

# The POPE & the DEVIL

Uncovering The true Story of Pope PIUS XII

A **Documentary Series** that investigates the controversial history of **Pope Pius XII** before, during and immediately after the Second World War.

The Vatican has given us **exclusive access** to the archive of over **16million documents**, which we will interrogate to find the truth behind the edicts and actions of this controversial Pope.

4 x 60min.

[www.picassofilm.net](http://www.picassofilm.net)

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# SERIES OVERVIEW:

This 4 part series takes us deep into the heart of one of the darkest, most controversial periods in the history of the Vatican State and Catholic Church. Through our exclusive access to the Vatican archives we will investigate and interrogate the historical facts of Pius' life and reign as Pope.

Most of the filming will take place within the Vatican. What did go on? What role did Pius XII, so often criticised, actually play throughout this turbulent period around the second world war? What was his relationship to the Nazi's and Italian Fascists? How did it change and develop as the second world war progressed? What happened when the Allies invaded Italy? What of the post war years and the start of the cold war? These are some of the many questions we will ask of the archives, and thus of Pius XII himself.

In the **first episode** we will investigate the truth about the Vatican and the so called "Jewish question" before the war. What role did the Pope and Church play as the Nazis came to power and began enforcing their racist policies?

The **second episode** will examine Pius XII's secret alliance with the German resistance, in particular with Admiral Canaris, through the mysterious German lawyer Joseph Muller. What was Hitler's extraordinary plan to kidnap Pope Pius XII inside the Vatican? How much did the Vatican know?

In the **third episode** we explore Pius XII's strategy of silence in the face of the Holocaust. We will examine how the Vatican was used to hide Jewish refugees, as were the schools, convents, hospitals and colleges and catacombs of Rome. What was the secret plan to save as many Jews as possible? Was it effective?

In the **fourth episode** we investigate the controversial involvement of the Church in the infamous Ratlines. Was Pius XII really involved in this? Was he aware of it? What did he do about it? Will the truth finally reveal itself as we delve into the Vatican's secrets hidden deep within the archives?

We close the series examining how Pius XII dealt with the rising threat of Stalin and the advance of communism after the war. What do the archives reveal about the Vatican's approach to this new enemy, this new devil to tackle?

## THE STYLE:

The series is conceived as a **biographical investigation of Eugenio Pacelli, Pope Pius XII**. Confessional in tone, Pope Pius might narrate his own story through the crucial years from 1929 to 1958 as the archives open for us to reveal his **correspondence, notes and secret orders**. We will be questioning him through the documents and reports. We hope to find it all there as we explore the original documents and confront him with the accusations that were made about him, particularly relating to his public silence during the Holocaust. We will use original **archival footage** to give a full depth of the material available to us in terms of public records of the life and pontificate of Pius XII.

Interviews in this documentary are designed as active interviews, capturing the interviewees in activity on a particular location related to their role of the story, eg. portraying the head of the secret archive in his office at the entrance to the archive itself. This will allow us to use b-roll of the interviewees as the important investigators of the truth, focusing on details relative to the general action. The **shoots are 2 camera setup based** with the fixed A CAM for wide shot and B-CAM dedicated to a slight angle closeup view and B-roll. **Filming in RAW format** will allow maximum flexibility in post production and colour grading and choosing a shallow depth of field will give us a clear dividing line between the interviewee and the background.

**B-Roll** focuses on **unique locations** that the audience does not normally have access to, the actual **exclusive documents** and the activity of our investigators of the story. Using sliders, stabilizers, time-lapse, POV cameras with cinematic lenses gives us various techniques from low to high angles, rack focus, detailed closeups, bringing the audience into the location, story and our investigation. This creates a seamless transition to our re-creations.

**Re-creations** serve to transport the audience right to the heart of the story, displaying the **intimate details of the story**. Precise casting and collaboration with period costume and props providers and recreators give this docuseries a distinct feeling where attention to detail is paramount.



Documents shooting and the active interview examples

Period reenactment shooting example

Interview A CAM and B CAM example

## METHOD

**Dramatic reenactment** will bring the main players to life, as we recreate major events. We will use an immersive interview technique as international experts investigate the documents and archives in our search for the truth of events.

Many **interviews** will be shot **inside Vatican City**, filming in the locations where events took place, where Pius XII used to pray, meditate, walk and hold his meetings. Getting a sense of the man through his artifacts, and habitat.

## KEY ACCESS:

With the exception of Vatican scholars, no one has yet examined the archives containing **16 million documents** that relate to Pius XII. We are working with scholars who are among the few who have access to the unexplored truths buried in the archives.

This will be a first step towards uncovering the past through original documents. **No more guesswork or assumptions.** All on camera. Academic detective work.



## EPISODE 1: THE JEWISH QUESTION

**Evian-les-Bains, July 1938:** At the instigation of US President **Roosevelt**, representatives from 32 nations and 39 private organizations, gathered for 8 days of speeches, meetings, and grand displays of good will. More than 200 journalists covered the event. It was a big deal. The aim was to decide what to do about the growing number of Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria. Between 1933 and 1941, the Nazis intended to make Germany judenrein (cleansed of Jews) by making life so difficult for them that they would be forced to leave. By 1938, **about 150,000 German Jews**, one in four, **had already fled Germany**. After the annexation of Austria in March 1938 an **additional 185,000 Jews** were brought under Nazi rule, and **needed refuge**. Many were unable to find countries willing to take them in.

Despite the noble words and intentions expressed in Evian-les-Bains, most of the states participating were unwilling to open their borders to the refugees, fearful that to do so would cause further economic hardship. The conference lasted a week. With the exception of the tiny Dominican Republic, **no country was willing to accept more refugees**. No one could imagine the future horror of the extermination camps, yet somehow, in the autumn of 1938, **the fate of the Jews under the Nazis was sealed**.



**Pope Pius XI** was outraged by this international indifference to the Jewish problem. Working together with his Secretary of State, Eugenio Pacelli, future Pope Pius XII, he explored ways the **Vatican might help German and Austrian Jews**, devising a plan to help them emigrate secretly in small groups **using various charitable organizations**. Pius XI and Pacelli decided **not to publicly denounce the Nazi regime** fearing that official condemnation would block their strategy of clandestine aid. As Secretary of State Pacelli sent hundreds of coded letters to the apostolic delegates of all five continents asking them to welcome the refugees. We will be investigating these documents. We will open up **correspondence with US President Roosevelt**, with whom there was a close relationship. What was their real attitude? What did they really do? Why the silence in the face of the rise of the Nazis and Fascists?

Death of Pius XI.

**On the night of 9th February 1939** Pius XI planned to break his strategy of silence and deliver a speech the following day to the Italian Bishops he had summoned to Rome. The speech was to denounce the violation of the Lateran Treaty by the Italian government, and denounce the racist persecution of Jews by the German Reichstag. He never delivered the speech. **He died of a heart attack at 5.31am 10th February 1939**. There was speculation that Mussolini had him poisoned. Pius XI's doctor, Marcello Petacci, was the father of Mussolini's lover Claretta Petacci. Dr Petacci was suspected, by some, of giving the Pope a drug that caused his death. There was no autopsy, so this remained speculation. We will investigate what really happened through the many documents of the time.

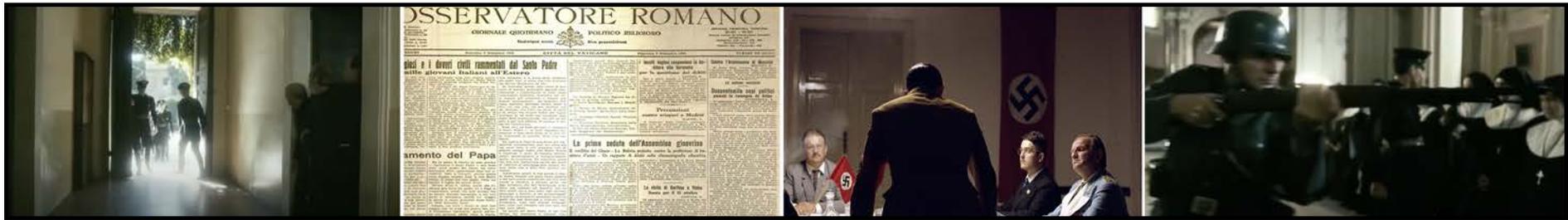
Pius XI had managed to orchestrate Church protest against racial legislation and the ties that bound Italy to Germany, publicly denouncing the evils of the Nazi regime at every possible opportunity. There had been little success. The situation of the Church in Germany was worsening, and there was growing hostility to the Church in Italy as fascism spread through the land. **March 2, 1939 Eugenio Pacelli was elected Pope**, taking the name Pius XII in homage to his predecessor and mentor, declaring that a Papal Crown was not being placed on his head, but rather a **"crown of thorns"**. Initially he faced the Nazis and Fascists with quiet unequivocal resistance. Books that exalted or otherwise supported Nazi ideology were banned and the Bishops of Holland were allowed to refuse the sacraments to Catholics who supported the Nazis. What was really going on behind the scenes? The archives will release their long held secrets to our team of academic detectives.

**EPISODE 2:**  
REVENGE OF EVIL  
Hitler's plan to kidnap the Pope

**The Abwehr-Vatican axis:** Admiral Canaris and General Ludwig Beck creators of the "Operation Valkyrie" plan to assassinate Hitler, and leaders of the anti-Nazi resistance within the German armed forces, sent **Josef Müller**, a lawyer and secret agent, from Bavaria to Rome to establish contact with Pius XII.

Müller's contacts were two German priests close to the pontiff, Father **Ludwig Kaas**, treasurer of the Vatican Basilica, and Father Robert Leiber, Pius XII's Jesuit secretary. They initiated anti Hitler agreements between the Abwehr and the Vatican. Müller called them "**Roman Conversations**". What were these? How far reaching were they? Were they effective?

In May 1940, Müller delivered plans for the attack Hitler was about to launch against Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg . **Pius XII secretly warned their leaders of the planned invasion.** Sadly the intelligence was not taken seriously. A fatal hesitation? Could action have been taken? What was the intelligence the Pope sent? Hitler's stormtroopers broke through the Maginot line. By June 1940 Paris was occupied.



After the invasion of France, Josef Müller used to meet in secret with Monsignor Kaas and Father Leiber in the **Vatican Grottoes**, a safe place for their covert meetings. Excavations in search of Saint Peter's tomb were underway and the site was inaccessible. What did they discuss? What plans? We will reenact their meetings in the grottoes where they took place.

Pius XII sent international telegrams condemning the German military action. **L'Osservatore Romano**, the official Vatican newspaper, which published the telegrams, **was blocked**. All copies were seized. Priests caught reading it were beaten. Pius XII was deprived of the only open means of communication he possessed. His car was violently attacked by a squad of fascists. Deprived of the means of communication, **Pius XII was practically a prisoner in the Vatican.** The Vatican is under siege, Nazi spies were thought to have infiltrated the Holy See in the guise of priests. In early 1944 Hitler initiated a plan to kidnap or kill the Pope along with the entire diplomatic corps of the Vatican state. Known as the **Rabat-Fohn plan**, Pius XII learnt of it, and ordered his cardinals to make a new conclave in case he was kidnapped, so the Church and Vatican State would not be left without government. The Nazis dropped the plan, fearing the worldwide disapprobation which would have followed. What do the archives reveal of this tense, dangerous time? What really happened?

**EPISODE 3:**  
THE STRATEGY OF SILENCE  
Pius XII and the Holocaust

**Pius XII Exorcism of Hitler:** Pius is said to have repeatedly performed remote exorcisms on Hitler, convinced that the Führer was an instrument of the devil. We investigate the evidence behind these stories. Were they true? What evidence remains of this strange period? What was the belief behind remote exorcism? What were the rituals?

In 1934, as Secretary of State to Pius XI, Eugenio Pacelli had signed the **Reichskonkordat**, a concordat between the Holy See and the Third Reich. What was the background to this so-called "pact with the devil"?



The Jewish Dossier. This directory contains thousands of letters about Jews who were hidden and given sanctuary. False baptismal certificates were produced. How was this programme of clandestine aid to Jewish people executed under the noses of the Nazis? Was it effective?

**The Madagascar Project:** In 1940, Hitler planned to transfer Jews from territories controlled by the Third Reich to Africa. Initially, he asked Mussolini to accept them in Ethiopia. Mussolini agreed, but the plan changed and Madagascar became the chosen destination. The plan was now to transfer 4 million people over 4 years. Hitler entrusted the realization of the project to Adolf Eichmann. The plan was eventually abandoned as the War with Britain escalated.

Pius XII and his closest advisors apparently worked tirelessly in clandestine diplomatic activity to obtain assurances from European governments to avoid the deportation of Jews, and to gain the release of those already imprisoned in the camps. The high authorities of the Jewish world including **Isaac Herzog, Chief Rabbi of the Holy Land**, David Prato, Chief Rabbi of Rome and Alexandria, and H.D. Kaanna, Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem secretly wrote to Pius XII thanking him for what the Holy See had done and was doing to help the Jews. Do the archives hold documents that reveal the truth of this period? What really went on? We will explore all the evidence surrounding this period in the Vatican.

**Kappler's Gold:** In 1943 Herbert Kappler, SS officer author of the Ardeatine massacre, was in charge of Jewish roundups for deportation to Auschwitz, sending more than **2,000 Roman Jews to their deaths**. He demanded a ransom of 50 kilograms of gold from the Roman Jewish community, which he later claimed was an attempt to prevent the deportations. It was alleged that the Vatican was sheltering Jews and became involved in the Ransom negotiations. What really happened? Was the gold ever sent?

How dangerous were his threats against the supposedly neutral Vatican, whose schools, convents, hospitals and colleges throughout Rome were definitely giving sanctuary to Jewish refugees? Even the catacombs were being used as hiding places. What evidence of this period remains buried in the archives?

Pius XII was delivering food through his housekeeper, **Sister Pascalina Lehnert** and **Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty**. O'Flaherty, nicknamed the "Scarlet Pimpernel of the Vatican", was said to be responsible for **saving 6,500 Allied soldiers and Jews**. Kappler put a high price on his head and vowed to torture and kill him were he to ever step outside the Vatican. He never managed to, and was himself tried and sentenced to life imprisonment after the war.

EPISODE 4:  
RATLINES  
Nazis on the run  
and the spectre of communism

The Austrian bishop and Rector of the Roman College of Santa Maria dell'Anima, **Alois Hudal** was a **Nazi sympathizer** during the war. After the war he helped many Nazis flee Europe. **Franz Stangl** former SS-Hauptsturmführer, commander of the Sobibor and Treblinka extermination camps, a man responsible for the deaths of almost 1 million Jews was one of them. Stangl escaped from prison and made his way to Rome and the Vatican down the infamous Ratlines. Hudal, a fellow Austrian, furnished him with papers that allowed him to travel to Syria, and eventually on to Brazil with his family. What Did Pope Pius XII actually know of all this? Did he secretly authorise and instigate any of these escapes? What were his personal inner thoughts and concerns?

We will examine the Vatican **Ostpolitik** of Pius XII. How did Pius XII lead the Catholic Church and approach dialogue with the Soviet Union and communist block from Stalin onwards. The Vatican, the smallest state in the world, with the longest reach always had to work hard to maintain relations and influence in the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries where Catholics and Christians were regularly persecuted and imprisoned. **For the Church, Communism and Joseph Stalin were now the new enemy to face.** How did they deal with this?

In the eyes of the Church, the devil had now taken shape and manifested in a new political form. The threat to the Church and its worldwide congregation was now Communist. How did Pius XII enter into battle with his old foe in new clothing?

With our new access to the archives we intend to dig deep to answer these and many more questions as we explore the history and uncover the secrets of this controversial Pope. These documents, hidden away for so long, should shed light on the man and the turbulent period of his Pontificate. They will inevitably throw up new areas of investigation that we perhaps are completely unaware of. New questions to answer, new events to explore and shed light on as we travel back in time deep into the Vatican Archives.



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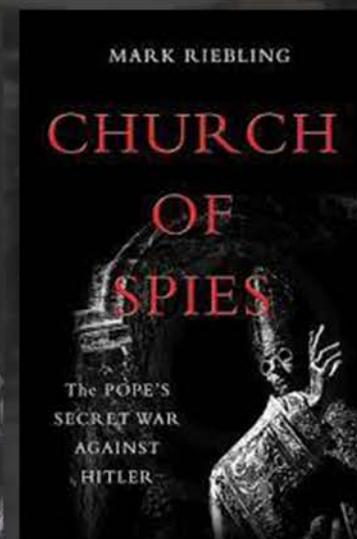
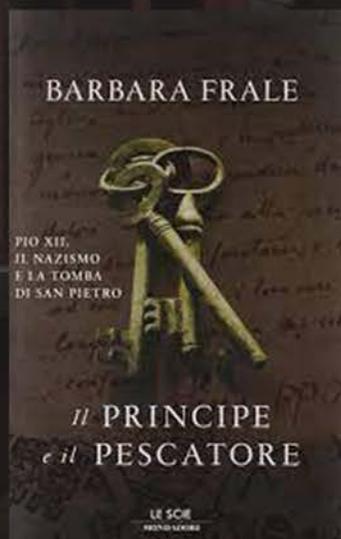
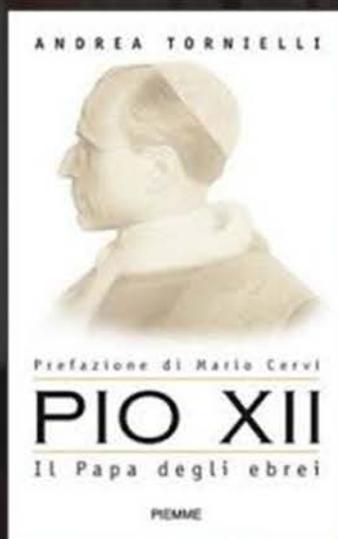
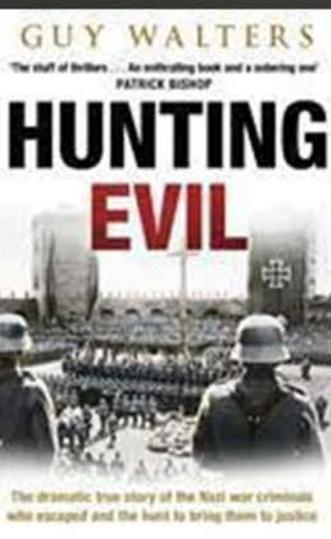
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*The list of experts may be modified during the production*

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