

## Pastoral Perspective

## CHRIST HAS RISEN! — BE ALIVE!

Just two weeks ago I had the privilege of establishing a new parish in the diocese. I asked Father Robert Kreckel, the newly appointed pastor, to allow his people to choose the title for their community of faith and worship and witness: How pleased I was to affirm their choice — "The Church of the Resurrection." I thought as I wrote the document of official erection of the parish, that these people had experienced my hope for every parish in the Diocese of Rochester — that the Church everywhere would be an Alleluia people gathered to give witness to the Easter experience. For the burden of proof in the fact of Christ's Resurrection rests squarely with us. It is a mystery of faith which each liturgical celebration challenges us to proclaim. No other argument can convince the unbeliever.

The Easter vigil service is a symbol of the unique power of our personal witness to the reality of Christ's victory. The ceremony begins in darkness. One Paschal Candle begins to penetrate the gloom. Then the light spreads from candle to candle until the whole Church is illuminated. Easter is the

light which enlightens our lives filled with the darkness of the night of our own limitations and failures, of our sufferings and of our faltering faith, of our daily defeats and deaths. All are made bright by the luminous victory of Christ's Resurrection.

Easter must be a sacramental event — a luminous sign — if man is to believe in it and have the hope of resurrection from his seeming hopelessness. We must never make use of our faith in Christ's Resurrection nor of our hope in a final resurrection to avoid living the resurrection now. The power of the Risen Christ should be penetrating our everyday lives.

We should be leaping for joy if we are true witnesses of Christ's victory. When we merely limp along, as we so often do, leading frightened, anxious, constricted lives, we discredit the Easter reality. Good news is never announced by 'uptight' people.

Our Mission as witness should be one of urgency to tell everyone we see that the time of peace has been established, that reconciliation is within our grasp, that the world has nothing to lose and everything to gain by accepting the new creation established by the Risen Lord. It is ours to tell our brothers and sisters who are still casting their lot with the forces of greed, hatred, war, bigotry,

fierce competition and exploitation, that their allies are already defeated; that judgment has been rendered; that Christ is Lord; that He has won the victory over the powers of darkness.

If the question be asked: "What single truth must the Christian seek to make real, deep and effective in his life?" the answer must be the Resurrection of Christ. It is this truth which throws light on all the rest: the ultimate identity of Jesus, the problem of evil, the forbidding mystery of death, the coming of the Spirit, faith, the Church, eternity. Nothing makes sense except through the shining radiance of Easter Sunday morning.

As I offer my Easter Masses for you I shall pray for your renewal to a deepening sense of your vocation as Easter people. The poet expresses my hope and blessing:

"Lord, it's morning!  
You've sun — on Easter feet —  
has crept into my room  
and called me  
from my slumber tomb.

"Arise, be risen  
And spread the news  
It's morning!"

## vatican news

## Vatican Role in WWII Documented

Vatican City [RNS] — In attempting to assist the victims of World War II, the Vatican and Pope Pius XII not only encountered stiff resistance from the Axis powers, especially Nazi Germany, but ran into some difficulty with Great Britain, it was revealed in a documentary volume made public here.

A second volume of documents, published simultaneously, reported that Pope Pius intervened personally but without success with Mussolini and King Victor Emmanuel to have Italy pull out of the war in 1943 and save the country from an Allied onslaught.

The efforts to aid war victims — mainly refugees and prisoners of war — and the late pontiff's attempts to have Italy withdraw from the war "on honorable terms" were among the disclosures in the sixth and seventh volumes of a Vatican series, covering the Vatican and World War II from 1939 to 1943.

The two volumes of documentation, entitled *The Holy See and the Victims of War, March, 1939 — December, 1940* and *The Holy See and the World War, November, 1942 — December, 1943*, were compiled by four Jesuit historians from unpublished materials in the Vatican archives.

Resumes of both works, written by one of the four historians, American Jesuit Father Robert Graham, were slated to appear in the English edition of the Vatican City daily, *L'Osservatore Romano*.

Concerning the documentation on war victims, Father Graham said that in addition to German hostility and British reluctance to provide data, the Vatican's efforts toward aiding prisoners of war, sick and wounded, refugees and the peoples of occupied nations were met with "bureaucratic barriers" set up by neutral countries.

He said this reduced to "maddening slowness" the processes of aid and emigration.

For administrative and financial reasons, the Jesuit

added, the Vatican did not itself carry out organized relief work but through the Church and diplomatic channels aided and sometimes created "field organizations" to do it.

Father Graham noted that the documentation appearing in the sixth volume details the appeals that came to the Vatican, "not necessarily Catholic and often Jewish, asking help or intervention."

The Jesuit said that one project especially close to the heart of Pope Pius XII was the Vatican Information Office, which was able to set up a network of communications involving POWs, the military, families and concentration camps.

Among the Pope's "high priority" concerns, said Father Graham, were assistance to "Catholics of Jewish background" in need of emigration, and material and spiritual assistance to Poles.

Noting that the Pope had received \$125,000 from American Jews to assist refugees, he said the Vatican encouraged the formation of "refugee committees" in North and South America and in Europe.

"The Vatican's main efforts in the field of Polish relief were directed . . . to helping both military and civilians who had been able to find refuge abroad," said the Jesuit historian. "For this, the Pope received generous financing from American bishops."

He observed that the success of all Vatican efforts in aiding refugees and others was conditioned by the degree of cooperation by belligerents. Father Graham said documents of the initial war years permit the following ratings: "Italy, with Hungary and Rumania, Good; Great Britain, initial opposition moderated later by benevolent reluctance; Germany, no cooperation whatever."

Declaring that the Nazis continually evaded, blunted and rejected Vatican aid proposals,

the U.S. Jesuit said the "official explanation was the danger of espionage. The real reason, only to become evident in the acts of the Reich government, was systematic hostility to the Holy See."

The Jesuit said this was particularly manifested with respect to Poland.

Great Britain rejected Pope Pius's request to transmit POW information on the ground that it would duplicate the work of the Red Cross. A refusal of papal urgings for food shipments to occupied France and Belgium was reportedly based on the necessity of maintaining a blockade of the German war economy, he said.

Father Graham said Britain later relented on these points by way of exceptions. He added that the difficulties in aiding the war victims were outlined by Pope Pius himself in a December, 1940, letter:

"Unfortunately, many of our attempts (at aid) have encountered difficulties of every kind, much more serious than those of the last war, some of these inherent in the nature of the scourge that prevails but others — and we ought to say it — caused by the will of men."

Father Graham said that particularly tragic was the fate of 3,000 Brazilian visas obtained by the Vatican for "Catholics of Jewish background." He said that by the time France had fallen in 1940, hardly one-third of them had been issued and none to people from Germany.

In a resume of the second volume just published, Father Graham said documentation during the period November 1942 to December 1943 shows the behind-the-scenes activities of the Vatican to promote peace.

A major initiative by the Vatican was its attempt to make the Allies understand that Italy was ready for peace and was only waiting for a suitable moment to break with the Nazis. But, the Jesuit said, "it seemed to the Vatican that this 'real situation'



Msgr. Giovanni Battista Montini, now Pope Paul VI, stands next to Pope Pius XII in this 1947 photo. Vatican documents just made public show that the two men were involved in efforts to have Italy pull out of World War II. Msgr. Montini, at the time a sub-secretary of state for the Vatican, was one of a relative handful of Vatican diplomats who played roles in the delicate Church negotiations for peace. [RNS]

was not understood in Washington and London.

The documents of this time also recorded the doubts of the Vatican over the policy of "unconditional surrender" and the fears that such a policy would only prolong the war. Various Vatican spokesmen warned that the "harsh terms" would tend to "sow the seeds of future wars," the Jesuit said.

At that time, the Pope was being submerged with pressures from various nations urging papal initiatives for peace before the Soviet Union's occupation of Eastern Europe was complete.

The "apparent insensitivity" of the Vatican to the problem of future Soviet influence in Europe was surprising to the diplomats, said Father Graham. But the

Jesuit pointed out that in confidential conversations high Vatican officials expressed their reserve over British and American confidence in the good intentions of their Russian ally.

The Vatican, seeing little difference between Nazis and Communism, indicated to British officials in now published documents that both systems "are dangers for civilization . . . materialist, anti-religious, totalitarian, tyrannical, cruel and militarist."

The Pope, the documents disclosed, personally contacted Mussolini and King Victor Emmanuel but his pleas for peace were rejected. It was also disclosed that the Pope was acting out of fear for the safety of Italy and not to make it easier for the Allies to take over.