in Czechoslovakia.

In July, 1949, in face of the growing threat of communism, Pius XII issued a decree excommunicating all Catholics who, "knowingly and of their free will," join or remain in the Communist Party or who in any way produce, disseminate, read or support Red propaganda. The decree was regarded as one of the most far-reaching of modern times. For although the Church had condemned communism for a century, preaching against its errors and evils, the Pope's decree was the first act aimed at the individual.

For a few days the communists remained silent. Then their press began violent attacks on the decree. For they saw it as a serious threat to their plans for reducing the peoples of the satellite nations to a state of slavery. In

Union for the brutal force it was using to suppress Hungary.

In his 1954 Christmas message the Pope again condemned the Reds for their bloody suppression of the Hungarian revolt.

"There is no longer room for doubt concerning the aims and methods which rely on tanks," the Pontiff declared, "when these

are to noisily crash over borders, soiling death to force civilian peoples into a pattern of life which they explicitly detest."

Regarding the evidence given in Hungary of the Reds' true intentions, the Pope stated: "If there still be any vacillating spirits, notwithstanding the black testimony of ten years of cruelty, the blood just shed in the immolation of many lives sacrificed by a martyred people should finally convince them."

In May, 1957, when Poland had won a degree of freedom from its harsh communist rule, the Pope issued an encyclical letter to Polish Catholics reminding them that they must stand up to enemies of the Church.

He cited the heroism of St. Andrew Bobola, heroic Polish Jesuit who was martyred in 1657 by Orthodox enemies of the Faith. Catholics must remember, he said, that to act and suffer for the Faith is part of Christian virtue.

A plea to Catholics throughout the world, especially in Poland, to remain firm in their Faith was contained in the encyclical "Evangelii Aethiopiae Christi" which was issued on May 16, 1957. Its appearance coincided with the bestowal of the red hat of the cardinalate on His Eminence Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski, Primate of Poland, a former prisoner of the communists. In the encyclical the Pope declared: "The more boldly haters of God and enemies of Christian teaching attack Jesus Christ and the Church He founded, the more readily

THE HOLY YEAR

On Holy Thursday, 1949, Pius XII issued a Papal Bull decreeing 1950 a Holy Year. He urged Catholics everywhere to make a pilgrimage to Rome, to pray and do penance during that year that to the world's Catholics to come to those outside the Church, might to their assistance. To administer the aid they contributed he set up the Pontifical Mission for Palestine, through which "large" all the people of the world may



Pope Pius XII walks from Vatican chapel after he was elected as 262nd Supreme Pontiff of the Catholic Church, March 2, 1939. He was crowned 10 days later.

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