

# POPE PIUS XII: 50th ANNIVERSARY OF HIS DEATH

Today marks the 50th anniversary of the death of Pope Pius XII. Thus, it is an appropriate time to reconsider his legacy. Here are some indisputable facts:

- In 1939, the *New York Times* quickly lauded the pontiff's first encyclical as "a powerful attack on totalitarianism," adding that "It is Germany that stands condemned above any country or movement in this encyclical—the Germany of Hitler and National Socialism."
- In 1940, Einstein lauded the pope: "Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler's campaign for suppressing the truth."
- In 1941, a *New York Times* editorial said, "The voice of Pius XII is a lonely voice in the silence and darkness enveloping Europe this Christmas."
- In 1942, a *New York Times* editorial said, "This Christmas more than ever he [Pius XII] is a lonely voice crying out of the silence of a continent."
- In 1943, Hitler told his military command "we must occupy Rome" and "destroy the Vatican's power, capture the pope, and say that we are protecting him." Assassination was not ruled out.
- In 1944, the chief rabbi of Jerusalem opined that "The people of Israel will never forget what His Holiness and his illustrious delegates...are doing for our unfortunate brothers and sisters in the most tragic hour of our history, which is living proof of Divine Providence in this world."
- In 1945, the World Jewish Congress donated \$20,000 to Vatican charities "in recognition of the work of the Holy See in rescuing Jews from Fascist and Nazi persecutions."

No wonder that three years before he died, the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra flew to Rome to give the pope a special concert. Similarly, when he died in 1958, Leonard Bernstein of the New York Philharmonic called for a minute of silence "for the passing of a very great man, Pope Pius XII." Golda Meier, as well as Jewish leaders from around the world, paid tribute to his heroics. No one said it better than Pinchas Lapide, an Israeli official who researched the Yad Vashem archives: He suggested that 860,000 trees be planted in the hills of Judea to honor the pope—one for every Jewish person he saved.

It is for reasons like these that the Catholic League supports the beatification of Pope Pius XII.

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