

December 21, 2009

There are some who deplore the fact that the Catholic Church is starting the process for sainthood for Pope Pius the XII by the commencement of Beatification. They claim he should have done more than he did, if anything, to stop the Nazi holocaust. I sympathize with my Hebrew friends, but on this one issue I disagree.

I am reminded of the complaint of James Joyce, himself a Catholic, in "Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man" where he rants at church for failing to stand up to the English for what they were doing to the Irish in Ireland. Had he read history, he should have known he was wrong. In point of fact, the Orange men went to the Catholic Cathedral and informed the Cardinal there that if he did not shut his priests up in the pulpit, the streets of Ireland would run red with the blood of Irish women and children! Oh what was he to do? The only thing humanely possible: shut the priests up in the pulpit; but not the laity in the streets. Eventually, most of Ireland had their liberty.

The Church is composed of two parts: The religious priests, brothers, deacons and their order such as the Dominicans, Jesuits, etc. The Pope sits at the top in a position analogous, but not the same as, a President, or other head of state, which he is for the Vatican State. He has no Tanks, aircraft, army, or navy. The Swiss Guard, while armed, is small, with swords, and perhaps hand weapons. It is more like a police force, not geared to carry on warfare, never was, and most likely never will be. It is the laity that carries their faith into the world, workplaces, entertainment venues, and other interesting places, setting an example of what we are not just as Christians, but as human beings who recognize that others believe differently, but who we ought to respect. The Pope speaks rarely *ex cathedra*, with infallibility, but that is confined to faith and morals, what we are as Church. All humans are subject to mistakes, and the religious and laity of the church are no different than any other human being.

What makes us tick, is that we work together to ensure that we all survive; we take care of ours from womb to tomb. As one person observed, we are the largest charity in the world, supporting hospitals, schools, the hungry and disabled all over the world, regardless of race, religious, or national origin, where ever in the world the need exists.

When it comes to the holocaust, the Pope, faced with tanks, could do no more than the Irish Cardinal; stand publically silent, but work beneath the radar with his Cardinals, Bishops, and religious in instructing them to care for those at risk, namely the Jews of Europe. Many perished notwithstanding efforts to spare lives: Ann Frank. Others survived. Steven Spielberg in "Shindler's List" recounts how those in captivity helped thwart the Nazi effort by sabotaging the weapons factory. The hero of that effort, we are told, a Catholic, was declared a righteous man by Israel. Someone had to coordinate that effort; I am convinced that Pope Pius the XII, together with others, coordinated the effort.

So we turn back to the beginning. How is to blame? We are all to blame. How did it happen? When WWI ended, the reparations demanded of a defeated Germany were staggering, in international law, *jus cogens* or *contra bono mores* for it left Germany in economic ruins, with the people of Germany no money, no jobs and starving. Congress,

justifiable so, refused to ratify the treaty. And so the cornerstone had been laid for a petty tyrant to become chancellor, and convince the people of Germany he had a plan to restore Germany to financial greatness, and a hungry population bought into the hoax that led to the holocaust. Chamberlain's policy of appeasement was a disaster. The long delays in stopping the abuses gave Hitler the time needed to fully rearm Germany, and to carry on the holocaust that shocked the world. Even in my own corner of the world in the First Grade at St. Dominic's Catholic School in San Francisco I was horrified at the tales. What we were asked to do by the Church, donate food for those in Europe in need.

And what more could Pope Pius XII do? He asked us to pray. We prayed. He asked that we do all they we could to protect them. We hid all we could hide. He asked us to feed them. We fed all that we could feed. He asked us to smuggle out of Germany all that could. We smuggled out all that we could. The Church is not a war machine, and never intended to be such, but we did what we could.

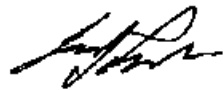
And the bitterness goes on, now, in the Middle East near Jerusalem (City of Peace). The time is now, to build institutions to defuse bitterness and build mutual respect and toleration. We have the Sacramento Interfaith Service Bureau designed to, and does, have Jew, Christian, Muslim, and many other sitting side by side working to build respect for others, and to tolerate the belief of others. We do not have a statewide organization. We do not have a National organization. We do not have a worldwide organization. Let us together build peace now, while we have peace most places, so that we can expand peace everywhere. There is but one creator. Some of us call the creator God, others Yahweh, Allah, and more names they we can list, but however we call the Creator, we have common ground: the Decalogue, and other who do not know the Decalogue, call upon us to respect the creator and honor him. And so, we, made in the image of the creator, should respect each other, and treat each person fairly.

Shalom al Achem

Pax

Salaam al akim

Peace.
Respectfully,



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