

Thou Shall Not Kill:

The Ustaša Genocide and Religious Education Today

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Abstract

The involvement of Pope Pius XII with Anté Pavelić, a Catholic Croatian fascist leader, in the Ustaša Genocide (1941-1945) is a little known and a little explored fact of church and world history and is rarely, if ever, taught in religious educational circles. It may seem unfathomable to us today that the Catholic Church recognized *de facto* the Ustaša and its attempts to create a pure Catholic Croatia by use of extermination, deportation, and conversion. Many Catholic clergy, mostly Franciscan friars, joined the Ustaša in efforts to annihilate and remove any Jews, Roma (gypsies), and Orthodox Christian Serbs from Croatia. Particularly disturbing is the Catholic Church's support for Jasenovac, a Croatian concentration camp headed by a Franciscan friar, Tomislav Filipovic (nicknamed "Fr. Satan") where he and other Franciscan friars carried out mass killings.

Some scholars have nicknamed Pope Pius XII as "Hitler's Pope" for his alleged complicity with Adolf Hitler during the Holocaust; in a similar manner and relative to the Ustaša Genocide, Pius XII takes on an additional nickname: "Pavelić's Pope." Both Pius XII and Anté Pavelić saw fascism as a way to unite Europe and to fight against communism.

While situated within a complicated period of 20th century world history, the work of the Ustaša, along with the complicity of the Catholic Church, made it possible for approximately one million people to lose their lives. This paper explores the relationship of the Vatican with the Ustasha and explores ways religious educators today can use insights from the Ustasha Genocide as motivation to help their learners resist any temptation to use religion as fuel for violence.

Background on the Ustaša Genocide

The Independent State of Croatia (NDH, *Nezavisna države Hrvatska*), consisting of modern day Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and some parts of Serbia, was declared on April 10, 1941 after the invasion of Yugoslavia by the Axis Powers, an alliance among Nazi Germany, Hungary, and Italy. Two days later, Adolf Hitler granted Croatia "Aryan" status, a racialist

ideological term that defined who was the master race. From its beginning, the NDH was a “puppet state” of Nazi Germany, its government a façade whereby it looked like a government to the people while in fact it was maintained by military force and run by Anté Pavelić on behalf of Hitler. As a result, Croatia was exploited by Germany and Italy and, as we will see later, by the Vatican for its resources, money, and labor.

Much planning went into the startup of the NDH, and the Catholic Church had a hand in it. In the years prior to 1941, members of the Catholic Church’s clergy met secretly with Italian fascists to prepare for the final destruction of Yugoslavia. They also helped the NDH in its recruitment of members by providing meeting places in their churches, monasteries, and other church properties.

The leadership of the Church was well aware of the leading role it was expected to play in the soon to be independent, fascist Croatian state. In the years prior to 1941 the Croatian fascist movement recruited members of legal Croatian nationalist parties and from within the Yugoslav military with the help and encouragement of the Croatian Catholic Church. Not only did the Croatian Catholic clergy meet secretly in the years prior to 1941 with Italian fascist agents to help prepare for the final destruction of Yugoslavia, but they provided the Ustasha with all of the vast resources at its disposal, including its buildings and monasteries for meetings and safe-houses. The operational headquarters in which the plans for the Ustasha take-over were made was in the Franciscan monastery at Chuntch. Monasteries, parish houses, cathedrals, Franciscan high schools, seminaries, etc., throughout Croatia doubled as meeting places, recruiting centers, arms depots and staging areas for Croatian fascism and terror in the years prior to the war. We know this to be true because the Croatian fascists themselves boasted of it when they came to power in 1941 in their official publications and on the memorial plaques they affixed to these places.¹

In 1939, Pope Pius XII, while hosting a pilgrimage to Rome, said this to Alojzije Stepinac, a Nazi collaborator and the Archbishop (later Cardinal) of the Catholic Church in Croatia:

¹ Lituchy, B. (2003). *The Holocaust Revealed: What is the Vatican Hiding?* http://holocaustrevealed.org/Church/Vatican_Hiding.htm, 8.

The hope of a better future seems to be smiling on you, a future in which the relations between Church and State in your country will be regulated in harmonious action to the advantage of both.²

The Vatican was a sovereign state due to the 1929 Lateran Treaty that was signed by Mussolini and the Vatican and that detailed the Vatican's political and financial designations apart from Italy; overall, Vatican City was formed. The identity and function of both the Vatican and the Pope are complex, but are important notes to keep in mind as we investigate the role of the Vatican in the Ustaša Genocide: the Vatican is the spiritual center for the Western Rite of the Roman Catholic Church *and* it is a political headquarters for the Vatican as a sovereign state; the Vatican is a spiritual sanctuary *and* it is a diplomatic embassy; the Pope is the spiritual leader, the Vicar of Christ, for Catholics *and* he is the head of the Vatican as a sovereign state; the Pope brings the gospel message of peace to Catholics and to the world *and* the Pope once had authority over such military units as the Palatine Guard and the Noble Guard, both of which were abolished in 1970. Together, the Vatican and the Pope are a religious force *and* a political force.

The Vatican did not recognize the NDH *de jure*; it did not validate the NDH as a legal and legitimate country. But in a 1941 meeting with Pavelić, Pope Pius XII, who was as Eugenio Pacelli once the Papal Nuncio to Germany who forged with Hitler the 1933 *Reichskonkordat*, the agreement of the Catholic Church's place within Germany,³ did recognize the NDH *de facto*,

² Cornwell, J. (2008). *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII*, 250.

³ John Cornwell says this about the *Reichskonkordat*: Pacelli's acceptance of Hitler's deal poisoned the wells of Catholic moral and social integrity from the very outset of the Hitler regime. In order to lure Pacelli into a treaty that would ultimately benefit Nazism and politically paralyze German Catholicism, Hitler offered greater funding for Catholic schools in Germany—more teachers, more school buildings, more Catholic pupil places. At the same time, he was withdrawing wide ranging educational benefits from Jews. Hitler's 'generosity' toward Catholic education in Germany coincided with the mass dismissals of Jewish teachers and university professors and a drastic reduction in Jewish pupil places in schools. Pacelli's willingness to accept educational benefits from the

meaning that the Vatican, along with 17 other countries and governments, understood the NDH to have authority over Croatia. The Vatican therefore established diplomatic relations with the NDH.

Because of its involvement with the formation of the NDH, leaders of the Catholic Church knew that the NDH was a “puppet state” and they knew about Pavelić’s ideology and intentions. Carl Savich, a Serbian-American, explains:

The Vatican knew that Anté Pavelić was ‘a totalitarian dictator,’ a fanatical Croat ultra-nationalist zealot and Roman Catholic who was sponsored and installed in power by Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini. They knew Pavelić was a hardcore fascist who supported and endorsed Nazi Germany and fascist Italy. They knew about the anti-Serbian, anti-Jewish, and anti-Roma laws that the NDH had passed. They knew Pavelić was committed to the policy of forceful conversions of Orthodox Serbs to Roman Catholicism. Moreover, the Vatican knew that the NDH was a Nazi puppet state created by Nazi Germany that was under German military occupation and control.⁴

Thus, the Vatican supported the NDH and Pavelić. Consider these examples:

- In 1941, The Catholic weekly *Nedelja* praised Pavelić in this article: God, who directs the destiny of nations and controls the hearts of Kings, has given us Anté Pavelić and moved the leader of a friendly and allied people, Adolf Hitler, to use his victorious troops to disperse our oppressors and enable us to create an Independent State of Croatia. Glory be to God, our gratitude to Adolph Hitler, and infinite loyalty to chief Anté Pavelić.⁵
- Easter 1941, Archbishop Stepinac announced from the Cathedral of Zagreb the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia, thus giving the solemn sanction of Church and Vatican to Pavelić's work.
- June 28, 1941, Stepinac, with other bishops, went to see Pavelić. After promising the wholehearted cooperation of the entire Hierarchy, the Archbishop solemnly blessed Pavelić, as the leader of the Croatian people: "While we greet you cordially as head of the Independent State of Croatia, we implore the Lord of the Stars to give his divine blessings to you, the leader of our people." Pavelić, it should be remembered, was the

selfsame source of power that withdrew them from Jews signaled an eloquent collusion with, if not intentional endorsement of, Jewish persecution.

⁴ Savich, C. (2011). *The Vatican Role in the Ustasha Genocide in the Independent State of Croatia*, 5.

<http://serbianna.com/analysis/archives/1182>. Accessed October 8, 2014.

⁵ *Nedelja*, April 27, 1941.

same man who had been sentenced to death for political assassinations: once by the Yugoslav courts, and once by the French, for the murders of King Alexander and the French Foreign Minister, Barthou.⁶

And then in 1998, Pope John Paul II beatified Alojije Stepinac, one step closer to being declared a saint within the Catholic Church, referring to Stepinac as a martyr for the faith.

Ustaša Croatian Liberation Movement

The Ustaša Croatian Liberation Movement was officially in existence from 1929 to 1945. Founded by and led by Anté Pavelić, The Ustaša (from *ustasi* in Croatian, meaning “to rise up”) was founded on 17 principles known as “The Principles of the Ustaša Movement” (*Načela ustaškog pokreta*).⁷ In essence these principles centered on racist ideology—ethnic cleansing—that led to the extermination of Jews and Roma (gypsies) living in Croatia (and Bosnia-Herzegovina) and to the forced expulsion and conversion of Serbs. In a 1941 speech in Gospić, Mile Budak, the NDH’s Minister of Education and Faith, explained the religious foundation of this Croat fascist movement and its goals to exterminate, deport, and convert in order to create a Catholic Croatia:

The movement of the Ustashi is based on religion. For the minorities—Serbs, Jews and Gypsies, we have three million bullets. We shall kill one part of the Serbs. We shall deport another, and the rest of them will be forced to embrace the Roman Catholic religion. Thus, our new Croatia will get rid of all Serbs in our midst in order to become one hundred percent Catholic within ten years.”⁸

The Ustaša was the largest fascist movement (others at the time included Albanian and Macedonian), most likely due to support from the Vatican and from Archbishop Stepinac:

⁶ Manhattan, A. (1988). *The Vatican’s Holocaust*. Springfield, MO: Ozark Books. <http://www.reformation.org/holoc3.html#5>. Accessed October 8, 2014.

⁷ For an excellent discussion on these principles, consult Levy, M.F. (2009). “The Last Bullet for the Last Serb’: The Ustaša Genocide Against Serbs: 1941-1945,” *Nationalities Papers*, 37:6, 811-812.

⁸ Lituchy, 13.

The leader of the Catholic Church in Croatia, Archbishop Stepinac, fervently supported the Ustasha movement and welcomed the invading Nazi army as it entered Zagreb. On April 11th he met with Ustasha leaders and on April 12th he blessed the newly arrived Ustasha leadership in a public ceremony at his cathedral. In his Easter address of that month he compared the creation of the new fascist state to the resurrection of Christ. In his pastoral letter of April 28th he ordered the clergy and called upon all Catholic people of Croatia and Bosnia to follow their 'Poglavnik' (Führer) Ante Pavelić, for he had seen in Pavelić's rule 'God's hand in action.' The pastoral letter was read over the radio and in every Catholic parish in fascist Croatia.⁹

Catholic clergy held many high-level posts in the Ustaša; the Pope himself was appointed Croatia's military vicar. Bishops had reserved places on its cabinet. Other clergy served as priest-advisors. The leading racist theorist who insisted that Croatia had to be racially cleansed, Ivo Guberina, was a priest. The Ustaša Central Propaganda Office, which led a campaign of scapegoating Jews and Orthodox Christians for Croatia's difficulties, was led by another priest, Grga Peinovic.

By 1941, laws aimed at exclusion of Jews and Orthodox Christians from society were well underway. Publications using the Cyrillic script, the alphabet most often used by Orthodox Serbs, was banned. "The Aryanization of Jewish Property," the first racial law, was issued on April 18, 1941. Other laws included:

- Serbs must wear blue bands on their sleeves with the letter "P" (for Orthodox);
- Jews must wear a band with the Star of David and the letter "Z" (for Jew);
- Serbs and Jews forbidden from walking on sidewalks;
- Signs posted "No Serbs, Jews, Gypsies or Dogs Allowed!";
- Undesirable peoples (Serbs, Jews, Gypsies and anti-fascist Croats) told of their fate: rounding up, dispossessing of property, and send to death camps.¹⁰

⁹Lituchy, 10-11.

¹⁰Lituchy, 12.

Catholics (and other Christians) may find it astonishing that the basis for such laws can be found in many Christian writings throughout the centuries. For example, Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* in the 2nd century; Thomas Aquinas' "On Disbelief" from his famous *Summa Theologica* in the 13th century; Martin Luther's *On Jews and Their Lies* in 1543; and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a 20th century fabrication of Jewish leaders' discussion and plans for worldwide domination, which Henry Ford allegedly placed in all glove compartments of the cars he had made. Karl Marx, the 19th century German philosopher and economist wrote *On the Jewish Question*; also in the 19th century famed composer Richard Wagner not only wrote *Judaism in Music* that referred to Jews as the enemy of humanity, but also wrote many operas that contained antisemitic words.

Such writings are a result of 2000-year history of teachings of antisemitism (belief that Jews must convert to Christianity and belief in the racial inferiority of Jews expressed as prejudice and hatred toward Jews) and anti-Judaism (the opposition to and disdain for Jewish beliefs and practices) that stem from its false accusation of deicide (that Jews killed Christ), and teachings of supersessionism (the claim that the New Covenant as expressed in Jesus Christ replaces the Old Covenant with Israel). Consider these select Catholic teachings on Jews¹¹:

- Jews and Christians not permitted to eat together (Synod of Elvira, 306)
- Burning of Talmud and other books (12th Synod of Toledo, 681)
- Jews not permitted to patronize Jewish doctors (Trullan Synod, 692)
- The marking of Jewish clothes with a badge (4th Lateran Council, 1215)

¹¹ Hilberg, R. n.d. *Canonical and Nazi Anti-Jewish Measures*. <http://www.voxclamantis.nl/1files-sub/hilberg.htm>. Accessed October 8, 2014.

- The Crusades where mass extermination of Jews took place under direction “exterminate all heretics” (4th Lateran Council, 1215)
- Compulsory ghettos (Synod of Breslau, 1267)
- Jews not permitted to obtain academic degrees (Council of Basel, 1434)

Also, in 1054, disagreement over pneumatology and thus the *filioque* resulted in the Great Schism that left a division between Eastern Rite Catholics (who broke all ties with the Vatican and with the Pope) and Western Rite Catholics (who maintained ties with the Vatican and with the Pope and claimed to be the “true religion” from which the Eastern Rite Catholics fell away). The division remains to this day.

When such teachings are repeated over and over in word, song, and prayer from religious leaders and teachers who, for their learners are expected to know and teach the truth, it is logical that such feelings of resentment and hatred toward people of these groups develop over time. Is it any wonder, then, considering the religious underpinnings of the World War II genocides that Hitler, in weeks before signing the *Reichskonkordat* with Pacelli in 1933, declared: “I believe that I act today in unison with the Almighty Creator’s intention. By fighting the Jews I do battle for the Lord.”¹² Built up resentment and hatred turn into laws. Laws turn into racial and religious exclusion. Racial and religious exclusion turns into genocide.

Genocide

The term genocide (from the Latin *geno*, meaning tribe or race and from the Latin *cide*, meaning killing) is a relatively new term, having been coined by Raphael Lemkin in the 20th century to define the atrocities of the Holocaust and “a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of

¹² Giblin, J.C. (2002). *The Life and Death of Adolf Hitler*. New York: Clarion, 76.

annihilating the groups themselves.”¹³ Due to tireless work done by Raphael Lemkin, the United Nations approved the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide that determined what is genocide:

Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.¹⁴

The genocides that took place during World War II, whether they happened in such places as Croatia, Germany, or Poland, were not instances of a new phenomenon. Consider some other genocides that have taken place during the 20th and 21st century:

- Hereros
- Armenia and Assyria
- Tibet
- Hutus
- Al-Anfal (Kurdish)
- Assyria
- Iraq
- Rwanda
- Darfur

In fact, the killing of people deemed inferior—genocide—is a result of many factors, including colonialism (taking over another country), imperialism (using diplomatic or militaristic

¹³ U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. *What Is Genocide?*
<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007043>. Accessed October 8, 2014.

¹⁴ Ibid.

force to gain power), and religious fervor to incite violence. Such an understanding of genocide helps explain the Vatican as both a political and religious force in the world and its involvement in the Ustaša Genocide. According to Barry Lituchy:

To understand the Vatican's role and motives in the Holocaust in Yugoslavia we need to understand the phenomenon of genocide as a product of modern imperialism. Genocide is a direct consequence of imperialist wars of conquest aimed at territorial expansion for economic, political and military domination. After World War I the Vatican was determined, like its fascist partners of Italy and Germany, to destroy the Yugoslav state and reconstitute in that region the power and influence the Papacy had lost with the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire...The Vatican was also determined to destroy Yugoslavia, though for its own reasons. The dismemberment of the Catholic Austro-Hungarian Empire was a catastrophe for the Catholic Church. The Vatican was no longer the supreme religious authority in Central and Eastern Europe and had lost the state foundations on which citizens owed a dual allegiance to Church and state. Its disappearance marked a sharp decline in the Church's world power and influence. Worse still was the replacement of the Austro-Hungarian Empire with states dominated by other religions in which Catholics sank to a minority status. The worst of the bunch was Yugoslavia which was ruled by a King of the Serbian Eastern Orthodox faith, a church that the Vatican viewed as a 'schismatic sect.' From the Vatican's point of view, this schismatic-sect was a cancer, to be eliminated.¹⁵

Beginning in 1941, the Ustaša maintained 14 death camps in Croatia alone (9 death camps were only for children), killing upwards to 1 million Jews and Orthodox Serbs. Many scholars and survivors of the genocide contend that the killings were done in the most horrific and torturous ways that even the German Nazis could not fathom. Catholic clergy were part of and even led many of the Croat killings, as Cornwell notes:

Priests, invariably Franciscans, took a leading part in the massacres. Many went around routinely armed and performed their murderous acts with zeal. A Father Bozidar Bralow, known for the machine gun that was his constant companion, accused of performing a dance around the bodies of 180 massacred Serbs at Alipasin-Most.

¹⁵ Lituchy, B. (2003). "The Vatican's Complicity in Genocide in Fascist Croatia: The Suppressed Chapter of Holocaust History" in *The Holocaust Revealed: What is the Vatican Hiding?*, 5-6.
http://holocaustrevealed.org/Church/Vatican_Hiding.htm. Accessed October 9, 2014.

Individual Franciscans killed, set fire to homes, sacked villages, and laid waste the Bosnian countryside at the head of Ustashe bands. In September of 1941, an Italian reporter wrote of a Franciscan he had witnessed south of Banja Luka urging on a band of Ustashe with his crucifix.¹⁶

After they were tortured, many people were tossed into mass graves where they slowly died. It is important to note that forty years later and 10 miles away from the graves, the Catholic Church erected in 1981 the Medjugorje shrine in honor of its belief that the Virgin Mary appeared to 6 children there and spoke to them about world peace. It is estimated that over 40 million people have visited that shrine. Do they know of the atrocities that occurred nearby?

Fr. Tomislav Filipović was of the Petricevac Franciscan Monastery, the same monastery where later in 2003 Pope John Paul II beatified Ivan Merz, who founded the Croatian Eagles in 1922; the Croatian Eagles were comparable to the Hitler Youth. Filipović was in charge of the Jasenovac Concentration Camp¹⁷ where over 600,000 Orthodox Christians and Jews were killed, many of whom were children. Many people were thrown alive into the furnace; others were gassed with Zyklon B, the same deadly gas used by the Nazis in their own death camps; others fell victim to attacks and assaults from prison guards. Filipović had a nickname of “Fr. Satan” due to his brutal and sadistic methods of terror, torture and extermination, including his favorite form of torture: hanging.

Borislav Ševa, a Jasenovac survivor who was 22-years old when he was sent to Jasenovac, offers a testimony to what he experienced at that camp:

They told me nothing. They only said I am to be sent to the Jasenovac camp--the two of us, me and Rade Zrnić. They tell us to get ready. They take us from the cells. They tie us.

¹⁶ Cornwell, 254.

¹⁷ For a more in-depth analysis of the Jasenovac Camp, the reader is urged to consult The State Commission of Croatia for the Investigation of the Crimes of the Occupation Forces and Their Collaborators, ed. Sinisa Djuric, 2003. <http://www.rastko.rs/cms/files/books/47cec18d78325>. Accessed October 9, 2014.

I was tied to Rade. I did not know any of the other prisoners. To the trucks--and the direction: Jasenovac. There were at least 30 people [loaded] in the truck. People were exhausted, thin--pure misery.

At the gates of the concentration camp Jasenovac, there is a coat of arms with the Ustasha symbol: 'U.' That [*sic*] is that large, metal gate. They opened the gate, and the truck brings us in. We all got out of the truck. They untied us as we entered the camp. As we arrived, immediately they all came out, all officers--Ljubo Miloš, Matković, Picilli, Luburić. That was their headquarters. They were all there--standing. They watch and say, 'Right here! Now, this is good for us' [to have fun with them].

Those nine [sick ones] were taken farther away. I see that two of the Ustashes are leading them. We are just standing and watching. The officers are here, too. They took them to the Brick Factory. The ovens were about 50 meters [150 feet] away. They took them there. They opened the doors to the oven, took them by the arms and legs and threw them into the oven--nine of them. Those two were not the only ones throwing [men in the brick oven]. There were more of them who were throwing. The oven had large, metal doors. They can be opened as a door to a room. Two Ustashes grab one [victim]. They do not topple him [to the ground]. They [simply] grab him by the arms and legs and throw him into the oven, into the fire. I was watching with my own eyes. We all watched.¹⁸

Forced conversions were well supported by Catholic clergy as they saw the opportunity to cleanse the NDH from the Orthodox Serbs by saving their "hopeless souls" and converting them Catholicism, which they considered to be the one true faith. Orthodox churches were looted and destroyed. Those to be converted were first forced to pay a fee. For the Orthodox Serbs, Pope Pius XII had hoped that "the separated Christian brethren would see the error of their ways and return to full union with the Pope and Rome."¹⁹ Yet, disagreement grew within the Ustaša regarding how the conversions ought to take place. As Levy points out:

Many clergymen embraced these conversions as a way to increase the number of Church members; some even sought to convert already doomed Serbs and Jews at the very last moment, to be certain that they died as members of the "true faith." But the

¹⁸ Mr. Borislav Ševa's Testimony in Lukajić, L., translated by Petar Makara (2005). *Friars and Ustashes Are Slaughtering*. Belgrade. http://www.srpska-mreza.com/History/ww2/book/Lukajic/Borislav_Sheva.html. Accessed October 9, 2014.

¹⁹ Cornwell, 265.

Vatican recognized only “good faith” conversions, rather than conversions forced upon desperate individuals. To complicate the matter further, on 14 July 1941, the Ustaša’s Ministry of Justice decreed that no educated Orthodox Christian artists, intellectuals, or merchants could be converted, despite its campaign of forced conversion. This made it even more difficult for clergy to determine the appropriate action to take. Nevertheless, whole villages of Serbs were forcibly converted. Of those, most were later murdered despite their conversions.²⁰

End of the War

At the conclusion of World War II, the Vatican helped establish and maintain escape routes for Ustaša (and other Nazi) leaders, particularly to the United States and to Argentina. For example, the Collegio San Girolamo degli Illirici (College of St. Jerome of the Illyrians), which once housed Croatian priests studying at the Vatican and was under Vatican protection, became a headquarters for Ustaša criminals to receive false passports and false identities from the Red Cross and the International Refugees Association.²¹

Much debate has gone into whether Pope Pius XII did enough to save the millions of victims of the Holocaust overall and if he did enough to stop the atrocities occurring in Croatia under the Ustaša regime in particular. Yes, he opened safe houses for Jews; he hid children; he did not personally kill anyone. But Pope Pius XII’s actions and involvement with the Ustaša show how he was a recipient of millennia worth of antisemitic teachings and was both a religious and political leader of the Vatican.

That failure was implicit in the rifts Catholicism created and sustained—between the sacred and the profane, the spiritual and the secular, the body and the soul, clergy and laity, the exclusive truth of Catholicism over all other confessions and faiths. It was an essential feature of Pacelli’s ideology of papal power, moreover, that Catholics should

²⁰ Levy, 816.

²¹ Cornwell, 266.

abdicate, as Catholics, their social and political responsibility for what happened in the world and turn their gaze upward to the Holy Father and, beyond, to eternity.²²

It is this author's conclusion that Pope Pius XII failed humanity for the sake of political power.

He was Pavelić's pope.

The Role of Religious Education

Decades later, what does the Ustaša Genocide have to say to religious educators? What about the genocide are we to learn and how do we pass that learning along to our learners in efforts to help them refrain from using religious fervor and erroneous teachings to fuel hatred and violence?

First and foremost, we must teach about the Ustaša Genocide and not sweep it under the rug in our religious educational settings. By many accounts, the Holocaust began in Croatia, and any teaching on the Holocaust ought to give attention to the Ustaša Genocide.

Furthermore, the relationship between the Vatican and the Ustaša must be taught.

Second, given the fact that the Vatican and the Pope play a dual role in the world as religious and political forces, we must call upon church leaders to provide the necessary religious and moral leadership in times of political distress. We must hold them accountable for any actions that cause violence against people and their cultures, whether they themselves committed the act or were complicit any act of violence. Furthermore, we must help them take

²² Cornwell, 295.

a moral ground when violence occurs, especially in the name of religion, and help people see that violence against people and their cultures is never OK in the eyes of God.

Third, we must bring to light the dark of church history. The Catholic Church—and all of Christianity—is made up of sinful human beings. We acknowledge such sinfulness when we teach about the Ustaša Genocide; when we teach about the religious influences of the Holocaust and all genocides; when we teach our antisemitic and anti-Jewish past. But we cannot stop there. We must help our learners determine how to recognize and rely upon God's grace when studying such difficult topics. In so doing, they may honor the victims of the many who suffered due to Christianity's exclusivist and racist past and pledge to change our ways of thinking about other people.

Fourth, we must honor holy sites but also recognize and honor what may have happened there or nearby. Would erecting or visiting any holy site open old wounds or inhibit relationships from developing between people who may have a political or religious history with the site?

Finally, we cannot underestimate the significant role we religious educators have in helping form moral sensibilities within our learners. Learners look to us for moral guidance and leadership to help them discern right from wrong. While we cannot supply the answers, we can supply our learners with the tools they need to discern the will of God in ways that bring good

to the world, end any destruction of people and cultures, and ultimately make real the reign of

God here and now.

DRAFT

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