

Pontiff Made Frequent Pleas For World Peace

(N.C.W.C. NEWS SERVICE)

The reign of Pope Pius XII presents a striking contrast. Pope during the bloodiest of all wars and its aftermath of constant and bitter strife, the most outstanding characteristics of his Pontificate was his unceasing work for peace.

Europe and the world were already perilously close to war when Pius XII was elected Pope on March 2, 1939. Recognizing the seriousness of the situation and mindful of the example of his great predecessor, Pius XI, the new Pontiff's first address was a call to all men to work with him for peace. He particularly appealed to those in high positions whose decisions would either cause or prevent war.

"We invite all," the Holy Father said, "to the peace of a tranquil conscience in friendship with God, to the peace of families united and harmonized by much love of Christ and, finally, to a peace among nations through fraternal help, reciprocal and loving collaboration, and cordial understanding for the superior interests of the great human family under the eyes and protection of Divine Providence."

LEADERS OF NATIONS

"In these tearful and difficult hours, while so many difficulties seem to oppose the attainment of that peace which is the most profound aspiration of all hearts. We raise to Our Lord a special prayer for all those who are entrusted with the highest honors and the heaviest burden of guiding their peoples in the ways of prosperity and progress."

A month later, in his Easter sermon in St. Peter's Basilica, the Holy Father warned men of the approaching conflict, again urged them to return to the way of peace and pointed out the way to them.

"We, therefore, exert all as this fearful storm approaches, to make their way back to the Kingdom of Peace, the Conqueror of Death."

"You see, therefore, Venerable Brethren and most dear children, how peace, in the true sense, is built upon a single and most firm foundation. That is to say, it is built upon the Eternal God, to acknowledge Whom, to honor and worship Whom is the duty of every living creature. To diminish the obedience due to the Divine Creator, to regulate it out of existence, is thus nothing else than to throw into confusion and to break up entirely the tranquility of the individual citizen's life, of the life of the family, of the separate nations and, ultimately, of the whole human race."

HISTORIC MESSAGE

War, however, continued to come closer and closer. Working tirelessly, Pius XII drew on all his long experience as one of the world's most skilled diplomats and tried by every means to avert it. He appealed to the people in a radio broadcast, saying:

"The danger is imminent, but there is yet time. Nothing is lost with peace: all may be lost with war."

"Let men return to mutual understanding. Let them begin negotiations anew, conferring with good will and with respect for reciprocal rights. They will find that to sincere and conscientious negotiations an honorable solution is never precluded. They will feel a sense of greatness in the true sense of the word if, by silencing the voice of passion—be it collective or private—and by leaving to reason its rightful role, they will have spared the blood of their fellow men and saved their countries from ruin."

He exhausted as well as all the resources of diplomacy. Until the very hour of Poland's invasion by German armies, the representatives of the Holy See in both Warsaw and Berlin sought with all their powers of persuasion to bring about an understanding between the two powers. His Holiness also asked Great Britain, through its minister, and France and Italy, through their ambassadors to the Vatican, to do all they could to prevent the disaster. But his efforts were in vain.

After war came, Pius XII bent all his efforts towards bringing it to a speedy end and alleviating the sufferings of its victims. The Vatican Information Service was set up to supply news of prisoners of war to their relatives. Through this service went millions of messages. To many it gave their only news of the whereabouts of members of their families who had been captured by the enemy. The service was open to and used by all Catholic and non-Catholic alike. The Holy See also spent large amounts of money to aid refugees and to assist in the restoration of war-damaged churches and shrines.

PEACE PLAN

But the greatest contributions of Pius XII to peace were his

to the natural law and to God, from Whom that law comes.

"This hour demands," his Holiness declared, "with insistent voice, that the aims and programs for peace be inspired by the highest moral sense. They should have as their superior purpose nothing less than the task of securing agreement and concord among the warring nations — an achievement which may leave with every nation, in the consciousness of its duty to unite with the rest of the family of states, the possibility of cooperating with dignity, without renouncing or destroying itself, in the great future task of reparation and reconstruction."

After war ended, Pius XII continued to work as hard as ever for a peace based on justice and charity. An evidence of the world's recognition and appreciation of his labors was the award in 1947 to His Holiness of the Prince Karl Medal by King Gustav V of Sweden.

During 1954 Pius XII delivered two major addresses on the problem of peace, calling for international agreements to outlaw atomic, bacteriological and chemical warfare in his Easter radio message and again appealing to nations in the fall to do everything possible to avert the threat of atomic war.

Like his Christmas Eve address to the cardinals the Pope called upon the nations of Europe to form a continental union. "Why continue to hesitate?" he asked. "The end is clear, the needs of nations are obvious to all."

On Easter Sunday, 1954, the Holy Father made a plea to the nations of the world to outlaw nuclear and bacteriological warfare and to put the discoveries of science to peaceful use for a better world.

This theme was echoed again in the following Easter Sunday, April 10, 1955, when the Pontiff warned the world of the tragic consequences which could come from progress in the nuclear field. He spoke, hopefully, of the atom as a source of "easily accessible energy," but prayed that God would prevent nuclear experiments from "being turned into an infernal violence that would destroy everything." The Pope cited also the potentially damaging effects of nuclear tests in the field of genetics.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

In his Christmas message the same year, the Pope outlined the progress achieved in nuclear weapons and stressed the necessity for an international agreement to simultaneously put an end to atomic weapons experiments, renounce use of atomic weapons and institute effective general control of armaments. The Holy Father at that time declared himself in favor of a cessation of nuclear tests.

The Hungarian revolution and the Suez crisis in the fall of 1956 called forth three appeals for prayers from the Pope. On October 28, 1956, he asked prayers for peace with justice in Hungary in the encyclical "Luctuosissimi Eventus." For the second time within a week he called for prayers for peace in the encyclical "Laetamur Admodum," issued November 3, 1956, which also stressed the danger caused by warlike acts in the Middle East. Finally, only two days later, on November 5, the Pontiff issued yet a third encyclical, "Datis Nuperime," in which he asked again for prayers for peace and condemned Russia's use of force to reimpose its control on Hungary.

In July, 1958, he called upon all the faithful to offer prayers for the persecuted Church throughout the world in the encyclical "Memento Juvat."

The constant theme of these and other messages of the Holy Father—Peace—was summed up in September 17, 1958, radio address to participants in the Mariological Congress in Lourdes. The Pope recalled the significance of Lourdes in the centennial year of the great French Marian shrine.

He then said: "Beloved brothers and sons, in this solemn hour implore for the world all the gifts you deem necessary and opportune, each one according to the needs of which he is aware. But pray above all that hatreds and discords may cease, that the insistent voices of covetousness and pride may be reduced to silence and the joyous and salutary sun of much-wished-for peace may finally shine on the earth—the peace of Christ, which is higher than all sentiments in the hearts of men, in their social and international relations, the natural consequence of the integral application of the Gospel."



Children captured the Pontiff's special attention. He accepted their gifts, gave them Rosaries in return.



Against constant advice of his doctors (one 'haunted himself in attempts to greet him stands scowling behind him) Pope Pius ex- , sands of pilgrims.



The Pontiff whose word was law for half a billion Catholics was a gentle man such that even God's least creatures nestled in the palm of his hand as in garden of his Castelgandolfo summer home.

Biography Of Pope Pius

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Bishops of their own dioceses for that purpose.

MORE CARDINALS

Late in 1932, by which time the Sacred College had fallen to 46 members, Pius XII called the second Consistory of his reign to name new Cardinals. He elevated 24 prelates from 12 nations to the rank of Cardinal, thus bringing the College up to full strength for the first time in some 250 years. As in 1946 one of the new Cardinals died after the Consistory had been called but before it could be convened in January, 1933. This time, however, another Cardinal was named to take his place.

A few days before the Consistory His Holiness had issued a historic making decree granting annual permission for evening Masses throughout the world and introducing the Eucharistic fast. He gave Bishops everywhere the right to permit evening Masses on Sundays, holy days of obligation, First Fridays and a number of other specified occasions. It also modified the fast laws, allowing the faithful under certain conditions, to drink liquids—excluding alcoholic beverages—up to one hour before Holy Communion. Among the other liturgical changes introduced by the Pope was the revival of the ancient Easter vigil service. He permitted its use, after centuries of non-observance, in 1951 and renewed permission for it for three more years in 1952.

Pope Pius XII on March 25, 1933, sent to Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain a message of condolence on the death of her grandmother, Queen Mary. He was himself the recipient of condolences in November when members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Vatican requested an extraordinary audience and expressed to the Holy Father their profound sympathy in his sorrow occasioned by the arrest of Cardinal Wyszyński, Primate of Poland by the communist government in Warsaw. In July, 1933 the Pontiff addressed a letter to the Polish Primate regarding him and his spirit and hopes have always sprung from the blood of martyrs.

HONORS U.S.

In October, 1933, His Holiness honored the entire Church in the United States by personally taking part in the dedication of the new North American College in Rome. It marked the first time that the Pontiff had left either the Vatican Palace or his summer home in Castelgandolfo for the opening of a national college. It was only the second occasion in modern times that a Pope had left the Vatican for any college dedication. Pius XI did so for the dedication of the College of the Propagation of the Faith, which is a pontifical rather than a national institution.

Early in 1954 the Pope fell ill, but both before his illness and after his slow recovery—prayed for in all parts of the world—he continued his strenuous work. In addition to radio talks to a number of national Marian congresses, he kept up the custom of addressing various professional and occupational groups, speaking throughout the year on such widely different subjects as medicine and medical ethics, the press, population problems, education, modern technology, tailoring and radio and television. In June he spoke in five languages in an address closing the first telecast in Europe over an international TV hookup. Television, he said, should serve as a "symbol and promise" of European unity.

In August, 1954, it was announced that His Holiness had given permission at the request of the American Hierarchy, for the use of English instead of Latin in the United States in certain parts of the ceremonies of Baptism, Marriage, Extreme Unction and a number of blessings.

MARIAN YEAR

In proclaiming 1954 a Marian Year—to mark the passage of 100 years since the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception by Pope Pius IX—the Holy Father sought to inspire men to holiness and to foster greater devotion to the Mother of God. The purpose was not to attract pilgrims to Rome, but to stimulate religious life everywhere, even in the smallest parish, and to pray to the Blessed Virgin for peace. Outstanding events of the Marian Year in Rome were the canonization of St. Blase on May 29 and of five other new saints on June 12, as well as the Pope's proclamation of the feast of the Queenship of Mary in October.

In citing his reasons for proclaiming the new feast, Pius XII wrote that, after mature consideration, he was convinced that "great advantages will derive for the Church if this solidly demonstrated truth (Mary's Queenship) shall shine forth more evident

than ever before all as the most shining light of her candelabrum."

Earlier in the year, receiving 350 prelates in special audience, the Pope noted that the Bishops alone are the divinely appointed teachers of the Church. Priests and lay theologians, he said, share in this authority only insofar as they have a mandate from their Bishops. In November, at the end of the International Marian Congress in Rome, he warned against the false idea of the "priesthood of the laity." In what was essentially a continuation of his earlier address to the prelates, he took a strong stand against the error that would limit the authority of Bishops to "strictly religious matters." He cited the Church's interest in such questions as social problems, the licitness of war and the evils of totalitarianism as examples of her concern with the moral aspects of temporal matters.

In late November the Holy Father suffered a recurrence of his illness and was ordered by his physicians to take a complete rest. As a result he missed the opening exercises of his annual retreat for the first time in his reign.

In August, 1957, a new code of canon law for the Eastern Rites of the Church was promulgated and the following month the Pope issued the encyclical, "Munera Fronsus," on motion pictures, radio and television. These "renewable inventions," the Pope stated, should serve to give people a "more respectful understanding" of each other and bring them closer together.

In October he addressed 2000 delegates to the second World Congress of the Lay Apostolate and told them that the Church will continue to fight communism to the end with the laity as its army.

Later in the month he inaugurated the new facilities of the Vatican Radio.

In his 1957 Christmas message the Pope called on the Christian world to shake off a pessimistic lethargy and become the "vigorous defender" of the "divine order in the world." He declared that the divine law imposes on all rulers the duty to prevent war by means of suitable international organizations and armaments reduction. He also warned against a "blind fascination for progress" and emphasized that the rejection of Christ in society brings about "the iron discipline of collectivism."

In March 1958, he called off formal observance of the 19th anniversary of his coronation as pontiff and his 82nd birthday as a protest against the anti-religious campaign by leftists in Italy. The campaign continued throughout the Italian elections and is still going on.

In his Easter address the Pope spelled out the causes of war and their solution, reminding that only through Christ can the world find peace.

In the encyclical, "Meminiisse Juvat," issued in July, the Holy Father urged prayers for the persecuted Church and warned that the powerful new weapons at man's disposal make possible "universal extermination." Only by a return to Christian precepts can men found a just society, he pointed out.

GROWTH OF CHURCH

In spite of wars and persecution, the Pontificate of Pius XII saw a remarkable growth in the Church. Evidence of this growth is the fact that the Holy Father found it necessary during his reign to create or raise in rank more than 500 ecclesiastical jurisdictions. He created 94 new archdioceses and dioceses, of which 77 were in the United States or its possessions. He raised 182 lower jurisdictions, mainly vicariates apostolic, to archdioceses or dioceses. He elevated another 70 jurisdictions in rank and founded 134 new lower jurisdictions. In addition, he established national hierarchies in China in 1949, in the Gold Coast and Nigeria in 1950, in the Union of South Africa in 1951, in Formosa in 1952 and in East Africa and the Scandinavian countries in 1953.

During his years in the Papacy, Pius XII spoke to the Church in 28 brilliant Encyclicals, as well as in many less formal pronouncements. While continuing his predecessor's custom of issuing Encyclical letters, lengthy, papal statements predominantly doctrinal in character, he also revived the use of the shorter Encyclical Epistles, generally messages concerning a specific event, problem or need.