

# WORLD & NATION

## Vatican plans early release of some archives

By John Thavis  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The Vatican announced it would open ahead of schedule part of its 20th-century archives, including new documents on Vatican-German relations and Pope Pius XII's efforts to help prisoners during World War II.

The Vatican described the move as an "exceptional gesture" by Pope John Paul II that should help put an end to "unjust and thankless speculation" — an apparent reference to accusations, strongly rejected by the Vatican, that Pope Pius XII and others did not do enough to stop the Nazi rise to power and the Holocaust.

The announcement came in a two-page statement Feb. 15 by officials of the Vatican Secret Archives and the Secretariat of State. For years, Jewish scholars in particular have pressed the Vatican to open its archives so experts could examine a more complete historical record from the period.

The Vatican usually makes the archival material of an entire pontificate available. This is done only after the passage of many years, in order to respect the rights of the people involved and to allow the material to be organized.

In 1984, Pope John Paul ordered

archival material opened from the pontificate of Pope Benedict XV, who reigned until 1922. At the same time he ordered archivists to start organizing material from the reign of Pope Pius XI, who died in 1939.

In its Feb. 15 statement, the Vatican said cataloging the documents from the pontificate of Pope Pius XI would take another three years to complete. But in the meantime, starting in 2003, it will make available to scholars some of the documents — those that relate to Vatican-German relations in 1922-39.

The documents are considered especially sensitive because they cover a period in which Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pope Pius XII, served first as nuncio to Germany and then as secretary of state. In 1999, the book *Hitler's Pope* accused Cardinal Pacelli of having pro-German sentiments that colored his World War II policies as pope — an accusation Vatican historians rejected as slanderously false.

The archival documents to be made available are contained in more than 600 folders that came from the Vatican Secretariat of State and the apostolic nunciatures in Berlin and Bavaria. The Vatican

warned scholars, however, that many other documents of the Holy See were destroyed in Germany during the war.

The Vatican said that once the entire archives from Pope Pius XI have been opened — in about three years — Pope John Paul wants archival documents dealing with Vatican-German relations under Pope Pius XII to be made available on a priority basis.

"This further opening of the Vatican archives is very important to the Holy Father considering that, during the pontificate of Pius XII, the Second World War took place and with it the deportation of the Jews and the tragedy of the Shoah," the Vatican statement said.

Meanwhile, it said, the Vatican would take the unusual step of publishing archival documents relating to World War II prisoners. It said this was possible because the Vatican's material on prisoners has been kept relatively intact and complete.

The intent is to "bring to the awareness of historians the great work of charity and assistance carried out by Pius XII regarding numerous prisoners and other victims of the war, of whatever nation, religion or race," the Vatican said.

The Vatican said its decision to make the 20th-century archival material available in stages could bring some pitfalls for scholars. A historian researching Vatican-German relations, for example, might want to extend his research to other areas of the archives that remain closed.

It said such problems were inevitable, but that the exceptional nature of the questions involved argued for early release of some of the material.

For years, access to the Vatican archives has been a controversial issue, particularly in Catholic-Jewish relations. Last year, a Catholic-Jewish historical commission suspended its work after members called on the Vatican to open its entire historical archives of the World War II period.

Vatican officials explained the difficulties in preparing and organizing the archival material. At the same time, they pointed to the 11 volumes of Vatican archive material published by the Holy See between 1965 and 1981.

Vatican historians repeatedly have said those volumes offer ample evidence that Pope Pius XII and his aides did much in secret to help the Jews and had good reason to fear that public condemnations would be counterproductive.

### Site targets young adults

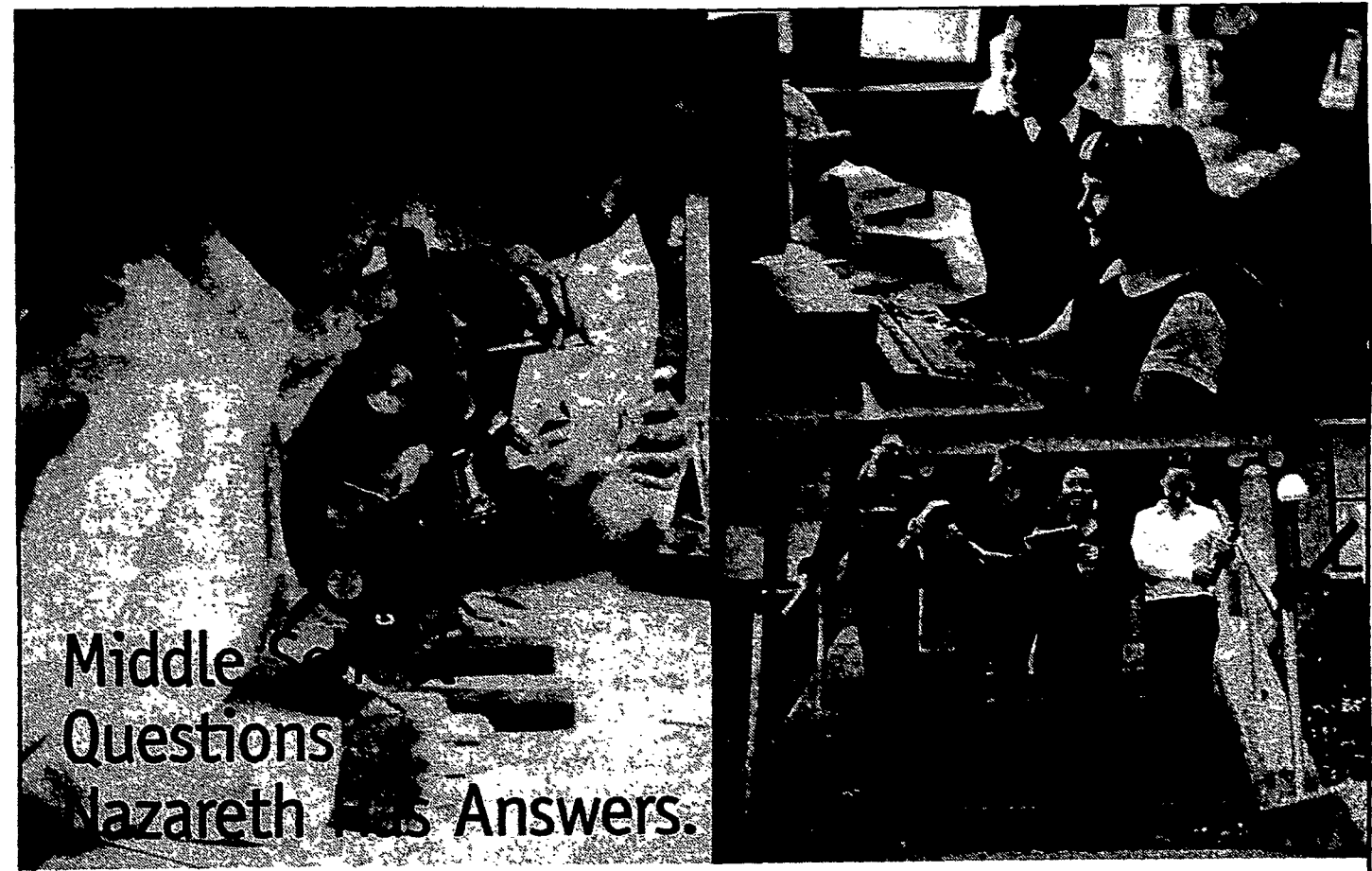
NEW YORK (CNS) — A new Web site with the unlikely name of Busted Halo is aimed at Catholic young adults in search of spirituality and deeper meaning in their lives.

The brainchild of Paulist Young Adult Ministries in New York and built in collaboration with Paulist Media Works in Washington, the Web site offers features such as "Chilling out about prayer" and "A man's view of 'Sex and the City,'" as well as opportunities to take a quiz about "Looking for love in all the wrong places."

In addition to forums on relationships, spirituality and work lives, young adults — loosely defined as those ages 18-39 — have a chance to learn more about Scripture in the virtual Bible Boot Camp, look at Catholic practices in Tradition Bytes and explore awe-inspiring venues for getaways and prayers in Sacred Spaces.

The site at [www.BustedHalo.com](http://www.BustedHalo.com) also features an opportunity to read about historical and contemporary religious figures and vote on whether they are "Saint or Sinner" and a chance to challenge one's knowledge of church history in *Trivis Inferno*.

"While there are other sites aimed at young adults, there are no others that are focused on spirituality in such a dynamic way," said Paulist Father Brett Hoover, director of Paulist Young Adult Ministries. "People are finding us through search engines and word-of-mouth, and through some Internet and print advertising we've done, and they're pleased with what they see."



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- Middle School Tours (grades 6-8)**  
 Tuesday, Feb. 26, 9 a.m.  
 Friday, March 8, 9 a.m.  
 Tuesday, March 5, 4 to 7 p.m.  
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- Lower School Tours (pre-school to grade 5)**  
 Thursday, Feb. 28, 10 a.m.  
 Thursday, March 14, 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

For more information or another tour time please call Susan Hasler Ryan, Director of Enrollment Management, 647-8738.

Nazareth Schools is a mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

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