

# PIUS XII SMEARED AGAIN; EFFORT BRANDED A "HOAX"

The campaign against Pope Pius XII picked up steam in January when the *New York Times* reported that there was documentation to suggest that the Vatican issued instructions after World War II not to return baptized Jewish children to their parents; this story was based on an article that had recently appeared in an Italian newspaper. Before the month ended, the sensational story was exposed as bogus (see pp. 4-5 for our response).

No one seriously disputes the fact that Catholics successfully hid legions of Jewish children during the war. Many of these Catholics, which included priests, religious, nuns and laypersons, risked their own lives to shelter Jewish kids from the Nazis. What is in some dispute is what happened to these kids once the war was over.

Problems were evident with the *Times* story from the beginning. For example, Jesuit Father Peter Gumpel, the postulator of the beatification cause of Pius XII, quickly noted that the document was unsigned, written in French and bore the seal of a Catholic official working in France. In short, the reason it didn't appear on Vatican stationery is because it did not emanate from the Vatican.

We then learned from another Italian newspaper that the document in question was merely a summary of a larger document. And what did the full text of the document say? It said the exact opposite of what had been reported. To be specific, the Vatican had given instructions to return Jewish children to their original families whenever possible. But were they? Two decades after the war, Dr. Leon Kubowitzky, an official of the World Jewish Congress, said he knew of "hardly a single case where Catholic institutions refused to return

Jewish children.”

Father Gumpel correctly branded this latest attack a “hoax.” But the same media outlets that trumpeted the first story largely ignored the second story. Worse, some Jewish pundits and organizations continued to hype the original story, even to the point of charging that the Vatican “kidnapped” Jewish kids during the war.

What’s really going on here is a campaign to stop the Vatican from making Pius XII a saint. The anti-Pius forces aren’t giving up, but neither are we. The fact remains that Pope Pius XII did more to save Jews than anyone in Europe.