

CALL FOR PAPERS

War and Genocide, Reconstruction and Change: The Global Pontificate of Pius XII, 1939-1958

Conference hosted by the École Française and the German Historical Institute in Rome
17-19 June 2020

In March 2020, the Vatican will open its archives for the pontificate of Pius XII. Long-awaited within the scholarly community, these new sources will allow historians to address a whole range of topics that extend beyond Eugenio Pacelli's biography and relate to greater questions of global politics as well as twentieth-century social and economic history.

Pius XII steered the Catholic Church not only through the mass violence of the Second World War and the Holocaust, but also through the period of post-war reconstruction, the Cold War, and finally, into a new era of globalization. This pontificate, in other words, stands amidst the 'Age of Extremes', which forced Catholics to situate themselves in relation to conflicting ideologies, totalitarianism, democracy, and modernity. Although a period of accelerating secularization, the pontificate also witnessed the re-emergence of the Catholic Church as an influential global force.

Scholars now face a multitude of questions: What were the major institutional, social, and religious changes in the global Catholic community under Pius XII's papacy? What was the Vatican's attitude towards democracy and human rights as well as totalitarian and authoritarian regimes? How did Pius XII cope with Catholic ambiguities between resistance and collaboration in Nazi-ruled Europe and in the face of the Holocaust? And how important were the Vatican's efforts of humanitarian aid in the same period? In what ways did Pius XII influence the formation of the Western alliance and the beginning of the Cold War? How did the Holy See react to the foundation of Israel or to movements of de-colonization in Africa, Asia, and South America? In addition, future scholarship will likely examine how Pius XII reacted as a theologian to challenges of secularization, mass culture, technological progress, and rapidly changing gender relations. These issues, of course, gained a particular importance in the Second Vatican Council, held only four years after Pacelli's death.

Given the timing of the archives' opening, this conference does not claim to provide definitive answers to open historical questions. Instead, it aims to discuss the current state of the historiography, to encourage further discussions, and to establish an agenda for future research. In particular, the conference will examine what we have already learned from the previous opening of the archives of Pius XI in order to lay a groundwork for assessing continuities and discontinuities between the pontificates of Eugenio Pacelli and his predecessor in their respective government of the Church. Thereby, the conference is not limited to biographical research on Pius XII. It also seeks to gather historians in Rome who work on Catholicism in the context of broader global events. Ultimately, we hope to form an international group of scholars who will stay in contact whilst doing archival research in the Vatican over the next decade.

Both paper and panel proposals are welcome and should be sent to Dr. Nina Valbousquet and Dr. Simon Unger-Alvi (nina.valbousquet@efrome.it & Unger-Alvi@dhi-roma.it) by January 31, 2020. Paper proposals (for a 15-20-minute presentation) should not exceed 350 words and should be accompanied by a short CV. Panel proposals should include 3/4 papers and CVs. Accommodation will be provided and reimbursement for travel costs may also be available, particularly for younger scholars without institutional funding.