

ANOTHER BASELESS ATTACK ON PIUS XII



In gratitude for having saved so many Jews, on May 25, 1955, the Israel Philharmonic performed Beethoven's Seventh Symphony in the presence of Pius XII.

Bill Donohue comments on an article by Rabbi Shmuley Boteach posted yesterday online at observer.com attacking Pope Pius XII:

Rabbi Boteach's piece trotted out the discredited thesis that Pope Pius XII was "silent" during the Holocaust. In actual fact, the pope did more to save Jews from the Nazis than any other religious leader in the world. This explains why Jewish notables at the time praised him so effusively.

On Christmas Day, 1941, the *New York Times* singled the pope out in an editorial, saying he was "a lonely voice in the *silence* and darkness enveloping Europe this Christmas." [My *italic.*] The next year it said, "This Christmas more than ever he [the pope] is a lonely voice crying out of the *silence* of a continent." [My *italic.*] So much for the rap that the pope was "silent."

To be sure, the pope chose his words carefully. So did Jewish leaders in the United States: they did not want to inflame Hitler even further. Were they Hitler's rabbis?

One of the world's experts on the Holocaust, who wrote monumental volumes on the subject, Sir Martin Gilbert, died in February. He said that the test case for Pius XII "was when the Gestapo came to Rome in 1943 to round up the Jews." What happened? "And the Catholic Church," he said, "on his [the pope's] direct authority, immediately dispersed as many Jews as they could." Which is why Gilbert thanked the pope for his yeoman efforts in *Never Again: A History of the Holocaust*.

Rabbi Shmuley's ideologically driven screed is not supported by the kind of careful scholarship of Sir Martin Gilbert. If anything, Pope Pius XII deserves to be hailed as a "Righteous Gentile," as Gilbert and other Jewish scholars have recommended.