

WORLD & NATION

Barak

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expected to receive only 18 or 19 seats. Netanyahu announced his intention to resign as head of the Likud less than half an hour after television exit polls showed him losing by a large margin.

Bethlehem Mayor Hanna Nasser, reacting to the One Israel win, said: "No doubt this will help implement the peace process. Those who signed the peace accords are now in power. This is a very clear-cut indication that the majority of the Israeli society is for the peace process. This will keep our hopes great again."

Nasser said he was optimistic for the future despite Barak's tough talk regarding the future of Jerusalem and settlements. Palestinians will be patient with Barak and allow him to proceed with the peace process, Nasser added.

In his message, Patriarch Sabbah expressed the hope that Jerusalem would again find its "vocation as the place of reconciliation."

"May all of us, Israelis and Palestinians, be peacemakers so that all people may see God in his land and praise him forever for his mercy," Patriarch Sabbah said.



Reuters/CNS

The newly elected prime minister of Israel, Ehud Barak, prays at the Western Wall in Jerusalem May 18. Latin-rite Patriarch Michel Sabbah said he hoped Israel's new leaders will "answer the people's expectations for peace."

Official refutes attack on Pius

By Jerry Filteau
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — A prominent Jewish leader's condemnation of Pope Pius XII has drawn sharp criticism from Eugene Fisher, national director for Catholic-Jewish relations for the U.S. bishops.

Rabbi Marvin Hier, founder and dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, called Pope Pius XII "the pope of the Holocaust" May 13 and said the idea of the Catholic Church declaring him a saint "desecrates the memory of the Holocaust."

"Pius XII sat on the throne of St. Peter in stony silence, without ever lifting a finger, as each day thousands of Jews from all over Europe were sent to the gas chambers, with his full knowledge," Hier said in the 19th annual State of World Jewry Address, delivered in New York at the 92nd Street Y Bronfman Center for Jewish Life.

Fisher said the time has come "to stop raising loud accusations and (instead) sit down together with responsible scholars" to assess Pope Pius' papacy.

"Virtually every statement (Rabbi Hier) makes here falls short of accuracy," Fisher said.

In his speech the rabbi said the Vatican "adamantly refuses to open its files" on Pope Pius in World War II — "files, I am certain that would prove conclusively that Pius XII knew all about the 'Final Solution.'"

Fisher said Rabbi Hier seems unaware of the 11-volume official documentary series on the activities of the Holy See relative to World War II, edited by a team of leading historians who were given full access to the archives of the Vatican Secretariat of State for the project.

Fisher acknowledged that the team consisted only of Catholic historians but added, "That is why Cardinal (Edward) Cassidy (president of the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews) in March 1998 made the suggestion that the Holy See's commission and IJCIC (the International Jewish Committee for Inter-religious Consultations) get together with a group of Catholic and Jewish scholars" to review the documentation of that era.

"Let's get the historians together and let them do their job, and see where it leads," Fisher said.

He also took issue with Rabbi Hier's criticism that Pope Pius XII "refused to issue" the encyclical against racism and anti-Semitism planned by his predecessor, Pope Pius XI.

"It was written by an American Jesuit priest, Father John LaFarge," the rabbi said, referring to one of the three Jesuits assigned to draw up a draft document for Pope Pius XI, who died before he had a chance to complete it or publish it.

"LaFarge did not write the section on anti-Semitism in the so-called 'hidden encyclical,'" Fisher said.

He said Father LaFarge appears to have been the chief writer of the section on racism, but the anti-Semitism section, almost certainly written by the German Jesuit on the drafting team, "had a very European structure. It sees Jews as a problem, which LaFarge did not."

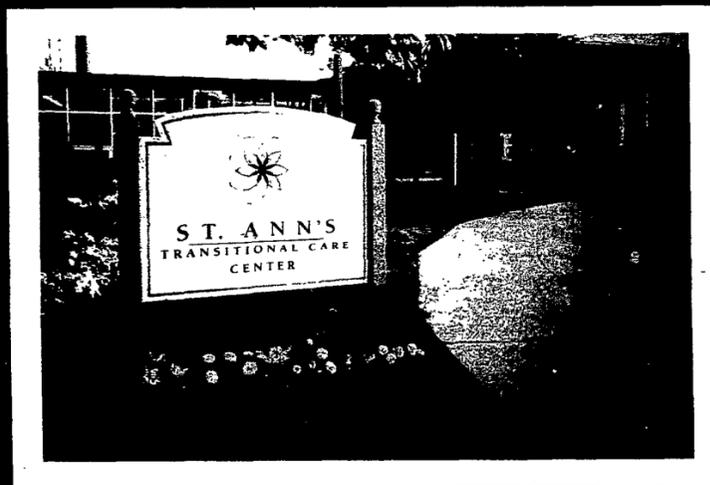
Language in the draft encyclical describing Jews as a problem and speaking of the right of Christians to defend themselves against Jews was such, Fisher said, that it could and probably would have been used by Hitler for anti-Semitic propaganda.

"It would have been disastrous for Pius XII to have issued that encyclical," he said.

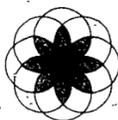
At a symposium in Rome earlier this year Cardinal Cassidy warned that unjustified and unsupported attacks on Pope Pius XII by Jewish leaders "have provoked not a little resentment" among Catholics and could seriously set back Catholic-Jewish relations.

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