

WARRIORS FOR PEACE

A Brief History Of The Papacy

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The Peace of God was a series of regulations aimed at protecting sacred persons, places and things, from armed aggression. The Truce of God was even more daring. It was the provision in Church law that nobody could engage in warfare or violence on Sundays, feastdays, or in sacred seasons! This movement was strongest in France; but from France it spread elsewhere when the popes placed their sanction on it.

Pope Blessed Urban (1088-1099) gave this French peace movement his backing in 1085, when he attended the church council held at Clermont in France. But Urban went even farther than approving the Truce of God. It was at that council that he proclaimed the First Crusade.

It may sound strange to say that the pope started these "holy wars" in the interests of peace; but this was the case. Christian peace is not pacifist, and allows for just wars.

The crusades were justified wars, directed against the Seljuk Turks who had lately invaded Palestine and interfered with the rights of pilgrimage, to Christ's homeland; rights acknowledged for centuries in international law. Furthermore, Urban believed that it would be truly in the interest of peace to dissuade the Christian warriors of the West from attacking each other, by sending them forth shoulder to shoulder, against a common enemy.

"Let hatred, therefore, depart from among you," he cried out. "Let your quarrels end; let wars cease; let all dissensions and controversies slumber. Enter upon the road to the Holy Sepulcher; wrest that land from the wicked race, and subject it to yourselves!"

They cried out in reply: "God wills it!"

It is true that the Crusades failed in their immediate object. But they did serve to make the West more heedful of the admonitions of popes later.

Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) profited by this development. The circumstances of the time provided him with many unique legal rights to intervene in the lives of kings and emperors. And he did not hesitate to act on these rights when their tyranny compromised the peace and welfare of the faithful.

With holy audacity he would bring pressure upon them, even by the threat of war. The mon-

archs would cry out against him but would eventually submit.

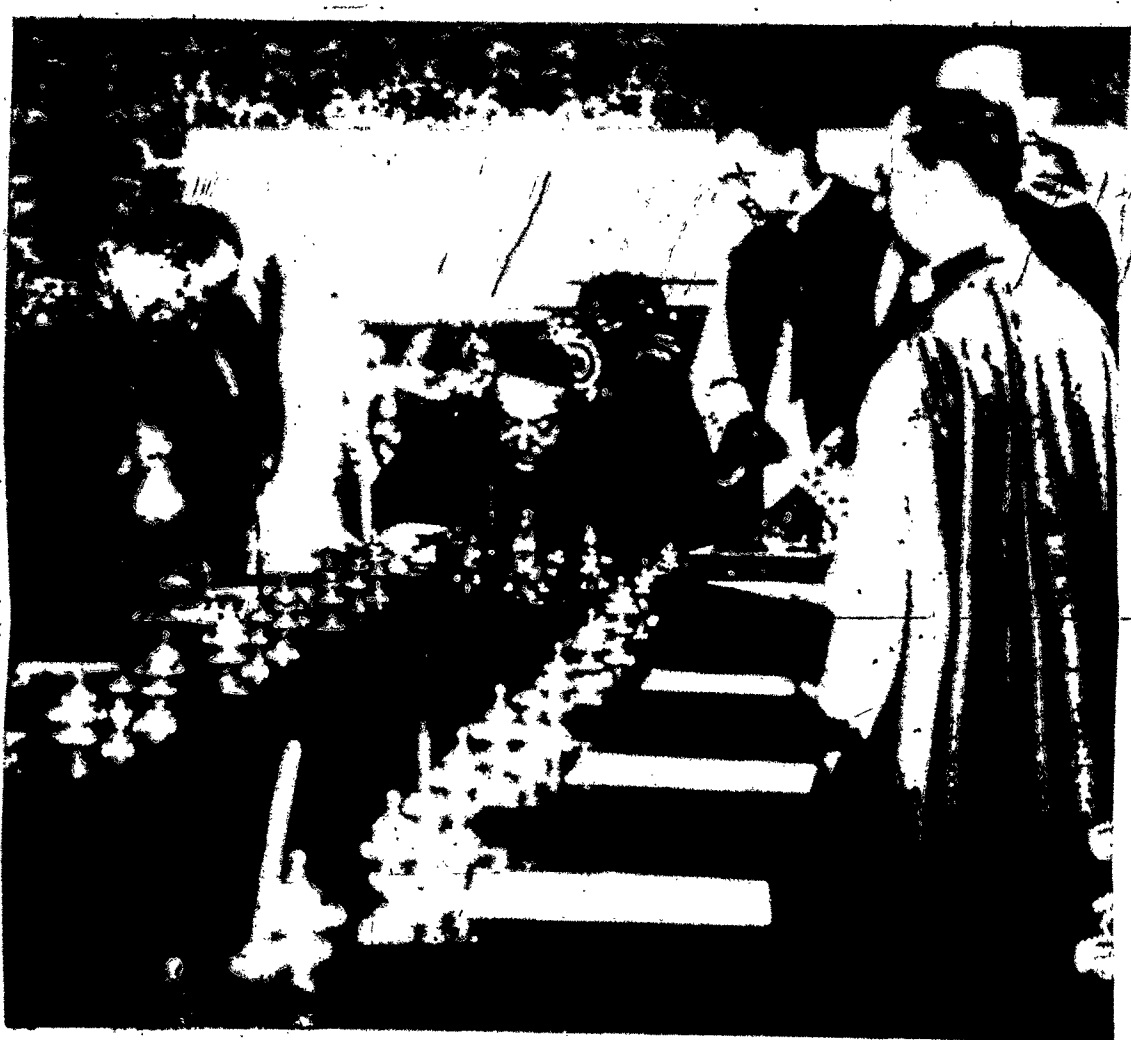
The people whom they had repressed would turn their eyes gratefully to the Pope.

Never again thereafter were the popes able to exercise such a powerful political influence in the interests of the common welfare.

Rulers kept increasing their absolute power and asserting their independence of papal political intervention. Finally, in 1517, the Protestant Reformation broke out and many princes favoring the errors of the Reformers, cut loose from the authority of the Bishops of Rome.

The loss of so many millions to the faith grieved the hearts of the Vicars of Christ; and the terrible religious conflicts which followed mightily tried their minds. But they came forth, in the Council of Trent, with the only true answer to the revolt: Hold fast to the faith and practice it the more fervently!

Pope Gregory XIII (1572-1585) spared no effort in carrying out this program. His ideal was the peaceful penetration of the spirit



This historic photo shows Cardinal Gasparri signing the Lateran Treaty as Premier Benito Mussolini stands watching. Treaty was signed in 1929, recognized the Vatican as an independent nation.

of the Gospel into the whole world, so as to preserve the truth where it was not already lost, and spread it into Asia and America where it was still unknown.

In a day when hatreds ran high, he also presented to the world a singular gesture of peace and concord: the Gregorian Calendar, which all the nations of the world now observe in common.

The popes of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries often had as much trouble with Catholic kings as with non-Catholic ones. Absolute in power, many Catholic rulers considered themselves almost supreme in national church affairs, and they resented papal interventions as a form of interference.

In 1682, for instance, Louis XIV of France went so far as to approve a declaration that popes are not the true heads of the church on earth, and are not infallible in their official teachings.

The pope at that time, Blessed Innocent XI (1676-1689), had to take a stand against Louis' action, for the declaration was false and mischievous. The method he chose, however, was not one of war, but of passive resistance.

Since Louis XIV had the privilege of naming bishops to the see of France, Innocent simply refused to appoint anybody he nominated, if that nominee had signed the declaration, and this was true of most of them. — had countersigned the 1682 declaration. Louis XIV was not used to being opposed thus. But when by 1693, as a result of the firmness of the "Stubborn Saint" in Rome, there were over

thirty French dioceses without bishops, the monarch had to admit defeat.

The despotism of European kings was finally destroyed by the French Revolution. But a new despotism arose in its place to plague the Church: the radical democracy of political liberalism, which the Revolution had produced.

Far different from the Christian democracy of the United States, this radical democracy opposed a Church authority, especially Church authority, and advocated a liberty which was more often license than true freedom.

Because he opposed this spirit, the peaceful Pius VI (1775-1799) — who in his own time had withstood the very autocrats whom the Revolution destroyed — was carried away into exile and death: the last and the most august victim of the French Revolution.

If the new European republics had not been so anti-religious, the Church could have adapted itself to them peacefully for the Church accommodates herself to any just form of government.

Before he was elected pope in 1800, Pius VII declared: "Be Christians, and you will be excellent democrats!" But in Italy especially, the movement for uniting the peninsula under one government aimed directly at de-throning the popes from their small kingdom and destroying the prestige and influence of religion.

It was a long battle that the

Italian unionists fought. The popes did not cling to the papal kingdom out of mere greed. The few little states had come into their power legitimately. They were important as proofs and guarantees of the pope's independence.

They were an unwelcome responsibility, but the popes had taken, at their coronation, an oath to protect them.

We know what eventually happened to these states.

During the reign of Pope Pius IX (1846-1878), they were one by one wrested from papal control. Finally, in 1870, the Italian armies camped outside Rome itself.

Pius had only a handful of soldiers, but he had to show the world that he yielded up the papal kingdom only to force. He therefore ordered the little army to defend the walls until the attackers made a breach in them. As soon as the breach was made, he had the white flag of surrender run up on St. Peter's.

Pius IX was a man of peace, who would be avenged upon his enemies only as a man of peace. "The vengeance of the priesthood and of the Vicar of Christ," he had declared some years before, "can only be prayer and supplication that they may all be converted and live."

In the twentieth century, the popes have been, if possible, still more ardent warriors for peace than their predecessors.

This is because we live in the age of world war and total war.

Pope St. Pius X (1903-1914) seemed to foresee the horrors we have experienced in our day. Asked by the Austrian ambassador to bless the Austrian army as it entered World War I, he replied sternly: "Tell the Emperor that I cannot bless the war nor him who desired it. I bless peace!"

It was Pope Benedict XV (1914-1922) who had to live through that first great world conflict. From the outset he pleaded that all the faithful second with their prayers his many efforts after peace.

Those efforts reached their climax in August, 1917, when he sent to the heads of all the belligerent nations concrete proposals for a just negotiated peace. Unfortunately, his recommendations went unheeded, and the war went on, with increasing slaughter. But he continued to bind up the wounds of conflict, and, after the Armistice of 1918, to advocate the re-establishment of sound international concord.

Pius XI (1922-1939) carried on where his predecessor had left off. While never denying the justice of wars of self-defense, he took as his program "The Peace of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ." His primary interest was, of course, to have the nations guarantee to the faithful the peace necessary to practice their faith.

One means which he often

used to protect this religious peace was to sign concordats or treaties with the various nations. He did not hesitate to conclude these treaties even with the rising totalitarian powers; for, as he once declared, he would make a treaty even with the devil if by so doing he could save a single soul.

But he fought for the wider peace, too: peace for the whole human family; and to maintain this peace he offered, if it would help, even his own life.

As a collaborator of Benedict XV and Pius XI, Pius XII (1939-1958) saw eye-to-eye with them on the urgency of world peace. Choosing as his motto the words of the prophet Jeremiah: "The work of justice shall be peace," he devoted his whole pontificate to this pursuit, as we are all witnesses. A consummate diplomat, he outlined, as early as Christmas, 1939, the five indispensable foundations of a just international peace.

The full story of his efforts to prevent war has not yet been told; but even in its fragmentary state it is a great story. The arrival of the atomic age in 1945 only proved the truth of his warning of 1939: "Nothing is lost by peace. All may be lost by war."

With good reason, therefore, did he double his exertions, in his latter years, to promote every worthwhile attempt to maintain international concord.

Ever since that day, there-

fore, when Christ in Gethsemane told St. Peter, his first Vicar, "Put up thy sword," the successive Vicars of Christ have been essentially warriors for peace.

It is quite true that many — perhaps most — of their measures in this direction have not been greatly successful. The exhortations they have addressed have been condemned. The spiritual penalties they have inflicted have been ignored. Their crusades have gone awry. Their concordats have been scrapped. The international leagues which they have encouraged have proved ineffectual.

Even their passive resistance, while winning a moral victory, has not averted disaster.

Will the popes who succeed Pius XII, in view of these earlier failures, cease their efforts as peacemakers? They most certainly will not. For the preaching of peace is one of their duties.

As Pius XI once pointed out, it is not only truth, but "justice and brotherly charity of which the Church is the sole depository and the divinely appointed teacher."

As representatives on earth of the Christ "who, coming, announced the good tidings of peace," the popes must ever preach to men of good will a message of reconciliation. They must ever think, as God himself thinks, "thoughts of peace and not of affliction."

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