

# FAITH AND REASON

**Myth vs. Historical Fact:** When he died, Pius XII was the object of unanimous tributes of admiration and gratitude: "The world", President Eisenhower declared, "is now poorer after the death of Pope Pius XII". And Golda Meir, Foreign Minister of the State of Israel, said: "The life of our times was enriched by a voice speaking out about great moral truths above the tumult of daily conflict. We mourn a great servant of peace". A few years later, beginning in 1963, he had become the victim of a sinister myth: during the war, either out of political calculation or cowardice, he was supposed to have remained impassive and silent in the face of crimes against humanity which his intervention might have prevented.

When accusations are based on documents, it is possible to discuss the interpretation of the texts, to check whether they were misunderstood, accepted uncritically, distorted or selected with a specific bias. On the other hand, when a myth is put together with disparate elements and fantasy, the argument is baseless. The only thing possible is to counter the myth with historical reality, proven by indisputable documents. To this end, Pope Paul VI, who as the Substitute of the Secretariat of State had been one of Pius XII's closest co-workers, authorized the publication in 1964 of the Holy See's documents relating to the Second World War.

**The organization of 'Actes et Documents':** Indeed, the dossier in which the activities of the Pope and his offices can be followed from day to day, and sometimes from hour to hour, is kept in the archives of the Secretariat of State. They contain Pius XII's messages and addresses, the letters exchanged between the Pope and civil and ecclesiastical authorities, notes of the Secretariat of State, memos of subordinates to their superiors reporting information and proposals, as well as private notes (in particular those of Mons. Tardini, who had the habit, most helpful to historians, of commenting with pen in hand), the correspondence of the Secretariat of State with the Holy See's representatives abroad (Nuncios, Internuncios and Apostolic Delegates), and the diplomatic notes exchanged between the Secretariat of State and ambassadors or ministers accredited to the Holy See. These documents are for the most part issued in the name and with the signature of the Secretary of State or of the Secretary of the First Section of the Secretariat: this does not mean that they do not express the Pope's intentions.

On the basis of these documents, a work could have been written describing the Pope's attitude and policy during the Second World War, or a White Paper could have been written to show that the accusations against Pius XII were false. Since the main accusation was that he had kept silent, it was especially easy, on the basis of the documents, to highlight the Holy See's activity on behalf of war victims, and, in particular, of the victims of racial persecution. It seemed more appropriate to undertake a complete publication of the documents relating to the war. Various collections of diplomatic documents already existed, many volumes of which concerned the Second World War: Document diplomatic Italian; Documents on British Foreign Policy. 1919-1939; Foreign Relations of the United States; Diplomatic Papers; Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik 1918-1945. In view of these series and following their example, it was advantageous to allow historians to study in these documents the Holy See's role and activities during the war. With this in mind, publication began of the series *Actes et Documents du Saint-Siège relatifs à la seconde guerre mondiale*.

The difficulty lay in the fact that for this period the archives—both those of the Vatican and of the other States were closed to the public and to historians. The special interest in the events of the Second World War and the desire to write its history based on the documents, and not only on more or less indirect accounts and testimonies, had persuaded the States involved in the conflict to publish the documents that were still inaccessible to the public. The trusted people charged with this task were bound to certain rules: not to publish documents which refer to people still living or which, if they were revealed, would impede negotiations currently under way. The volumes of the Foreign Relations of the United States regarding were published on the basis of these criteria, and the same criteria were used in the publication of the documents of the Holy See. The task of publishing the Holy See's war documents was entrusted by the Secretariat of State to three Jesuit Fathers: Angelo Martini, editor of *La Civiltà Cattolica*, who had already had access to the Vatican's secret archives, Burkhard Schneider, and the present writer, both teachers on the faculty of Church history of the Pontifical Gregorian University. The work started at the beginning of January 1965, in an office close to the archives of the then Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs and the First Section of the Secretariat of State; it was there that the documents relating to the war were normally kept.

These conditions entailed particular advantages and disadvantages for the work. The problem was that because the archives were closed to the public, there were no systematic inventories to facilitate research; the documents were neither classified in strictly chronological order nor in geographical order; documents of a political character, which thus concerned the war, were sometimes filed with documents of a religious, canonical or even personal nature, stored in reasonably manageable boxes but sometimes containing a great variety of contents. Information on Great Britain might well be found in dossiers on France, if the information had been sent through the Nuncio in France. Likewise, interventions on behalf of Belgian hostages were in the boxes of the Nuncio in Berlin. It was therefore necessary to examine each box and sift through its contents to identify the documents relating to the war. The research was simplified however by an old rule of the Secretariat of State from the time of Urban VIII, which prescribed that Nuncios should treat only one subject in each letter.

In view of these difficulties, we had some notable advantages. Working in an office of the Secretariat of State and on commission, we were not subject to the restrictions of researchers admitted to the reference rooms of the public archives; one of us took the boxes of documents directly from the shelves in the storeroom. Another considerable advantage was that they were mostly separate, typewritten documents (the manuscripts to be typed for the printers were an exception); thus, as soon as a document was recognized as pertaining to the war, we only needed to pull it out, photocopy it and send the printers the photocopy with the relative notes, as scholarly work requires.

Although the work proceeded fairly quickly in the winter of 1965, we asked for the help of Fr Robert Leiber, who had retired to the German College after being the private secretary for over 30 years of Pacelli, first Nuncio then Secretary of State, and finally Pope Pius XII. He had followed Germany's affairs very closely and it was he who revealed to us the existence of the minutes of Pius XII's letters to the German Bishops; these formed the material of the collection's second volume and are the documents which best reveal the Pope's thinking.

**A Prayer for Peace:** We are molded, each one of us, in the image of God, and within our souls there is a fingerprint none can erase.

We pray for those who have no regard for anyone but self, who put no value on human life. For nations and individuals who abuse and kill. We are not called to be judge or jury, but we are called to be agents of change, and if the butterfly that flaps its wings should be our attitude to others then so be it, Lord, and may the hurricane this generates somewhere within the world reach into the hearts and souls of those for whom we pray and reveal to them how precious are those for whom they have no love, and how precious are they who now bring tears to the eyes of God.

**Allow Me:** Your path leads to Me. Your voice speaks My praise. Your eyes look to Me. I hear your pleas. I listen to your questions. I answer your needs. Be at peace with My way. Accept its course, as it leads others to Me. You await a discovery of life's future. Know that you will see My hand at your side. Accept My will for your situation, as it fulfills My wish. Be peaceful and bring your heart to Me. Allow Me to work through you as needed.

**Always on the Way:** Before all and above all, I exhort you to turn your attention toward the Divine Master, from whom you will obtain light from this work. The Gospel can also be read as a report on the work of Jesus in regard to his disciples. Jesus proclaims from beginning the "good news" of the fatherly love of God, but then he gradually teaches the profound riches of this message, and he gradually reveals himself and the Father with infinite patience, beginning over again if necessary: "After I have been with you all this time, you still do not know me"? (Jn 14). We can also read the Gospel to discover the method Jesus used to give his disciples the basic formation, their initial training. "The continuous formation" as it is called will come later, and the Holy Spirit will complete it. This will bring the Apostles to an understanding of how much Jesus had taught them and will help them to arrive at the fullness of the truth, to deepen it in their lives, and to follow in the way of the freedom of the Sons of God (Jn 14: Rom 8). From this look at Jesus and his lesson comes the confirmation of an experience that we have all had, none of us has reached the perfection to which we are called, each of us is always in formation is always on the way..... **Pope John Paul II**

#### **A Thought For the Day**

<b>Sunday</b>	Love consists in sharing what one has and what one is with those one loves.
<b>Monday</b>	Finally I am coming to the conclusion that my highest ambition is to be what I already am.
<b>Tuesday</b>	Duty does not have to be dull. Love can make it beautiful and fill it with life.
<b>Wednesday</b>	If you yourself are at peace, then there is at least some peace in the world.
<b>Thursday</b>	Prayer should be the key to the day and the lock of the night.
<b>Friday</b>	Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.
<b>Saturday</b>	I pray, Lord, that You enlighten my mind, inflame my will, purify my heart, and sanctify my soul.

**Quiet Times With Him:** In the stillness of the evening, I see the Miracle of Christ; The Man who walked on water, Savior, who gave us life. And I, unworthy sinner's soul, could not tie His shoe, but still, He loves me endlessly, blessing all I say and do. How beautiful His Tenderness, how boundless His Merciful Love; his Grace poured out to every man, earth, and sky above. He has broken the chains of death, Has loosed sin's every bond. And we have found a special plan to build our life upon. Mighty Lord, so full of grace, Creator, Lord of all; Please guide our precious, sinful, souls, each time we start to fall. Be with us, Lord, and strengthen us. precious gifts--obtained only from You-- That we reflect your love for all in what we say and do.

**Our Lady, Queen of Hope:** The chapel of Our Lady of Hope pays special homage to Our Blessed Mother's appearance in France during the Franco-Prussian War, featuring a bronze statue of Mary and two angels, hovering in a protective manner over the altar. On January 17, 1871, Our Lady appeared to six children in the village of Pontmain, France, a central location at that time of the war. As troops marched closer, she instructed the children and townspeople to pray fervently, assuring that if they did so, the conflict would end. The town gathered at the site of the apparition and prayed as instructed. Only three days later, the Prussian troops withdrew and within a week the war ended. All men from Pontmain who enlisted in the war returned home safely.

**Prayer to Our Lady, Queen of Hope:** *'O Mary, my Mother, I kneel before you with heavy heart. The burden of my sins oppresses me. The knowledge of my weakness discourages me. I am beset by fear and temptation of every sort. Yet I am so attached to the things of this world that instead of longing for Heaven I am filled with dread at the thought of death. O Mother of Mercy, have pity on me in my distress. You are all-powerful with your Divine Son. He can refuse no request of your Immaculate Heart. Show yourself a true Mother to me by being my advocate before His throne. O Refuge of Sinners and Hope of Hopeless, to whom shall I turn if not you? Obtain for me, then, O Mother of Hope, the grace of true sorrow for my sins, the gift of perfect resignation to God's Holy Will, and the courage to take up my cross and follow Jesus. But above all I pray, O dearest Mother, that through your most powerful intercession, my heart may be filled with Holy Hope, so that in life's darkest hour I may never fail to trust in God my Savior, but by walking in the way of His commandments I may merit to be united with Him, and with you in the eternal joys of Heaven. Amen.'*

**In His Will is Our Peace**  
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