

**Homily**  
**Palm Sunday - A**  
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski  
March 28-29, 2026

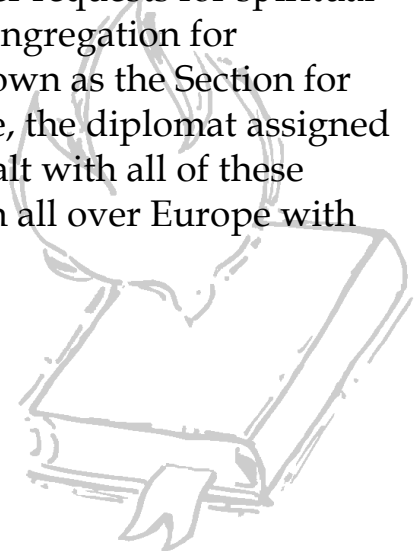
Mt 21: 1-11  
Is 50: 4-7  
Ps 22: 8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24  
Phil 2: 6-11  
Mt 26: 11-54

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If I am writing to you today, it is to ask you to help me from afar. Thousands of archived messages like this one, addressed to Pope Pius XII, were written by Jews, asking for help during the era of Nazi Fascist persecution. At the request of Paul Francis, the historical archives, preserving these requests for help, are now accessible to the wider public.

The virtual reproduction of this collection of documents consists of a total of 170 volumes, nearly 40,000 files. At this moment, only 70% of all material is available. vinyl volumes are currently being prepared. For the Abra, the Jews series of the historical archive of the Secretariat of State, section relations with states and international organizations. The photo reproduction of each individual document contains an analytical inventory, with all the names of the aid recipients.

Documentation shows requests for visas, passports to expatriate, refugee asylum requests, requests for reunification with family members. Releases from detention and prayer requests for spiritual support. Known at the time as the Sacred Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, now known as the Section for Relations with States of the Secretary of State, the diplomat assigned at the time, Monsignor Angelo del Aqua, dealt with all of these requests for relief that came to the pope from all over Europe with the aim of providing every possible help.



A little more than two years after the Vatican Apostolic Archives, (better known as the Secret Archives), were open to researchers, Pope Francis wished to reaffirm the Church's love of history by making available and accessible to all, a valuable, complete archival series from one of the most difficult periods in modern history.

An unprecedented event in the long history of the Vatican, Pope Pius XII, in general audience, hundreds of British and American fighting men. Signal Corps cameras record for the first time. The speech of a reigning pontiff in English. "Beloved sons. It is a real joy for us to welcome you all here. Do you know very well how our heart paternal heart have said times been almost overwhelmed, but the sorrows of our children. You are the of those children and if we have a trade of you, you know only too well, the dangerous and uncertainties of life and war.

The complicated legacy of venerable Pope Pius XII, decades after his passing, revealed to us that about 80% of the Jews that lived in Rome were able to survive through him and others from the Nazi occupation. Yet, his legacy has been tarnished by those who wish to cast a dark spirit over him. The New York Times, in the 1940s, called him the one bright light in the darkness of Europe during World War II, yet fifty years later, repudiated Pius XII for his actions.

In 1939, the 260th Eugenio Pacelli was elected the successor of St. Peter. Not only would he face the challenge of leading the Church, but the horrors, also of the Second World War, his response would be remembered for decades. Venerable Pope Pius XII. Eugenio Pacelli, was born in Rome on March 2, 1876. At the age of twenty-three, he was ordained to the priesthood and began work with what would become a long career.

Pacelli worked as a cleric in the Secretary of State's Office, then as the Papal Nuncio to Germany, where he broke an agreement between Bavaria and Russia. In 1929, Pius XI created him a cardinal. Ten years later, in a brief one-day conclave, Pacelli was elected pope, and chose the name Pius XII.

World War II broke out six months after he began his tenure as pope. Pius XII used his diplomatic background to respond to the violence and published his first Encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus (On the Unity of Human Society)*, which called for prayer to end the war. This was just the beginning of his mission of peace during World War II.

At the end of the Second World War, Pius XII universally was acclaimed for his courageous leadership. The Jewish historian, Pinchas Lapide (1922-1997), acknowledged that through this pope's efforts, the Church saved the lives of 850,000 Jews in Slovakia, Croatia, Romania, and Hungary. Rome's chief rabbi, Israel Zoli, converted to Catholicism to thank and honor Pope Pius XII; Zoli took the name "Eugenio" as his confirmation name after Eugenio Pacelli, the pope's birth name.

When Pius XII died, Israel's Foreign Minister Golda Meir wrote, "When fearful martyrdom came to our people in the decade of Nazi terror, the voice of the pope was raised for the victims." Leonard Bernstein asked the audience at a performance of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra for a minute of silence "for the passing of a very great man, Pope Pius XII."

Within five years after the pope's death, however, efforts began to calumniate Pius XII. Soviet disinformation sought to discredit him, but especially... the 1963 theatrical production, called *The Deputy* by Rolf Hochhuth (1931-2020) an unknown clerk at the German publishing

house and a radical leftist, he painted Pope Pius XII as a pro-Nazi, anti-Semitic, who was silent. while six million Jews were murdered.

The actual record did not stop the slander. Robert Graham S.J., a scholar of the period, was asked to explain why. With all the gruesome information coming out about the Nazi death camps in the 1960s and 1970s, someone “needed to be blamed for the Holocaust.” And a pope fit the bill.

In my research for this homily, I was coming upon one video after another of all kinds of wonderful individuals, very quietly saving as many Jewish faithful as possible throughout Europe. Knowing that speaking out would incite the Nazi radicals even more, so many of these individual quietly were forging documents, forging baptismal certificates, hiding innocent Jewish souls in the homes and in their churches. Those who were very dedicated to saving lives had done so very quietly because they did not want to be recognized; they wanted to do what God asked them to do in a quiet, loving way.

If you look on the internet, if you look on YouTube, you can read and watch all kinds of stories of all kinds of different people who

understood how sacred life is and did what they could to protect life without acknowledgement or recognition. Pius XII, despite all the GOOD that he had done to protect human life (knowing full well what would happen if he spoke too harshly against the Axis Power), was recognized by one civil and Jewish leader after another in the 1940s and 1950s, praising him as a light in the darkness.

A decade or so later, Pius' reputation was smeared. His reputation was tarnished. Pius was the victim of a group of bullies and thugs that could not acknowledge the good so they tried to destroy his reputation as if he were bad. As a result, this "light in the darkness" from the 1940s might not ever be recognized as a blessed or a saint because of this heinous sin of calumny, but he did what God asked him to do... and God knows what was and is in his heart. Like our Lord on the cross, Pius answered the scourges of the crowd with quiet love.

I was thinking about this life of Pius XII because when your name or reputation get smeared, when people put you down for doing nothing more but living the path of suffering and sacrifice and mercy as the Lord instructed us to live, then there is not much you can do to defend

yourself with those who do evil - God was nailed to a cross and chose not to defend himself as well. If you try to defend yourself to the evils of the world, you are seen as being defensive and the situation worse. If you keep silent to the attacks, be rumors perpetuate themselves.

Yet, life on earth is short and life on earth is not easy. So goes the life of a Christian. In Pius' case, hopefully in all of our lives, for what we do and how we live, God knows what is in his heart; God knows what is in my heart and God knows what is in your heart.

When Jesus agonized in the garden in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. what he suffered dearly where he pleaded for God to spare him this gruesome death that he was about to encounter, Jesus was alone and Jesus was defenseless. Jesus was silent; those who once supported him and in the garden he was abandoned. "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me (Psalm 22)?"

Jesus could have ran away from the garden; Jesus could have obliterated his enemies. Instead, he allowed the enemy to kiss him as a price paid for all of our sins. He willingly sacrificed his good reputation, his good name and emptied himself to become a slave (Philippians 2: 6-

11), so that we would have a chance for life. “Unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains a grain of wheat, but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12: 24).

Our society, in today’s age, probably will not recognize Pius XII as a great person, as even a saint. Maybe in the future, society may change their disposition, but the beauty of faith is that what people think is irrelevant in the long run; no one needs to know the good inside a person’s heart except for God and God, who sees the good that you have done, will repay you (Mt 6: 4). When you pray, when you fast, when you mourn, when you give, do it quietly, and God, who sees you in secret, will repay you.

I believe in my heart that in the kingdom of heaven, Pius XII stands up in the front within the kingdom of heaven because of his sacrifice and his love to defend and protect life, despite the evil that continuously tries to smear his name. Faith is not about Gallup Polls, popularity contests or what a group of bad-minded people will do to destroy your reputation. Faith is about love of God and neighbor, to “do it anyway,”

as St. Teresa of Calcutta says, because what we do is for the glory of God and not for the glory of man.

We focus today on a priest, a diplomat who was well educated and through his inner strength did what so many others quietly did with him – to save as many lives as possibly, knowing that speaking out would cause so many others to suffer, even perhaps losing the Catholic Church in German altogether along with any Jewish souls the Church attempted to protect

I would like to conclude today's homily with a prayer that Pius XII wrote for our Blessed Mother, the queen of heaven, a prayer that probably inspired him to soldier on in the faith, despite the hardships of World War II and what he had to endure from the Axis foe, This is the prayer that he offered that gave his strength. I hope gives me strength, and hope gives you strength, as well. The Holy Father wrote,

Out of the depths of this valley of tears, through which suffering humanity painfully struggles, up from the billows of this sea, endlessly buffeted by the waves of suffering, we raise our eyes to thee, most beloved Mother Mary, to be comforted by the contemplation of thy glory and to hail thee as Queen of Heaven and earth, Queen and Mother of mankind.

With legitimate filial pride, we wish to exalt thy queenship and to recognize it as due to the sovereign excellence of thy entire being, O dearest one truly Mother of Him Who is King by right, by inheritance and by conquest.

Reign, O Mother and Queen, by showing us the path of holiness, and by guiding and assisting us that we may never stray from it.

In the heights of Heaven, thou doth exercise thy primacy over the choirs of Angels, who acclaim thee as their sovereign, and over the legions of Saints who delight in beholding thy radiant beauty.

So, too, reign over the entire human race above all by opening the path of faith to those who do not yet know your Divine Son.

Reign over the Church which acknowledges and extols thy gentle dominion and has recourse to thee as a safe refuge amid the calamities of our day.

Reign especially over that part of the Church which is persecuted and oppressed; give it strength to bear adversity, constancy never to yield under unjust compulsion, light to avoid falling into the snares of the enemy, firmness to resist overt attack, and at every moment unwavering faithfulness to thy kingdom.

Reign over the minds of men, that they may seek only what is true; over their wills, that they may follow solely what is good; over their hearts, that they may love nothing but what thou thyself lovest.

Reign over individuals and over families, as well as over societies and nations; over the assemblies of the powerful, the counsels of the wise, as over the simple aspirations of the humble.

Reign in the streets and the squares, in the cities and the villages, in the valleys and the mountains, in the air, on land and on the sea; and hear the pious prayer of all those who recognize that thine is a reign of mercy, in which every petition is heard, every sorrow comforted, every misfortune relieved, every infirmity healed, and in which, at a gesture from thy gentle hands, from death itself there arises smiling life.

Obtain for us that all who now, in every corner of the world, acclaim and hail thee Queen and Mistress, may one day in Heaven enjoy the fullness of thy kingdom in the vision of thy Divine Son, Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth for ever and ever. Amen.

In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen. This is our prayer.

## Oración a María Reina del Papa Pío XII

**María, “llena de gracia y bendita entre las mujeres”, extiende, te lo suplicamos, la mano de tu maternal protección sobre nosotras, tus hijas, que estamos en torno a tu trono de Reina,** como falanges dóciles a tus indicaciones y resueltas a realizar con tu ayuda, en nosotros mismos y en nuestras hermanas, el ideal de la verdad y de la perfección cristiana.

Nuestra mirada se fija con admiración en ti, Hija Inmaculada y predilecta del Padre, Esposa del Espíritu Santo y Madre delicadísima de Jesús. Obténnos de tu Hijo el poder reflejar en nosotras tus sublimes virtudes en cualquier edad y cualquier condición.

**Haz que seamos puras y sin mancha en nuestros sentimientos y en nuestras costumbres;** compañeras dulces, afectuosas, comprensivas para con nuestros esposos; administradoras prudentes de nuestros hogares domésticos; ciudadanas ejemplares en nuestra querida nación; hijas fieles de la Iglesia, dispuestas a dejarnos guiar por ella en el pensar y en el obrar.

Ayúdanos, María amantísima, a observar plenamente los deberes de nuestro estado y a hacer de nuestras moradas centros de vida espiritual y de caridad activa, escuelas de formación de las conciencias y jardines de todas las virtudes; asístenos a fin de que, incluso en la vida social y pública, sepamos ser un ejemplo de fe profunda, de práctica cristiana constante, de integridad incorruptible y de justo equilibrio, fundado sobre los más sólidos principios religiosos.

**Bendice las intenciones que nos inspiras y las fatigas que nos ayudas a soportar,** y que nos sea dado el poder ver, con tu auxilio, sus frutos abundantes en el tiempo y en la eternidad. Amén.