

NEW BID TO SMEAR POPE PIUS XII FAILS

On January 9, the *New York Times* ran a story about an article in an Italian newspaper that claimed to have uncovered a 1946 document that implicates Pope Pius XII in a scheme not to return baptized Jewish children (who were hidden from the Nazis during the Holocaust) to their parents after the war. Since its publication, the controversy has exploded.

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke to this issue today:

“The document that was the source of the *New York Times* piece says that Pope Pius XII personally approved the decision not to return Jewish children who had been sheltered by Catholics during the war. But there are many problems with this interpretation. As first pointed out by Rev. Peter Gumpel in Rome, the document was unsigned, did not appear on Vatican stationery and was written in French, not Italian. Even more convincing is what has been learned subsequently.

“Thanks to Italian journalist Andrea Tornielli of *Il Giornale*, the original document in question has now been identified. To begin with, the document never originated in the Holy See: the text bears the seal of the apostolic nunciature of France. And not only does the document not say what it has been alleged to say, it says the very opposite! To wit: It expressly says that the children who were sheltered by Catholic institutions should be returned to their original Jewish families. In the event Jewish organizations, as opposed to Jewish families, sought custody of the children, that was to be handled on a case-by-case basis.

“Zenit, the international news agency that covers the Vatican, learned that the origins of the document extend to a letter

written in 1946 by Isaac Herzog, chief rabbi of Jerusalem, to Pius XII. In it, Herzog thanked the pope for helping Jews during the Holocaust and for sheltering 'thousands of children who were hidden in Catholic institutions.' He then requested that these children be returned to their original families. Which, as we now know, is what happened.

"In short, what the critics of Pius XII are suffering from is a heady dose of Rathergate: they willingly took the bait and now look *rather* foolish."