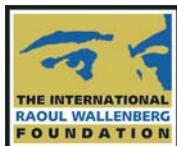


# JOHN XXIII

*Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli*



INTERNATIONAL RAOUL  
WALLENBERG FOUNDATION



ANGELO RONCALLI INTERNATIONAL  
COMMITTEE FOUNDATION



CASA ARGENTINA EN  
ISRAEL TIERRA SANTA



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## Biography

**Blessed Pope John XXIII** (Latin: *Ioannes PP. XXIII*; Italian: *Giovanni XXIII*), born Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli (25 November, 1881 – 3 June, 1963), known as Blessed John XXIII since his beatification, was elected as the 261st Pope of the Roman Catholic Church and Sovereign of Vatican City on October 28, 1958.

In Italy he is remembered with the affectionate nickname of "Il Papa Buono" ("The Good Pope").

### Early life and ordination

Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli was born in Sotto il Monte, a small country village in the Province of Bergamo, Italy. He was the firstborn son of Giovanni Battista Roncalli (1854-1935) and his wife Marianna Giulia Mazzolla (1854-1939), and fourth in a family of 14, including: Angelo Giuseppe, Alfredo, Maria Caterina, Teresa, Ancilla, Francesco Zaverio, Maria Elisa, Assunta Casilda, Giovanni Francesco, Enrica, Giuseppe Luigi and Luigi.[1] His family worked as sharecroppers like the largest part of Sotto il Monte peoples, a striking contrast to his predecessor, Eugenio Pacelli, who came from an ancient aristocratic family, long connected to the Papacy. However, he was still a descendant of an Italian noble family, from a secondary and impoverished branch.[2]

In 1904, Roncalli was ordained a priest in the Catholic Church of Santa Maria in Monte Santo in Rome. He was trained as a historian.

### Priest and bishop

In 1905, Giacomo Radini-Tedeschi, the new bishop of Bergamo, appointed Roncalli as his secretary. Roncalli worked for Radini-Tedeschi until the bishop's death in 1914. During this period Roncalli was also a teacher in the diocesan seminary.

During World War I, Roncalli was drafted into the Royal Italian Army as a sergeant, serving in the medical corps as a stretcher-bearer and as a chaplain.

In 1921, Pope Benedict XV appointed him as the Italian president of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. In 1925 Pope Pius XI appointed him as Apostolic Visitor to Bulgaria, also naming him for consecration as titular bishop of Areopolis. He chose as his episcopal motto *Obedientia et Pax* ("Obedience and Peace"), which became his guiding motto.





## **Nuncio**

In 1935 he was made Apostolic Delegate to Turkey and Greece. Roncalli used this office to help the Jewish underground in saving thousands of refugees in Europe, leading some to consider him to be a Righteous Gentile (see Pope John XXIII and Judaism). In 1944, during World War II, Pope Pius XII named him Apostolic Nuncio to France. In this capacity he had to negotiate the retirement of bishops who had collaborated with the occupying power.

## **Cardinal**

In 1953, he was appointed as the Patriarch of Venice, and, accordingly, raised to the rank of Cardinal-Priest of Santa Prisca by Pope Pius XII. As a sign of his esteem, President Vincent Auriol of France claimed the ancient privilege possessed by French monarchs and bestowed the red hat on the now-Cardinal Roncalli at a ceremony in the Elysee Palace. Pontificado

## **Papal election**

Following the death of Pope Pius XII in 1958, Roncalli was elected Pope, to his great surprise. He had even arrived in the Vatican with a return train ticket to Venice. Many had considered that Giovanni Battista Montini, Archbishop of Milan, was a possible candidate, but, although he was Archbishop of one of the most ancient and prominent Sees in Italy, he had not been appointed a cardinal.[3]

As a result, he was not present at the 1958 conclave and most of the cardinals abided by the established precedent of voting only for a member of the College of Cardinals, in spite of the affirmation in Canon Law that any Catholic male could be chosen.

After the long pontificate of Pope Pius XII, the cardinals chose a man who, it was presumed because of his advanced age, would be a short-term or "stop-gap" pope. In John XXIII's first consistory, Montini was raised to the rank of cardinal; and in time he became John's successor, Pope Paul VI. John XXIII's personal warmth, good humor and kindness captured the world's affections in a way his predecessor, for all his learning, had failed to do.

Upon his election, Cardinal Roncalli chose John as his regnal name. This was the first time in over 500 years that this name had been chosen - previous Popes had avoided using this name as the last bishop of Rome to use this name came to be considered an Antipope following the Western Schism.

On the choice of his name Pope John said that

I choose John ... a name sweet to us because it is the name of our father, dear to me because it is the name of the humble parish church where I was baptized, the solemn name of numberless cathedrals scattered throughout the world, including our own basilica [St. John Lateran]. Twenty-two Johns of indisputable legitimacy have [been Pope], and almost all had a brief pontificate. We have preferred to hide the smallness of our name behind this magnificent succession of Roman Popes. [4]



Upon choosing the name, there was some confusion as to whether the new Pope would be known as John XXIII or John XXIV. In response, John declared that he was John XXIII, thus affirming the antipapal status of Antipope John XXIII.

Before this Antipope, the most recent Popes called John were John XXII (1316–1334) and John XXI (1276–1277). However, there was no Pope John XX, due to confusion caused by medieval historians misreading the *Liber Pontificalis* to refer to another Pope John between John XIV and John XV.

## **Visits outside Rome**

On 25 December, 1958, he became the first pope since 1870 to make pastoral visits in his diocese of Rome, when he visited children infected with polio at the Bambin Gesù hospital and then visited Santo Spirito Hospital. The following day he visited Rome's Regina Coeli prison, where he told the inmates: "You could not come to me, so I came to you." These acts created a sensation, and he wrote in his diary:

...great astonishment in the Roman, Italian and international press. I was hemmed in on all sides: authorities, photographers, prisoners, wardens...[5]

## **Calling the Council**

Far from being a mere "stop gap" Pope, to great excitement John called an ecumenical council fewer than ninety years after the Vatican Council. Cardinal Montini remarked to a friend that "this holy old boy doesn't realise what a hornet's nest he's stirring up".[6] From the Second Vatican Council came changes that reshaped the face of Catholicism: a comprehensively revised liturgy, a stronger emphasis on ecumenism, and a new approach to the world.

## **Pope John and papal ceremonial**

Pope John XXIII was the last pope to use full papal ceremony, some of which was abolished subsequently after Vatican II, while the rest fell into disuse. His papal coronation ran for the traditional five hours (Pope Paul VI, by contrast, opted for a shorter ceremony, while later popes declined to be crowned). However, as with his predecessor Pope Pius XII, he chose to have the coronation itself take place on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica, in view of the crowds assembled in St. Peter's Square.

## **Final months and death**

On 23 September, 1962, Pope John XXIII was first diagnosed with gastric carcinoma. The diagnosis, which was kept from the public, followed nearly eight months of occasional stomach hemorrhages, and reduced the pontiff's appearances. Looking pale and drawn during these events, he gave a hint to his ultimate fate in April 1963, when he said to visitors, "That which happens to all men perhaps will happen soon to the Pope who speaks to you today."



On 11 May, 1963, the Italian president Antonio Segni awarded Pope John XXIII the Balzan Prize for his engagement for peace. It was the Pope's last public appearance.

On 25 May, 1963, the Pope suffered another hemorrhage and required blood transfusions, but the cancer had perforated the stomach wall and peritonitis soon set in. By 31 May, it had become clear that the cancer had overcome the resistance of Pope John. "At 11 A.M. Petrus Canisius Van Lierde as Papal Sacristan was at the bedside of the dying pope, ready to anoint him. The Pope began to speak for a very last time: "I had the great grace to be born into a Christian family, modest and poor, but with the fear of the Lord. ...My time on earth is drawing to a close. But Christ lives on and continues his work in the Church. Souls, souls, Ut omnes unum sint, [7] Van Lierde then anointed his eyes, ears, mouth, hands and feet. Overcome by emotion, he forgot the right order of anointing. Pope John gently helped him. Then the Pope bid him and all the other bystanders a last farewell." [8]

The Pope died 7:49 p.m. (local time) of peritonitis due to a perforated stomach cancer on 3 June at the age of 81. He was buried on 6 June, ending a reign of four years, seven months.

On 3 December, 1963, U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson posthumously awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the United States' highest civilian award, in recognition of the good relationship between Pope John and the United States.

## **Legacy and beatification**

Known affectionately as "Good Pope John" and "the most loved Pope in history" to many people, on September 3, 2000, John was declared "Blessed" by Pope John Paul II, the penultimate step on the road to sainthood. He was the first pope since Pope Pius X to receive this honor. Following his beatification, his body was moved from its original burial place in the grottoes below St Peter's Basilica to the Altar of St. Jerome and displayed for the veneration of the faithful. At the time, the body was observed to be extremely well-preserved—a condition which the Church ascribes to the lack of air flow in his sealed triple coffin rather than to a miracle. When John was moved, the original vault above the floor was removed. A new vault was built beneath the ground, and Pope John Paul II was later buried in this vault.

The date assigned for the liturgical celebration (where authorized) of Blessed John XXIII is not 3 June, the anniversary of his death, as would be usual, but 11 October, the anniversary of his opening of the Second Vatican Council.[9] Although his feast day is October 11 in the Roman Catholic Church, he is commemorated on 3 June by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and on June 4, by the Anglican Church of Canada.

From his early teens, he maintained a diary of spiritual reflections that was subsequently published as *Journal of a Soul*. The collection of writings charts Roncalli's efforts as a young man to "grow in holiness" and continue after his election to the Papacy; it remains widely read.

Sedevacantist and Conclavist groups have been some of Pope John's most outspoken critics.



Many who subscribe to the teachings of Our Lady of Fatima also believe that Pope John deliberately withheld secret prophetic information revealed by an apparition of the Virgin Mary. [10] This is perhaps the basis for Internet reports in the late 1990s about the supposed discovery of Pope John's diary where he received prophetic insight into the future, including the return of Jesus in New York in 2000. [11]

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- 11. [^ Pope John XXIII Predictions](#)

## External links

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## Video on YouTube — Italian Documentaries (English Subtitled)

- [Iohannes XXIII: the good Pope — part 1 of 2](#)
- [Iohannes XXIII: the good Pope — part 2 of 2](#)
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- [Pope Iohannes XXIII: pontificate and death — part 2](#)





## Encyclicals of Pope John XXIII

Pope John XXIII issued eight Papal Encyclicals during his five-year reign as Pope of the Roman Catholic Church, from his election on October 28, 1958 until his death on June 3, 1963. Two of his encyclicals, *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris*, are especially important.[1][2] A Papal Encyclical is a letter sent by the Pope which is addressed to Roman Catholic bishops in a particular area or the whole world.[3][4] Encyclicals may condemn errors, point out threats to faith and morals, exhort faithful practices, or provide remedies for present and future dangers to the church. The authority of the encyclical varies depending on the circumstances and is not necessarily *ex cathedra*. [5] The title of a Papal Encyclical is usually taken from its first few words.[6]

Pope John XXIII's first encyclical, *Ad Petri Cathedram*, was issued eight months into his pontificate and was neither an important social document nor doctrinal exposition. Instead it looked at truth, unity and peace with distinctive familiarity and concern.[6] The second, *Sacerdotii Nostri Primordia*, commemorated the 100th anniversary of the death of St. John Vianney, while *Grata Recordatio* considered the use of the Rosary. *Princeps Pastorum*, his fourth encyclical, used 1 Peter 5:4 as its biblical text and celebrated Roman Catholic missions.

*Mater et Magistra*, the fifth encyclical, carried forward ideas from Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891), which had been issued 70 years before, and Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931). It considers social ethics with its most important point being the application of natural law to the international community.[7] It is one of the longest encyclicals, at more than 25,000 words.[8] The sixth encyclical, *Aeterna Dei Sapientia*, commemorated the death of Pope Leo I and called for unity within Christendom from external movements such as Communism and secularism.[9] The penultimate encyclical, *Paenitentiam Agere*, considered penance and the then-upcoming Second Vatican Council. Pope John XXIII's final encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, was written two months before his death. It is long—over 15,000 words—and is the first in history to have been addressed to "all men of good will," rather than only the bishops and laity of the Roman Catholic Church. It was hailed as "one of the most profound and significant documents of our age." [10]



Nº	Latín	Título English translation	Subject	Date	Text (Click to open)
1.	<i>Ad Petri Cathedram</i>	"To the chair of Peter"	On truth, unity and peace in a spirit of charity.	29 Jun 1959	
2.	<i>Sacerdotii Nostri Primordia</i>	"From the beginning of our priesthood"	On St. John Vianney.	1 Aug 1959	
3.	<i>Grata Recordatio</i>	"With joyful recollection"	On the Rosary: Prayer for the church, missions, international and social problems.	26 Sep 1959	
4.	<i>Princeps Pastorum</i>	"The prince of the shepherds"	On the missions, native clergy, and lay participation.	28 Nov 1959	
5.	<i>Mater et Magistra</i>	"Mother and Teacher"	On Christianity and social progress.	15 May 1961	
6.	<i>Aeterna Dei Sapientia</i>	"God's eternal wisdom"	On commemorating the fifteenth centennial of the death of Pope St. Leo I.	11 Nov 1961	
7.	<i>Paenitentiam Agere</i>	"Penance for sins"	On the need for the practice of interior and exterior penance.	1 Jul 1962	
8.	<i>Pacem in Terris</i>	"Peace on Earth"	On establishing universal peace in truth, justice, charity, and liberty.	11 Apr 1963	

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## NOSTRA AETATE

Under the sign of interreligious dialogue, the cornerstone of a new era was set by John Paul II in accordance with the guidelines of Second Vatican Council, special milestone born from the inspiration of Pope John XXIII, Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli.

The theological expression of the council in relation to non-Christian religions was the enactment of the declaration "Nostra Aetate" (Our time), issued on 28 October 1965, coinciding with the same date in 1958 when Roncalli was elected Supreme Pontiff.

The revolutionary document opened a new era in relations between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people after centuries of prejudice and persecution. The origins, however, date back to the humanitarian actions of Monsignor Roncalli during the Holocaust.

**Nostra Aetate** (Latin: *In our Age*) is the Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions of the Second Vatican Council. Passed by a vote of 2,221 to 88 of the assembled bishops, this declaration was promulgated on October 28, 1965, by Pope Paul VI<sup>[1]</sup>.

The first draft, entitled "Decree on the Jews" (Latin: *Decretum de Iudaeis*), was completed in November 1961, approximately fourteen months after Cardinal Bea was commissioned by Pope John XXIII. This draft essentially went nowhere, never having been submitted to the Council, which opened on 11 October 1962.

### Summary of the final text of Nostra Aetate

1. Introduction
2. Hindus, Buddhists, and other religions
3. Muslims
4. Jews
5. Conclusion

\* The Declaration begins by describing the unity of the origin of all people, and the fact that they all return to God; hence their final goal is also one. It describes the eternal questions which have dogged men since the beginning, and how the various religious traditions have tried to answer them.

\* It mentions some of the answers that Hindus, Buddhists, and members of other faiths have suggested for such philosophical questions and then categorically states: "The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which,



though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men."[citation needed]

\* Part three goes on to say that the Catholic Church regards the Muslims with esteem, and then continues by describing some of the things Islam has in common with Christianity and Catholicism: worship of One God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, Merciful and Omnipotent, Who has spoken to men; the Muslims' respect for Abraham and Mary, and the great respect they have for Jesus, whom they consider to be a Prophet and not God. The synod urged all Catholics and Muslims to forget the hostilities and differences of the past and to work together for mutual understanding and benefit.

\* Part four speaks of the bond that ties the people of the 'New Covenant' (Christians) to Abraham's stock (Jews). It states that even though some Jewish authorities and those who followed them called for Jesus' death, the blame for this cannot be laid at the door of all those Jews present at that time, nor can the Jews in our time be held as guilty, thus repudiating an indiscriminate charge of deicide; 'the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God'. The Declaration also decries all displays of antisemitism made at any time by anyone.

\* The fifth part states that all men are created in God's image, and that it is contrary to the teaching of the Church to discriminate against, show hatred towards or harass any person or people on the basis of colour, race, religion, way of life and so on.

**DECLARATION ON THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS**

**NOSTRA AETATE**

**PROCLAIMED BY HIS HOLINESS  
POPE PAUL VI  
ON OCTOBER 28, 1965**

1. In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely her relationship to non-Christian religions. In her task of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship.

One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth.(1) One also is their final goal, God. His providence, His manifestations of goodness, His saving design extend to all men,(2) until that time when the



elect will be united in the Holy City, the city ablaze with the glory of God, where the nations will walk in His light.(3)

Men expect from the various religions answers to the unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the hearts of men: What is man? What is the meaning, the aim of our life? What is moral good, what sin? Whence suffering and what purpose does it serve? Which is the road to true happiness? What are death, judgment and retribution after death? What, finally, is that ultimate inexpressible mystery which encompasses our existence: whence do we come, and where are we going?

2. From ancient times down to the present, there is found among various peoples a certain perception of that hidden power which hovers over the course of things and over the events of human history; at times some indeed have come to the recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father. This perception and recognition penetrates their lives with a profound religious sense.

Religions, however, that are bound up with an advanced culture have struggled to answer the same questions by means of more refined concepts and a more developed language. Thus in Hinduism, men contemplate the divine mystery and express it through an inexhaustible abundance of myths and through searching philosophical inquiry. They seek freedom from the anguish of our human condition either through ascetical practices or profound meditation or a flight to God with love and trust. Again, Buddhism, in its various forms, realizes the radical insufficiency of this changeable world; it teaches a way by which men, in a devout and confident spirit, may be able either to acquire the state of perfect liberation, or attain, by their own efforts or through higher help, supreme illumination. Likewise, other religions found everywhere try to counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing "ways," comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites. The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims, and ever must proclaim Christ "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), in whom men may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself.(4)

The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men.

3. The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all- powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth,(5) who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been





raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom.

4. As the sacred synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it remembers the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock.

Thus the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are found already among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ-Abraham's sons according to faith (6)- are included in the same Patriarch's call, and likewise that the salvation of the Church is mysteriously foreshadowed by the chosen people's exodus from the land of bondage. The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles.(7) Indeed, the Church believes that by His cross Christ, Our Peace, reconciled Jews and Gentiles, making both one in Himself.(8)

The Church keeps ever in mind the words of the Apostle about his kinsmen: "theirs is the sonship and the glory and the covenants and the law and the worship and the promises; theirs are the fathers and from them is the Christ according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:4-5), the Son of the Virgin Mary. She also recalls that the Apostles, the Church's main-stay and pillars, as well as most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ's Gospel to the world, sprang from the Jewish people.

As Holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation,(9) nor did the Jews in large number, accept the Gospel; indeed not a few opposed its spreading.(10) Nevertheless, God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues-such is the witness of the Apostle.(11) In company with the Prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and "serve him shoulder to shoulder" (Soph. 3:9).(12)

Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues.

True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ;(13) still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from



the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ.

Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.

Besides, as the Church has always held and holds now, Christ underwent His passion and death freely, because of the sins of men and out of infinite love, in order that all may reach salvation. It is, therefore, the burden of the Church's preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God's all-embracing love and as the fountain from which every grace flows.

5. We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God. Man's relation to God the Father and his relation to men his brothers are so linked together that Scripture says: "He who does not love does not know God" (1 John 4:8).

No foundation therefore remains for any theory or practice that leads to discrimination between man and man or people and people, so far as their human dignity and the rights flowing from it are concerned.

The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion. On the contrary, following in the footsteps of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, this sacred synod ardently implores the Christian faithful to "maintain good fellowship among the nations" (1 Peter 2:12), and, if possible, to live for their part in peace with all men,<sup>(14)</sup> so that they may truly be sons of the Father who is in heaven.<sup>(15)</sup>

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## NOTES

- Cf. *Acts* 17:26
- Cf. *Wis.* 8:1; *Acts* 14:17; *Rom.* 2:6-7; 1 *Tim.* 2:4
- Cf. *Apoc.* 21:23f.
- Cf 2 *Cor.* 5:18-19
- Cf St. Gregory VII, *letter XXI to Anzîr (Nacir), King of Mauritania* (Pl. 148, col. 450f.)
- Cf. *Gal.* 3:7
- Cf. *Rom.* 11:17-24
- Cf. *Eph.* 2:14-16
- Cf. *Lk.* 19:44
- Cf. *Rom.* 11:28
- Cf. *Rom.* 11:28-29; cf. dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen Gentium* (Light of nations) AAS, 57 (1965) pag. 20
- Cf. *Is.* 66:23; *Ps.* 65:4; *Rom.* 11:11-32
- Cf. *John.* 19:6
- Cf. *Rom.* 12:18
- Cf. *Matt.* 5:45



## International Angelo Roncalli Committee

### A foundation to honour the memory of John XXII was created

Fuente:  eldiario.es

The concept of coexistence that came up in the '50, in order to express the need of preparing the world for a solution to the "Cold War", has been replaced by the slogan "living together" (*convivenca*) that expresses the wish not only to exist without being destroyed, but also the creation of a world of dialogue, as it was stated in Manhattan by the branch of a foundation to honour the memory of the deceased Pope John XXIII.

During the '60 decade, the movement of understanding among the different confessions started in Argentina, prompted by Rabbi Guillermo Schlesinger, Priests Carlos Cuchetti and Ernesto Segura, who later became the representative of the Jewish Committee Maximo Yagupski, Pastor Sossa and others.

Almost 40 years ago, Baruch Tenenbaum and Rabbi Schlesinger announced the idea to honour Pope John XXIII for his trajectory and openness "towards a better world" with the concepts of "living together" and dialogue.

More than a year ago, the Vatican Secretary Cardinal Angelo Sodano and the founder of the NGOs

"Interamerica -Interfaith" and the International Foundation Raoul Wallenberg, arrived in New York. They got together at the Embassy before the United Nations, the Nunciature, which is headed by Archbishop Renato Martino, at a meeting attended by Rabbis, community leaders, diplomats and intellectuals of the three Americas.

In that opportunity it was announced the creation of a special committee integrated by historians, theologians and experts in inter-confessional issues. This committee was to verify through the corresponding documents the attitude of Nuncio Angelo Roncalli during World War II.

The summary of the work and the surprising testimonies, backed by statements and writings of personalities like the Great Rabbi of Israel Herzog, the prominent shelita rabbis Arthur Herzberg, Eder Marcos, ambassadors, intellectuals including Hana Arendt, Salim Pelitaus,



historians and researchers, surprised the most diverse members of the club of "Enterprises of the Spirit", seated in Jerusalem, New York and Buenos Aires.

In Rome, it will be announced the creation of the movement "Reconciliation Nuncio

Roncalli (John XXIII)" that will include the International Foundation Reconciliation.

The members of the "International Foundation Raoul Wallemberg" will be able to integrate this new centre that will honour the "Good Pope", for his unforgettable epic historical labour in Istanbul as a diplomat. This list includes other royal houses: King of Spain, Queen of England, Queen of Holland, Russia President Putin, Presidents of France, Germany, Switzerland, Mexico, Czech Republic, Malta, Albany, Poland, Bulgaria Ecuador, more than 20 Prime Ministers from the five continents; Nobel Prize Awardees Elie Wiesel, Ramos Horta, David Trimble apart from 15 Nobel winners suggested by the founders of "Reconciliation", the King of Marrakesh, Islamic leaders, among others.

The proclamation of this project that makes justice in honouring Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, will be done in accordance to the dates of audience at the Vatican , which will be announced simultaneously in New York, Buenos Aires, Jerusalem and Rome



# Memory of John XXIII will be honoured

Fuente: 

Thirty years ago, in Latin America, the idea of investigating the texts related to the **Nuncio Angelo Roncalli** during his mission in Istanbul and in the Balkan countries came up, as was informed in Manhattan by the **Raoul Wallenberg Foundation**.

A commission integrated by the author of the initiative, *Baruch Tenenbaum*, the rabbis Jacobo Fink and Schlessinger, the historians Boleslao Levin, Stanford Shaw, Christian Feldman, John Morley, Ira Hirschmann, Peter Hebblethwaite, Ted Szulc, Arthur Morse, Giancarlo Zizola, Barry Rubin, Stefano Trinchese and Randolph Brahan, prepared the project that took many years of hard work and that ended a few weeks ago, with the conclusions of the reports being summed up by the vice-president of the Jerusalem branch of the Wallenberg International Foundation, Dr. Mario Ablin.

Nuncio Roncalli was elected Pope taking the name of **John XXIII**, and established the foundation for the interconfessional labour in the Vatican Council that announced historical decisions with the spirit of respect and reconciliation, as it had already been pointed out by Baruch Tenenbaum, Schlessinger, Arthur Herzberg, Abraham Foxman and Zvi Kolitz, in the public presentation, attended among others by the Vatican Secretary of State, Angel Sodano.

The group of intellectuals, community leaders, rabbis and historians that 30 years ago came up with the idea of honouring Nuncio Roncalli, informed the different factors of the public opinion, through reports number 1, 2, 3, including Yad Vashem, the Vatican, ADL and 105 Interfaith Organizations, and 40 heads of states who are members of the Raoul Wallenberg International Foundation.

André Chouraqui, of Jerusalem, and a group of European and American leaders will soon summon the members of the Roncalli International Committee for the awaited announcement and the launch of the activity programme.





## Research on Roncalli's humanitarian actions

International campaign for the acknowledgment of the humanitarian measures undertaken by Nuncio Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli for people persecuted by the Nazi regime.

### Presentation

On September 7, 2000, the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation (IRWF) launched an international campaign aimed to acknowledge the humanitarian measures undertaken by **Nuncio Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli**, later **Pope John XXIII**, for people persecuted by the Nazi regime. The presentation was held at the Permanent Observer Mission of the Vatican to the UN, in New York, with the attendance of the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Angel Sodano.

The IRWF has carried out exhaustive historical research in relation to the different events associated with Nuncio Roncalli's interventions on refugees' behalf during the Holocaust.

At this point in the investigation it is necessary to put out this request of international collaboration in order to eventually gather all personal testimonies and complementary documentation on behalf of individuals, churches, foreign relations ministries of relevant countries, public and private institutions in order to enhance the already gathered information. These are the events related to Nuncio Roncalli's interventions on which we seek further testimonial or documental information.

1. Jewish refugees who arrived in [Istanbul](#) and were assisted in going onto Palestine or other destinations by Nuncio Roncalli.
2. Slovakian children who managed to leave the country as a result of Nuncio Roncalli's interventions.
3. Jewish refugees whose names were included on a list submitted by Rabbi Markus of Istanbul to Nuncio Roncalli.
4. Jews held at Jenovats concentration camp, near Starogradiskas, liberated thanks to Nuncio Roncalli's intervention.
5. Bulgarian Jews who left Bulgaria thanks to Nuncio Roncalli's request to King Boris of Bulgaria.
6. Romanian Jews from Transnistria who left Romania as a result of Nuncio Roncalli's intervention.
7. Italian Jews helped by the Vatican as a result of Nuncio Roncalli's interventions.
8. Orphaned children of Transnistria on board a refugee ship that weighed anchor from Constanza to Istanbul, and later arriving in Palestine as a result of Nuncio Roncalli's interventions.



9. Jews held at the Sered concentration camp who were spared from being deported to Polish death camps as a result of Nuncio Roncalli's intervention.
10. Hungarian Jews who managed to save themselves thanks to the conversions into Christianity through the Baptismal Certificates sent by Nuncio Roncalli to Hungarian Nuncio, Monsignor Angelo Rota.

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Persons or organizations who might be able to collaborate with the present request should send all relevant information to the following addresses:

**Dr. Mario Ablin**

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Coordinator for the Nuncio Roncalli Committee  
Antebi 3 (94547) Jerusalem, Israel  
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**Mr. Baruch Tenenbaum**

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# Report N°1

## Available References Regarding the Actions Undertaken by Monsignor Guiseppe Roncalli (Pope John XXIII) in favor of Jews Persecuted by the Nazi Regime.

Possible interventions of Monsignor Roncalli in favor of Jewish refugees during the Holocaust:

### ***1) Issuance of "Immigration Certificates" for Palestine through the Vatican's Diplomatic Postal Service***

Various sources reveal that Monsignor Roncalli issued "Immigration Certificates" for Palestine to Archbishop Angelo Rotta in Budapest. Haim Barlas, the Jewish Agency's delegate in Istanbul, handed over these documents to Nuncio Rncalli.

Sources:

- a) Haim Barlas, "Rescues During the Holocaust" (*Salvamentos en el Holocausto*), pg. 349
- b) Monsignor Roncalli, "Remembering American Ambassador Ira Hirschman" (*Memorando al Embajador Americano Ira Hirschman*), 8-1-44, cited in a compilation of Vatican documents "The Saint Siege and the Victims of the War" January 1940-July 1945, pg. 390 (*Le Saint Siège et les victimes de la guerre, janvier 1940-juillet 1945*)
- c) Arthur Morse, "While Six Million Died". References are made to the issuance of "Baptismal Certificates". Possibly following after the erroneous reference of American Ambassador Hirschman in his book titled, "Caution to the Winds". Hirschman apparently confused the immigration certificates with baptismal certificates.
- d) On April 4, 1944, Monsignor Roncalli writes to Archbishop Rotta, "*Considering that the immigration certificates which I have sent to you helped save the lives of those who received them, I have accepted three more packages from the Jewish Agency in Palestine. I would appreciate it if Your Excellency would give the abovementioned certificates to Mr. Miklos Krausz*". (Cited in the record of Vatican documents, *Le Saint Siège et les victimes de la Guerre*, volume 10, pg. 195)

### ***2) The Saving of Jews Through Baptismal Certificates***

According to historian, Peter Hebblethwaite, author of the book, "John XXIII, Pope of the Council", 1985, the idea of trying to save Jews through baptismal certificates was conceived by Nuncio Roncalli and it was Archbishop Rotta who applied it.

- a) Ted Szulc, in "The Secret Alliance: The Extraordinary Story of the Rescue of the Jews Since World War II", Pan, London 1991, pg. 54, affirms that "*in the few months since Hirschman's meeting with the Apostolic Delegate, thousands of Jews were baptized in the anti-aerial shelters of Budapest and therefore saved from death.*"



b) Arthur Morse in "While Six Million Died" makes a reference to the issuance of thousands of baptismal certificates that helped save the lives of thousands of Hungarian Jews.

c) Historian, Giancarlo Zizola, author of "*L'utopia di Papa Giovanni*", Cittadella, Assisi, 1973, pg. 109, estimates that the baptismal certificates saved the lives of some 24,000 Jews. The information is attributed to Monsignor Loris F. Capovilla, Monsignor Roncalli's Secretary in Venice and later in Rome.

### ***3) Assistance given to a group of Jewish refugees from Wladislaw, Poland upon their arrival in the Holy Land.***

Historian Hebblethwaite alludes to an interview conducted on September 5, 1940 between Monsignor Roncalli and a group of Polish-Jewish refugees whom he helped transport to the Holy Land. During the interview he informed them of the situation in occupied Poland ("An Exchange of Blessings, Pope John XXIII and the Jews", Common Ground, 1993).

### ***4) Personal Disposition Towards Assisting Jewish Refugees***

Ira Hirschman, American Ambassador in Turkey, reveals in his book, "Caution to the Winds", 1962, that Monsignor Roncalli wrote to him opportunistically, "I am always available to help you in your humanitarian undertakings so long as it is within my reach, my faculties and circumstances permit me to do so.

### ***5) Interventions Reiterated Before German Ambassador, Von Pappen in favor of Jewish Refugees.***

Historian Stefano Trinchese in, "Roncalli, Diplomat in Greece and Turkey", ed. Audren Ricardi, laterza 1984, pg. 261, cites Monsignor Loris F. Capovilla, Pope John's XXIII Secretary, "*During the war Roncalli intervened frequently before Von Pappen on behalf of Jewish Refugees. Upon arriving in Istanbul (the refugees) would always request an interview with the Apostolic Delegate.*"

### ***6) Presentation before Pope Pius XII calling for intervention on behalf of the Hungarian Jewish Community***

Historian and Priest, Randolph Braham, in his work, "The Politics of Genocide- The Holocaust in Hungary" (pg. 240) refers to a note sent on March 24, 1944 by Nuncio Roncalli to Pope Pius XII- via the Nuncio in Washington- asking the Pontiff to use his influence in order to protect Hungarian Jewry. Allusions are made to the successive appellations from Nuncio Roncalli before the deportations commenced on May 15, 1944.



***7) Move before the Romanian government via the Nuncio of Bucharest in order to authorize the Jews' departure.***

References are made to this subject only indirectly through the memorandum written by Haim Barlas, the Jewish Agency's delegate in Istanbul, regarding a conversation had with Nuncio Roncalli. According to Barlas, during that meeting he solicited the assistance of Nuncio Roncalli in asking the Romanian government, through the Nuncio of Bucarest, assistance with the departure of 1,500 Jews in a ship that the Turkish government would provide in order to transport the refugees to the Holy Land. We do not have information or additional confirmation regarding this event and it is unbeknownst to us whether the Nuncio acted on this matter.

***8) The Recommendation of Special Cases before the Vatican Nuncio in Budapest- The Case of Rabbi Salomon Halberstan.***

In a note sent to American Ambassador Hirschman on August 8, 1944, Nuncio Roncalli affirms his willingness in recommending special Jewish refugee cases before Nuncio Rotta and points out the case of Rabbi Salomon Halberstan (Reports of the Vatican Documents, vol. 10, pg. 391

***9) Presentation before the Secretary of the Vatican State on behalf of Hungarian Jewry***

Nuncio Roncalli indicates in his letter to the American Ambassador (Reports of the Vatican Documents, vol. 10, pg. 390) the presentation given before the Secretary of the Vatican State at the request of Grand Rabbi of Palestine, Rabbi Herzog, on behalf of Hungarian Jewry.

***10) Action on behalf of Jewish children on a refugee ship.***

This reference appears in vague terminology in a letter sent by Sam Wargenaar on June 12, 1973 to Yad Vashem. According to Wargenaar, Nuncio Roncalli acted on behalf of Jewish children on board a refugee ship on the Turkish or Romanian coast. We have not been able to locate any additional resources on the matter. According to the petitioner, a certain Monsignor Cairoli would have access to the above-mentioned documents.

***11) Baptismal Certificates sent for the Jews of Bulgaria***

This event was revealed by the Portuguese Consul in Istanbul, Jacques Abravanel in a letter dated February 9, 1987 to Yad Vashem. This could be a different event than the one Barlas referenced (he referred to Hungarian Jews, not Bulgarian Jews).





### ***12) Rescuing Actions on behalf of Bulgarian Jews.***

Mr. Benjamin Samuel generically alludes in a letter to Yad Vashem dated December 16, 1979 to the eventual actions undertaken by Nuncio Roncalli on behalf of Bulgarian Jewry. A person named Meir Tuval-Weltman would be well informed as to the details surrounding these actions.

This reference to the possible actions undertaken by Nuncio Roncalli on behalf of the Bulgarian Jewish Community is also mentioned by Tuval-Weltman in an article dated June 26, 1973 titled, "How Pope John Helped Rescue European Jews".

### ***13) Help transferring Croatian Jews to Hungary.***

Meir-Tuval Weltman alludes to this deed in the aforementioned article.

### ***14) Rescue of a group of Croatian children who arrived in the Holy Land with the help of Nuncio Roncalli.***

Meir-Tuval Weltman alludes to this deed in the aforementioned article.

#### ***Note:***

The biographical and/or personal references included in this report have been taken from quotations from various texts consulted as well as from documentation included in proceedings in regards to Monsignor Rotta and Monsignor Roncalli at Yad Vashem (Holocaust Museum, Israel). They have not been directly examined within the context of the respective sources.

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## **Report N°2**

### **Vatican documents related to interventions of Nuncio Guiseppe Roncalli in favor of jewish people persecuted by the Nazi regime.**

The following report has been made based on the analysis of the Vatican documents published in 11 volumes by the Holy See in the work *Actes et documents du Saint-Siège relatives a la Second Guerre Mondiale* .

Such work comprises all the reports and telegrams exchanged between the Vatican's State Secretary and the nunciatures in the different relevant countries to the Second World War.

The analysis of the documents allows to distinguish the following events in which Nuncio Roncalli's expressed (or suggested) intervention appears in favor of Jewish refugees:



## ***VOLUME 8 :***

1. Actions taken by Nuncio Roncalli in favor of Jewish refugees who passed by Istanbul, in transit towards other destinations - Communication n° 3420 dated 01-28-1941 of Nuncio Roncalli to the Vatican's State secretary Cardinal Maglione (page 83). The telegram refers to a Jewish refugee named **Eduardo Luberski**, who would have headed towards USA. Another refugee **Casimiro Bober**, would have continued to Palestine.
2. Request of Nuncio Roncalli in favor of a group of Jews residing in Perpignan, France - Communication n° 4068 dated 01-18-1942 of Nuncio Roncalli to Nuncio to France Monsignor Valéri (page 647). In the telegram Nuncio Roncalli requests the intervention of the Nuncio to France to simplify the transit of a group of Jews.

## ***VOLUME 9 :***

3. Allusion of Nuncio Roncalli to the Vatican intervention to allow the exit of Jews from Germany-Communication n° 4129 dated 1-22-1943 of Nuncio Roncalli to the Vatican's Secretary State Cardinal Maglione (pages 87-88). The text refers to an action with the purpose of demanding Vatican intervention to allow the exit of Jews from Germany. It mentions an official of the Jewish Agency , Mr. Bader and a priest named Hughes supposedly appointed to the nunciature in Palestine. Annex : introduction of delegate Barlas of the Jewish Agency to Father Hughes.
4. Allusion of Nuncio Roncalli to the Vatican intervention in favor of Jewish children from Slovakia - Communication n° 99 dated 3-13-1943 of Nuncio Roncalli to the Vatican's State secretary Cardinal Maglione (page 185). The text refers to the message of a Jewish Agency's official whose named is Kapl in relation to the danger of deportation of 20.000 Jews from Slovakia , for whom Vatican help is requested.
5. Allusion of Nuncio Roncalli to conversations held with delegates of the Jewish Agency in relation to the destiny of the Jews from Slovakia - Communication n° 4180 dated 03-13-1943 of Nuncio Roncalli to the Vatican's State secretary Cardinal Maglione (page 185). The telegram refers to conversations held with the delegates of the Jewish Agency Kaplan and Barlas, about the intervention request to the Holy See in favor of Jews from Slovakia.
6. The Holy See confirms Nuncio Roncalli to have accomplished his intervention request in favor of the Jews from Slovakia - Telegram number 153 dated 05-04-1943 of the Vatican's State secretary Maglione to Nuncio Roncalli (page 272). It refers to the telegrams n° 99 and report n° 4180 of Nuncio Roncalli in which he had requested the Holy See intervention in favor of the Slovak Jews. The Vatican's State secretary informs Nuncio Roncalli that the Holy See has taken actions on this matter, as requested.
7. Nuncio Roncalli sends to the Vatican a list of names of Jewish people received from Rabbi Ashkenazi of Istanbul asking for papal intervention in their favor.



Communication n° 4248 dated 05-22-1943 of Nuncio Roncalli to the Vatican's State secretary Cardinal Maglione (page 306) note of names attached, delivered by Rabbi Markus and requests papal intervention for those people.

8. Nuncio Roncalli communicates Sister Casilda de Sión about the destiny of a Jewish refugee, passenger of the ship Sturma Communication n° 4207 dated 04-14-1943. Nuncio Roncalli asks Sister Casilda to inform a woman, her last name being Mayer, about the destiny of her daughter, refugee that traveled aboard the ship Sturma (page 310). *It's worth mentioning in this document the deep words of the Nuncio in relation to the Jews persecuted by Nazism.*

9. Nuncio Roncalli asks for the Vatican intervention in favor of two groups of Jewish refugees in Slovakia and Croatia - Telegram number 114 dated 05-30-1943. Nuncio Roncalli refers to two groups of refugees (page 321) - one of which has been confined to the concentration camp of Jasenovats near the town of Starogradiskas for whom he requests papal help.

10. The Vatican's State secretary informs Nuncio Roncalli of the action taken on his request in favor of Slovak Jews and other people included in the list delivered by Rabbi Markus Communication 3978-43 dated 06-23-1943. The Vatican's secretary updated Nuncio Roncalli on the above mentioned subject (page 361).

11. Nuncio Roncalli begs for mercy for the Bulgarian Jews to the King of Bulgaria Note dated 06-30-1943, Nuncio Roncalli begs for mercy to the King of Bulgaria for the Bulgarian Jews (page 371).

12. Nuncio to Bucharest Cardinal Casullo refers in a note to the Vatican's State secretary to a list of Jewish people from Transnistria delivered by Nuncio Roncalli. Nuncio to Bucharest refers to a list of Rumanian Jews delivered by Nuncio Roncalli who ask for Nuncio to Rumanian's intervention in their favor (page 390).

13. Nuncio Roncalli to the Vatican's State secretary refers to an humanitarian action taken in favor of Jewish refugees with no concrete results Communication number 4332 dated 20-8-1943 on the above mentioned subject (page 348).

14. Nuncio Roncalli to the Vatican's State secretary request papal intervention in favor of Italian Jews, **emphasizing likewise the convenience of permitting the emigration of the Jewish refugees to Palestine.** Communication n° 4344 dated 09-04-1943 on the above mentioned subject (page 469).

15. Great Rabbi Herzog to Palestine to Nuncio Roncalli, recognizes the efforts made by the Nuncio in favor of Jewish refugees - Note dated 11-22-1943 issued in Jerusalem by the Great Rabbi Herzog on the above mentioned subject (page 575).

16. Jewish Agency delegate Haim Barlas to Nuncio Roncalli, requests Nuncio's intervention in favor of Jews from northern Italy - Note dated 12-06-1943 issued in Istanbul on the above mentioned subject (page 592).



## ***VOLUME 10 :***

17. Great Rabbi Herzog to Palestine to Nuncio Roncalli giving his thanks to the efforts made by the Nuncio in favor of Jewish refugees Note dated 02-28-1944 issued in Jerusalem on the above mentioned subject (page 161).

18. Nuncio in Bucharest Monsignor Casullo to the Vatican's State secretary, refers to actions taken in favor of Jews from Transnistria (Rumania) as requested by Nuncio Roncalli - Communication n° 10858 dated 03-16-1944 on the above mentioned subject (page 179).

19. Nuncio Roncalli to Haim Barlas, delegate of the Jewish Agency, informed that Nuncio to Bucharest will intervene in favor of Jews from Transnistria Communication n° 4521 dated 03-23-1944 on the above mentioned subject (page 188).

20. Nuncio to Berne, Monsignor Bernardini, to the Vatican's State secretary, in relation to a request made by Roncalli in favor of Jews from Budapest Communication n° 4521 dated 03-23-1944 on the above mentioned subject (page 335).

21. Nuncio to Bucharest Monsignor Casullo to the Vatican's State secretary, informing of the evacuation of Jews from Rumania by ship Communication n° 11127 dated 07-11-1944 on the above mentioned subject. The explanatory note refers to a communication of Monsignor Casullo filed in the nunciature in Bucharest referring to the ship that departed from Constanta to Istanbul with 739 Jewish refugee from Rumania, among them 250 Jewish orphans from Transnistria (such orphans arrived later to Palestine) (Page 347).

22. Nuncio Roncalli to the American Ambassador to Turkey, Mr. Hirshman detailing the Nuncio's actions in favor of the Jewish refugees (Page 389).

23. Nuncio to Presburg, Monsignor Burzio, to the Vatican's State secretary, accompanying a request from Nuncio Roncalli of Vatican intervention in favor of Slovak Jews Telegram n° 98 dated 09-15-1944. Information to the Vatican about the renewed persecution against the Jews from Bratislava and accompanies the above mentioned request of Nuncio Roncalli (Page 418).

24. Monsignor Tardini to Nuncio to Berne Monsignor Bernardini, about the efforts of the Holy See in favor of the Jews from Hungary and the Czech Republic. It refers to telegram 212 of Nuncio Roncalli - Telegram n°696 dated 10-23-1944 on the above mentioned subject. In the footnote it is expressed that the telegram n° 212 of Nuncio Roncalli that accompanies Monsignor Tardini's note says the following: More than 5000 Jews are being concentrated in the camp of Sered, among them 2000 are in danger of deportation, which means a certain death. We permit ourselves to ask for Holy see intervention in favor of those 2000 Jews to save them from deportation and death (this telegram is filed in the nunciature of Istanbul) (Page 454).

25. Nuncio Roncalli (as Nuncio to France) to a Monsignor Montini, asking for information about the Italian Jews deported to Germany - Communication n° 601/45 dated 03-23-1945 on the above mentioned subject (page 565).



## Report N°3

### **Historical References About the Humanitarian Measures Undertaken by Nuncio Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli (later known as Pope John XXIII) in favor of jews persecuted during the nazi regime**

This report is the third of a series of surveys of bibliography carried out by the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, with the aim of compiling studies and materials concerning historical research that document the humanitarian action undertaken by Archbishop Roncalli as Vatican Nuncio in Istanbul, during the Second World War.

The first report (December of the year 2000) includes references - among others - to the following works : Haim Barlas, "Rescue in the Holocaust" ; Arthur Morse, "While six millions died" ; Peter Hebblethwaite, "John XXIII, Pope of the Council" ; Ted Szulc, "The secret alliance : the extraordinary story of the rescue of the Jews since World War II" ; Giancarlo Zizola, "L'utopia di Papa Giovanni" ; Stefano Trinchese, "Roncalli, diplomatico in Grecia e Turchia" ; Randolph Braham, "The politics of Genocide - The Holocaust in Hungary" ; Meir Tuval-Weltman, "How Pope John helped rescue European Jews" (article).

The second report (February 2001) includes a compilation of Vatican documents related to the humanitarian activity of Nuncio Roncalli, as it is referred to in the work "Actes et documents du Saint-Siège relatifs à la Seconde Guerre Mondiale" published by the Holy See.

This report refers to the following books: Barry Rubin, "Istambul intrigues" ; Ira Hirschmann, "Cautions to the winds" ; Stanford Shaw, "Turkey and the Holocaust" ; Peter Hebblethwaite, "An echange of blessings - Pope John XXIII and the Jews" ; Randolph Braham, "The politics of Genocide - The Holocaust in Hungary" ; Christian Feldman, "Pope John XXIII" ; Hana Arednt, "Men in dark times" ; Enciclopedia Judaica (article) ; Catholic Family Review (article) ; John F. Morley, "Vatican diplomacy and the Jews during the Holocaust 1939 - 1943".

#### ***1. STANFORD J. SHAW***

The historian and researcher Stanford J. Shaw makes reference to the humanitarian measures undertaken by Nuncio Giuseppe Angelo Roncalli in favor of Jewish refugees in his book "Turkey and the Holocaust" (published by New York University Press) Professor Shaw includes the following references:

- a. "Starting early in 1943, then, Bader (refers to Menahem Bader, secretary of the Rescue Committee headed by Haim Barlas in Istambul) that began to use as private couriers to carry both mail and money, people who were able to move relatively freely in the Nazi-occupied territories, particularly Turkish businessmen and truck drivers, a few





- diplomats, and couriers sent by the Papal representative in Istanbul, Angelo Roncalli, later Pope John XXIII" (Page 274)
- b. "The Istanbul office of the Jewish Agency, considerably more than that in Geneva, often sent documents that European Jews needed to travel or to gain exemption from persecution or deportation, either passports or at least certificates of nationality issued by neutral countries, particularly those in Central or South America. Sometimes these documents were obtained in return for substantial payments to greedy consular officials. Sometimes they were obtained free from idealistic officials who realized how much the Jews were suffering and wanted to help. Many came from Catholics priests stimulated to help by the appeals of Monsigneur Roncalli in Istanbul (Page 276)
  - c. "Many of these activities (in reference to the rescue activities of Jewish refugees persecuted by the nazi regime by the Jewish Agency Rescue Committee in Istanbul) were materially assisted by Monsigneur Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII, who after acting as Papal delegate to Bulgaria from 1925 to 1934 served as Apostolic Delegate to Greece and Turkey from 5 January 1935 until the middle of 1944" (Page 277)
  - d. "Without any encouragement from the Vatican, moreover, Roncalli arranged with the Turkish government for food to be sent to starving Jews and Greeks in Greece during the winter of 1941-42, a shortage caused as much by Greek hoarding and the British blockade as it was by German confiscations and looting. Roncalli also arranged for the Holy See to use its influence in Germany to attempt to prevent deportations of Jews to the East for extermination as well as to get it to allow Jews to leave for Palestine, at least if they had valid immigration certificates issued to the British or by the Jewish Agency on British authority" (Page 278)(This reference is cited by professor Stanford based on professor Peter Hoffman's book "Roncalli in the Second World War: Peace Initiatives, the Greek Famine and the Persecution of the Jews, "Journal of Ecclesiastical History XI, (1989) (Pages 77 - 84)
  - e. According to the author, "Aside from ignoring Papal orders not to assist the Jewish refugees coming to Turkey, Roncalli also intervened in Bulgaria to convince its King and Parliament not to accept German demands to deport all their Jews to Auschwitz" (note 390 on the footnote of page 278) (This affirmation of Professor Stanford is in accordance with the ones of the following researchers: Gilbert, "Auschwitz" page 122 ; Barry Rubin, "Istanbul Intrigues" pages 47-48, 93-94, 213-214 ; Peter Hoffmann, "Roncalli in the Second World War : initiatives, the Greek Famine, and Persecution of the Jews" ; Journal of Ecclesiastical History XL (1989) Pages 74-99 ; Saul Friedlander "Pie XII et le IIIe Reich" ; John Morley, "Vatican Diplomacy and the Jews during the Holocaust" ; Peter Hebblethwaite, "Pope John XXIII : shepherd of the modern world" Pages 141-143 ; Vittorio Ugo Righi, "Papa Giovanni sulle rive del Bosforo"; Ira Hirschmann, "Caution to the Winds" Pages 179-185 ; Roberto Morozzo della Rocca, "Roncalli Diplomatico in Turchia e Grecia 1935-1944" Pages 33-72
  - f. "Hirschmann (delegate of the War Refugee Board) worked closely with Papal representative in Istanbul, Monsigneur Angelo Roncalli, in helping and rescuing the Jews of Hungary, who had been placed in mortal danger by Germany's occupation of the country in 1944. Using Aliyah agents as well as papal representatives and official



diplomatic couriers, Roncalli also relied heavily on the communication networks and establishments of the Sisters of Zion, who had residences in both Tarabya on the Bosphorus and in Budapest, to send thousands Turkish visas and Palestine immigration certificates, and even "temporary" baptismal documents, some genuine and most forged, to Hungarian Jews that enabled them to join those who were fleeing through Turkey to Palestine as a result of the efforts of the Aliyah agents themselves" (Page 297)

- g. Largely as a result of Roncalli's leadership and encouragement, large numbers of "conversions of convenience" were arranged by nuns and priests in Hungary to enable its Jews to escape deportation and death (Page 298) (This quotation is based on the above mentioned work by foreseer Hoffman Pages 90-92)

## ***2. BARRY RUBIN***

In the Book "Istanbul Intrigues" written by Barry Rubin it is stated that : "Roncalli forwarded messages to the Vatican ; sent personal appeals to colleagues in occupied countries ; and asked his old friend, Bulgarias King Boris, to let Jews emigrate. There were some - usually temporary - successes. Rabbi Isaac Hertzog, chief rabbi of Palestine, wrote Barlas in December 1943 : "All Italian Jews (are) in extreme danger (and) about to be sent to concentration camps. Please contact His Eminence the Papal Nuncio in Turkey (in) view (of) his cabling urgent petition to his Holiness the Pope (to) use (his) influence (to) save our brethren." Roncalli did as requested, and the deportations of Italian Jews sottped for a while. A similar appeal had some effect in Slovakia" (Page 214)

## ***3. IRA HIRSCHMAN***

The American delegate of the War Refugee Board in Istanbul Ira Hirschmann tells in his book "Caution to the winds" a conversation kept with Nuncio Roncalli about the rescue of Hungarian Jews by granting "birth certificates" to the refugees. According to Hirschmann : "Roncalli listened intently as I outlined the desperate plight of the Jews in Hungary. I cited the meager statistics available to me and the many eyewitness accounts of underground operatives. As I emphasized each salient point, he nodded sympathetically. Then he pulled his chair up closer and quietly asked, "Do you have any contact with people in Hungary who will co-operate?" After my affirmative reply, he hesitated a few moments before asking, "Do you think the Jews would be willing to undergo baptism ceremonies?"

Not prepared for this suggestion, I equivocated a bit and said that I could only guess or assume that if it meant saving their lives they would be ready to do so gratefully. I added, "I know what I would do."

He went on to say that he had reason to believe that some baptismal certificates had already been issued by nuns to Hungarian Jews. The Nazis had recognized these as credentials and had permitted their holders to leave the country. We agreed that we would communicate with his representatives in Hungary and that I would get in touch with our underground connections to arrange for either large-scale baptism of Jews, or at least certificates to be issued to women and



children. It would be up to them to decide later whether they would wish to remain in the Church or "go their way". The proposal and agreement had been accomplished in what seemed like a few minutes. It was clear to me that Roncalli had considered this plan before my arrival and that he had created an atmosphere in which to test my credentials, my discretion and my ability to help put the operation into practical effect. I had no doubt that the wheels would soon be set in motion in Hungary for Operation Baptism under the auspices and with the mercy of the Catholic Church (Pages 181-182)

#### ***4. PETER HEBBLETHWAITE***

Historian Peter Hebblethwaite, in his article "An exchange for blessings - Pope John XXIII and the Jews" refers to two interviews that the Great Rabbi of Palestine Isaac Herzog held with Nuncio Roncalli about the fate of 55.000 Jews from Transnistria in Rumania. That territory - some kind of penal colony for Jews - was threatened by the Soviet approach and the Jews were being moved to the West towards the extermination camps. Three weeks after the interview, Nuncio Roncalli informs the Great Rabbi that the Holy See has taken actions in this regard. The rescue failed, though, for reasons not related to Roncalli, but he could inform that in July of 1944 a ship had arrived with 750 passengers, including orphans.

#### ***5. RANDOLPH L. BRAHAM***

Researcher Randolph L. Braham in his book "The Politics of Genocide - The Holocaust in Hungary" states "Archbishop Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, the Apostolic delegate in Istanbul (later to become Pope John XXIII) and one of the Vatican's main sources of information about the Nazis designs against the Jews, was among the first to alert the Vatican and the apostolic delegate in Budapest about the dangers confronting Hungarian Jewry"(Page 240)

#### ***6. JEWISH ENCYCLOPEADIA***

The Jewish Encyclopedia states that Nuncio Angelo Roncalli helped - during the German occupation of Greece - the local people and made his greatest effort to prevent the deportation of Jews from Greece. Likewise, he interceded with King Boris III in favor of Bulgarian Jews and with the Turkish government for the Jewish refugees arriving to the country. He also helped Jewish groups in Slovakia, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Italy and France.

#### ***7. CATHOLIC FAMILY REVIEW***

In an article that appeared in "Catholic family" review n°10 autumn of 1991, it is stated: "In Hungary, an estimated 80.000 baptism certificates were issued by the Ecclesiastical authorities to the Jews. In other areas in East Europe, the Vatican escape route (organized via Bulgaria by Nuncio Roncalli - later Pope John XXIII) has impressed the writers that have investigated this subject"



## ***8. CHRISTIAN FELDMAN***

Christian Feldman, author of the book "Pope John XXIII" points out : "Because he resided in neutral Turkey, Roncalli could also do more than others for the Jews who were being hounded from country to country. In September 1940 one group of refugees from the Warsaw ghetto had brought him the first reports about the concentration camps and the massacres carried out by the Einsatzgruppen. More and more persecuted men and women wanted to travel through the Balkans to Palestine, where the British mandatory forces often blocked their entry" (Page 61)

"Roncalli worked with Jewish refugee organizations, with Chaim Barlas from the Jewish Agency for Palestine, and later with Chief Rabbi Israel Herzog of Jerusalem. He passed on their requests to the Vatican - including the wish to declare loudly and clearly that the Church's help for threatened Jews should be viewed as a godly work of mercy... He scraped the bottom of his own resources and found a way to save from the death camps thousands of Slovakian Jews who were detained in Hungary or Bulgaria by signing their transit visas to Palestine" (Page 61)

## ***9. HANAH AREDNT***

Philosopher and publicist Hanah Arednt tells in her book "Men in dark times" the following tale related to the humanitarian actions of Nuncio Roncalli in Istanbul: "It is with respect to his work in Turkey, where, during the war, he came into contact with Jewish organizations (and, in one instance, prevented the Turkish government from shipping back to Germany some hundred Jewish children who had escaped from Nazi-occupied Europe)(Page 62)

According to Arednt, upon the outbreak of the war with Russia, he was approached by the German Ambassador, Franz von Papen, who asked him to use his influence in Rome for outspoken support of Germany by the Pope. "And what shall I say about the millions of Jews your countrymen are murdering in Poland and in Germany?". That was in 1942, when the mass killing just started (Page 62)

## ***10. JOHN F. MORLEY***

Researcher John Morley in the book "Vatican Diplomacy and the Jews during the Holocaust 1939-1943" points out that "The Apostolic delegate in Turkey, Archbishop Angelo Roncalli, also interested himself in the Jews of Romania, sending to the Secretariat of State a list of names of Jewish families in Transnistria who were deserving of help"(Pag 43)

In another reference to Nuncio Roncalli's actions in favor of Jews from Transnistria the author points out : "The early months of 1944 were a time of renewed fear for the Jews remaining in Transnistria because of the German army's retreat before the Soviets. Rabbi Isaac Herzog in Jerusalem appealed to Roncalli in Istanbul to bring this to the attention of the Vatican. This influenced Roncalli to discuss the situation in Transnistria with Barlas, the representative of the Jewish Agency in Istanbul. Barlas informed Roncalli that in the confusion of the Soviet



advance only small groups of Jews had been able to escape. Barlas indicated, moreover, that the Turkish government would supply a ship for 1500 refugees and assure them of entry into Palestine. The Romanian, however, would have to organize the transport. Roncalli was asked to use his influence with Cassulo to accomplish this (Page 45)

Nuncio Roncalli also intervened in favor of French Jews. According to John F. Morley Archbishop Roncalli wrote Valeri from Istanbul on September 18 (1942) asking for help for a group of Jews from Perpignan, who were eager to emigrate to Palestine (Page 61)

Another intervention - this time in favor of children from Slovakia - took place on March 13 (1943) date in which Nuncio Roncalli sent a telegram to the Vatican's State Secretary asking for Vatican's intervention in favor of 1000 Jewish children so that they were allowed to emigrate to Palestine (Pages 91-92)

Nuncio Roncalli's collaboration with Haim Barlas - delegate of the Jewish Agency for Palestine - is mentioned by John Morley in relation to a request made by Nuncio Roncalli in January of 1943 to the Vatican's State Secretary asking for Vatican intervention in favor of 5.000 German Jews for whom the Jewish Agency has immigration certificates to Palestine (Page 123)

Likewise Nuncio Roncalli intervened in favor of Jews from Croatia. John Morley points out that the Jewish Agency informed Roncalli on May 31, 1943 that among the group of 400 Jews recently deported from Croatia was the President of the Jewish Community Ugo Kon and the Great Rabbi of the Community. Roncalli wrote immediately to Nuncio Marcone asking for his intervention in favor of deported Jews. Towards the middle of June Roncalli received a letter of gratitude from Meir Touval-Weltmann, agent of the Jewish Agency in Istanbul for his actions in favor of the people deported from Croatia (Page 161).



# Summary of the research work of the International Angelo Roncalli Committee

Summary of the analysis of historical, documentary and bibliographic materials carried out by  
The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation

Humanitarian actions of Nuncio Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli - later known as Pope John XXIII  
- in favour of Jews persecuted by the Nazi regime

## Introduction

On September 7, 2000 the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation launched the International Campaign for the Acknowledgement of the Humanitarian Actions undertaken by Vatican Nuncio Giuseppe Roncalli - later known as Pope John XXIII - in favor of people, of whom mostly were Jewish, persecuted by the Nazi regime. The launching took place at the Permanent Observation Mission of the Vatican to the UN, with the presence of the Vatican's State Secretary, Cardinal Angel Sodano.

During the last months, the IRWF has carried out an exhaustive historical research related to different events connected with interventions of Nuncio Roncalli in favor of Jewish refugees during the Holocaust.

Until now three reports have been published compiling different studies and materials of historical research about the humanitarian actions carried out by Nuncio Roncalli.

The first report includes references - among others - to the following works: Haim Barlas, "Salvage in the Holocaust"; Arthur Morse, "While six millions died"; Peter Hebblethwaite, "John XXIII, Pope of the Council"; Ted Szulc, "The secret alliance: the extraordinary story of the rescue of the Jews since World War II"; Giancarlo Zizola, "L'utopia di Papa Giovanni"; Stefano Trinchese, "Roncalli, diplomatico in Grecia e Turchia"; Randolph Braham, "The politics of Genocide - the Holocaust in Hungary"; Meir Tuval-Weltman "How Pope John helped rescue European Jews" (article).

The second report includes a compilation of the Vatican documentation related to the humanitarian activity of Nuncio Roncalli, as included in the work *Actes et documents du Saint-Siège relatifs à la Seconde Guerre Mondiale* published by the Holy See.

The third report makes reference to the following works: Barry Rubin, "Istanbul intrigues"; Ira Hirschmann, "Cautions to the winds"; Stanford Shaw, "Turkey and the Holocaust"; Peter Hebblethwaite, "An exchange of blessings - Pope John XXIII and the Jews"; Randolph Braham, "The politics of Genocide - The Holocaust in Hungary"; Christian Feldman, "Pope John XXIII"; Hana Arednt, "Men in dark times"; Jewish Encyclopedia (article); Catholic





Family Review (article); John F. Morley, "Vatican diplomacy and the Jews during the Holocaust 1939 - 1943".

## Historical Studies and researches

### *Delivery of "immigration certificates" to Palestine through the Nunciature diplomatic courier*

Different sources state that Monsignor Roncalli issued "immigration certificates" to Palestine to the Archbishop Rotta in Budapest. Haim Barlas, delegate of the Jewish Agency in Istanbul, delivered this documentation to Nuncio Roncalli.

**Professor Stanford Shaw** in his book "Turkey and the Holocaust" says that:

"At the beginning of the year 1943, Bader (refers to Menahem Bader, secretary of the rescue committee which acted in Istanbul under the supervision of Haim Barlas) started using private couriers to deliver mail and money to people who could move freely in the occupied territories by the nazis, specially traders and Turkish diplomats and mails sent by the Papal representative in Istanbul Angelo Roncalli, later known as Pope John XXIII" (Page 274)

"The office of the Jewish Agency in Istanbul, much more than the office in Geneva usually sent documents required by European Jews to travel or to be excepted from persecution or deportation - either passports or nationality certificates issued by neutral countries, specially South American and Central American countries. Sometimes those documents were obtained in exchange of important payments to corrupt consular officials, and other times they were obtained free of charge from idealistic diplomats who understood how big the Jewish suffering was. Many of them had its origin in Catholic priests stimulated to help by Monsignor Roncalli's calls in Istanbul." (Page 276)

"Many of these activities (it refers to the rescue activities of Jewish refugees persecuted by nazism in charge of the rescue committee of the Jewish Agency in Istanbul) were helped by Monsignor Angelo Roncalli, future Pope John XXIII, who after acting as Papal delegate in Bulgaria since 1925 until 1934 was Apostolic Delegate in Greece and Turkey since January 5, 1935 until mid 1944" (Page 277)

**Christian Feldman**, author of the book "Pope John XXIII" says

"Roncalli worked with Jewish helping organizations to the refugees, with Haim Barlas of the Jewish Agency for Palestine and later with the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem Isaac Herzog. He transmitted his requests to the Vatican - including the wish of declaring aloud that the Church help to Jews threatened had to be seen as a divine work of grace... He took advantage of even the last of his own resources and found the way of saving from extermination Slovak Jewish detained in Hungary or Bulgaria by signing their transit visas towards Palestine" (Page 61)



Nuncio Roncalli's collaboration with Haim Barlas - delegate of the Jewish Agency in Palestine - is mentioned by John Morley in relation with a request presented by Vatican Nuncio Roncalli in January of 1943 to the Vatican's State Secretary asking for the Vatican's intervention in favor of 5,000 German Jewish for whom the Jewish Agency has immigration certificates to Palestine (Page 123)

### ***Rescue of Jews by means of certificates of "baptism of convenience" sent by Nuncio Roncalli to priests in Europe***

According to historian Peter Hebblethwaite, author of the book "John XXIII, Pope of the Council", 1985, the idea of trying to save Jews by means of baptismal certificates was Nuncio Roncalli's, which was put into practice by the Archbishop Rotta.

**Ted Szulc**, in "The secret alliance: the extraordinary story of the rescue of the Jews since World War II, Pan, London 1991" page 54 affirms that *"a few months after Hirschman's visit to the apostolic delegate, thousands of Jews were baptized at the air-raid shelters in Budapest and thus saved from death"*.

**Arthur Morse** in "While six million died" makes reference to the delivery of thousands of baptismal certificates which helped to save the lives of thousands Hungarian Jews.

Historian **Giancarlo Zizola**, author of "L'utopia di Papa Giovanni, Cittadella, Assisi, 1973" page 109 estimates that baptismal certificates saved the lives of 24,000 Jews. The information is attributed to Monsignor Loris F. Capovilla, Monsignor's Roncalli secretary in Venice and after that in Rome.

Historian **Stanford Shaw** alludes to the issue of the "temporary" baptismal certificates in the context of the collaboration between Nuncio Roncalli and Ira Hirschmann, delegate of the War Refugee Board in Istanbul:

"Hirschmann (delegate of the War Refugee Board) worked in direct collaboration with the papal representative in Istanbul, Monsignor Angelo Roncalli, in the assistance and help of the Jews from Hungary, who were endangered by the German occupation of the country in 1944. By using agents of "Alyah" as well as papal representatives and diplomatic couriers, Roncalli - who based outstandingly on the communication network and the dependencies of the Sisters of Zion, who possessed convents on the banks of the Bosphorus and in Budapest - he sent thousands of Turkish visas and Palestine immigration certificates, and even "temporary" baptismal certificates - some authentic and other falsified - to Hungarian Jews with the aim of allowing them to join those who were escaping through Turkey towards Palestine with the help of agents of Alyah" (Page 297). Mainly, as a result of Roncalli's leadership, a great number of "convenience conversions" were authorized by priests and nuns in Hungary to allow Jews to escape from deportation and death (Page 298) *(This quotation is based on professor's Hoffman cited work Page 90-92)*



This subject is extensively remembered by **Ira Hirschmann** himself in his memories. The America delegate of the War Refugee Board in Istanbul relates in his book "Caution to the winds" a conversation kept with Nuncio Roncalli about the rescue of Hungarian Jews by granting "baptism certificates" to the refugees. In Hirschmann's words:

"Roncalli listened carefully while I described the desperate struggle of the Jews from Hungary. I cited the poor statistics that I had and the numerous testimonies of undercover operations. Each time that I pointed out an important issue he agreed with empathy. In a certain moment, he moved the chair closer and asked in a low voice "Do you have people in Hungary willing to cooperate?" After my affirmative answer, it took him a few minutes before asking: "Do you think that Jews would voluntarily accept to be baptized?" The answer took me by surprise and I answered that in my opinion if that could save their lives, they would be willing to do it. He said, "I know what I am going to do". He added that he had reasons to believe that some baptismal certificates had already been granted by religious women to Hungarian Jews. The Nazis had recognized those documents as credentials and allowed its bearers to leave the country. He agreed that we would make contact with his representatives in Hungary and that I would communicate with our undercover contacts to organize massive baptisms, or at least certificates that were issued to women and children. It would depend on them whether they wanted to stay as members of the church or take their road". The agreement was reached in a few minutes. It was clear to me that Roncalli had considered this plan before my arrival and they that he had created a plan before my arrival in which I could prove my credentials, my discretion and my skill to put the operation into practice. I had no doubts that the wheels of the Baptism operation would be put into motion in Hungary under the auspices of the Catholic Church". (Page 182-183)

In an article of "**Catholic Family**" magazine # 10 autumn 1991, it is stated:

"In Hungary, a estimate quantity of 80,000 baptismal certificates were issued by the ecclesiastic authorities to the Jews. In other regions of Eastern Europe the Vatican's escape circuit (organized through Bulgaria by Nuncio Roncalli - later known as pope John XXIII -) has impressed the writers who have studied the subject."

### ***Intervention to King Boris of Bulgaria in favor of Bulgarian Jews***

Historian **Stanford Shaw** states in his book "Turkey and the Holocaust": "*Roncalli also intervened in Bulgaria to convince his King and Parliament not to accept the German demands of deporting all Jews to Auschwitz*" (footnote # 390 on page 278) (This affirmation of Professor Shaw is in accordance with similar references of the following researchers: Gilbert, "Auschwitz page 122"; Barry Rubin "Intrigues in Istanbul" page 47-48, 93-94, 213-214; Peter Hoffman "Roncalli in the Second World War: peace initiatives, starvation in Greece and the persecution of Jews"; "Journal of ecclesiastic history XI" (1989) Page 74-99; Saul Friedlander, "Pious XII and the III Reich"; John Morley "Vatican diplomacy and the Jews during the Holocaust 1939-1943"; Peter Hebblethwaite, "Pope John XXIII: shepherd of the modern world" Page 141-143; Vittorio Ugo Righi, "Pope Giovanni, on the banks of Bosphorus"; Ira Hirschmann "Caution to the winds" Page 179-185; Roberto Morozzo della Rocca, "Roncalli, diplomat in Greece and Turkey 1935-1944", Page 33 - 72.



### ***Intervention in favor of Jewish refugees from Transnistria***

Historian **Peter Hebblethwaite**, in his article "An exchange of blessings - Pope John XXIII and the Jews", it refers to two interviews kept between the Chief Rabbi of Palestine Isaac Herzog and Nuncio Roncalli about the luck of 55,000 Jews from Transnistria in Rumania. This territory - some kind of penal colony for Jews - was threatened by the Soviet advance and the Jews were being pushed to the West towards the extermination camps. Three weeks after the interview, Nuncio Roncalli informs the Chief Rabbi that the Holy See has taken actions in the subject. The rescue plan failed however, by reasons not related to Roncalli, but the Nuncio could report in July of 1944 that a ship had arrived with 750 passengers, including orphans.

Researcher **John Morley**, in the work "Vatican Diplomacy and the Jews during the Holocaust 1939-1943", points out that *"the apostolic delegate in Turkey, archbishop Angelo Roncalli, was also interested in the Rumanian Jews by sending the Vatican's State Secretary a list of Jewish family names from Transnistria for whom he requested help"* (Page 43)

In another reference of Nuncio Roncalli's measures in favor of Jews from Transnistria the author points out:

"The first months of 1944 renewed the fears about the Jews still remaining in Transnistria because the German Army was withdrawing due to the Soviet advance. Rabbi Isaac Herzog in Jerusalem asked Roncalli in Istanbul to bring the subject to the Vatican's attention. That induced Roncalli to talk about it with Barlas, the representative of the Jewish Agency in Istanbul. Barlas pointed out that the Turkish government would be willing to promote a ship for 1,500 refugees who could enter Palestine. The Rumanian government should organize the transportation. Roncalli was asked to use his influence on Cassulo (the Vatican Nuncio in Rumania) to achieve that" (Page 45)

### ***Intervention in favor of Italian Jewish refugees on request of Isaac Herzog, Great Rabbi of Palestine***

In the book "Istanbul intrigues" written by Barry Rubin it is stated that the Rabbi Isaac Herzog, Chief Rabbi to Palestine, wrote Barlas in December of 1943 *"All the Italian Jews are in danger of being sent to concentration camps. Please, contact His Eminence, Papal Nuncio in Turkey and ask for his influence to save our brothers"*. Roncalli acted accordingly and the deportation of Italian Jews was interrupted for some time (Page 214)

### ***Intervention in favor of Jewish refugees from Rumania, Slovakia and Croatia***

Another intervention of the Archbishop Roncalli - this time in favor of children from Slovakia - took place on March 13, 1943, date in which the Nuncio cabled the Vatican's State Secretary asking for Vatican intervention in favor of 1,000 Jewish children for them to be allowed to emigrate to Palestine (Page 91-92)



Likewise, Nuncio Roncalli intervened in favor of Jews from Croatia. John Morley points out that the Jewish Agency informed Roncalli on May 31, 1943 that within the group of 400 Jews recently deported from Croatia was the President of the Jewish Community Ugo Kon and the Chief Rabbi of said Community. Roncalli immediately wrote Nuncio Marcone asking for his intervention in favor of the deported Jews. By mid June, Roncalli received a note of gratitude from Meir Touval-Weltmann, agent of the Jewish Agency in Istanbul by his measures in favor of the deported to Croatia (Page 161)

### ***Intervention in favor of Jewish refugees from Greece***

Historian **Stanford Shaw** points out

"without being encouraged by the Vatican, Roncalli concerted with the Turkish government the delivery of food to Jews and Greeks during the 1941-42 winter, shortage caused by the Greek stockpiling, the British blockade and the German confiscations. Roncalli also took care that the Holy See exerted its influence over Germany to try to prevent the deportation of Jews to the East for their extermination, as well as to authorize Jews to emigrate to Palestine, at least those who had valid immigration certificates issued either by the British or by the Jewish Agency by British delegation" (Page 278) *(This reference is cited by professor Shaw based on professor Peter Hoffman in his book "Roncalli, in the Second World War: peace initiatives, starvation in Greece and the persecution of Jews - journal of Ecclesiastical History XI", (1989- Page 77-84)*

The Jewish encyclopedia says that Nuncio Angelo Roncalli helped -during the German occupation of Greece- the local population and did his best effort to avoid the deportation of Jews from Greece.

### ***Intervention in favor of Jewish refugees from France, Germany and Hungary***

Researcher **John Morley** in the work "Vatican Diplomacy and the Jews during the Holocaust 1939-1943" points out that the Apostolic Delegate in Turkey, Archbishop Angelo Roncalli, also intervened in favor of French Jews. According to John F. Morley *"the Archbishop Roncalli wrote Valéri from Istanbul on September 18 (1942) asking for assistance for a group of Jews from Perpignan, who were eager to emigrate to Palestine"* (Page 61) Nuncio Roncalli's collaboration with Haim Barlas - delegate of the Jewish Agency to Palestine - is mentioned by John Morley in relation to a request presented by Vatican Nuncio Roncalli in January 1943 to the Vatican's State Secretary asking for Vatican intervention *"in favor of 5,000 German Jews for whom the Jewish Agency has immigration certificates to Palestine"* (Page 123)

Historian **Stefano Trinchese** in "Roncalli, diplomatico in Grecia e Turchia", in the book Pious XII ed. Audren Ricardi, laterza 1984, page 261, cites Monsignor Loris F. Capovilla - who was secretary of Pope John XXIII - this way: *"During the war Roncalli intervened frequently to Von Pappen in favor of Jewish refugees. When the refugees arrived Istanbul they always sought an audience with the apostolic delegate"*.





Historian and priest **Randolph Braham** in his work "The politics of genocide - the Holocaust in Hungary" (page 240), refers to a note sent on March 24, 1944 by Nuncio Roncalli to Pope Pious XII - through the Nuncio in Washington - asking for the Supreme Pontiff to exert his influence to protect Hungarian Jews. Likewise, it is made a clear reference to consecutive appeals of Nuncio Roncalli before the beginning of deportations, on May 15, 1944.

### ***Nuncio Roncalli's personal disposition to help Jewish refugees taken to Istanbul or in transit to Palestine***

Historian Hebblethwaite alludes to an interview granted by Monsignor Roncalli on September 5, 1940 to a group of Polish Jewish refugees who *"informed him about what happened in the occupied Poland and whom Roncalli helped to get to Holy Land"* (in "An exchange of blessings, Pope John XXIII and the Jews", Common Ground, 1993).

The American ambassador to turkey, Ira Hirschmann, states in his book "Caution to the winds, 1962" that Monsignor Roncalli appropriately wrote: *"I am always willing to help him at his humanitarian work while that is within my reach and possibilities and if circumstances allow it."*

**Christian Feldman**, author of the book "Pope John XXIII" points out:

*"As he resided in the neutral Turkey, Roncalli could do more than others to help Jews who were being deported from country to country. In September 1940 a group of the Warsaw ghetto refugees brought the first news about the concentration camps and the massacres carried out by the Einsatzgruppen. More and more persecuted men and women wanted to get to Palestine through the Balkans, where many times the British forces blocked their way (Page 61)"*

## **Documentary sources**

The above-mentioned historians' works are solidly sustained in the Vatican documentary sources to which this section refers.

The documents mentioned below - issues, notes and telegrams exchanged between the Vatican's State Secretary and the Nunciatures of the different relevant countries during the Second world War - are published in 11 volumes edited by the Holy See under the title: "Actes et documents du Saint-Siège relatifs a la Seconde Guerre Mondiale":

### ***VOLUME 8:***

Document 1- Actions taken by Nuncio Roncalli in favor of Jewish refugees who passed by Istanbul, in transit towards other destinations - Communication # 3420 dated 1-28-1941 of Nuncio Roncalli to the State secretary Cardinal Maglione (page 83). The telegram refers to a Jewish refugee called Eduardo Luberski, who would have followed towards the USA. Another refugee, Casimiro Bober, would have followed towards Palestine.





Document 2- Nuncio Roncalli's request in favor of a group of Jews residing in Perpignan, France -Communication # 4068 dated 1-18-1942 of Nuncio Roncalli to the Nuncio in France Monsignor Valéri (page 647). In the telegram, Nuncio Roncalli requests the intervention of the Nuncio in France to facilitate the transit of a group of Jews.

### ***VOLUME 9:***

Document 3- Nuncio Roncalli's allusion for Vatican intervention to allow the exit of Jews from Germany - Communication # 4129 dated 1-22-1943 of Nuncio Roncalli to the Vatican's State Secretary Cardinal Maglione (page 87-88). The text refers to an action with the aim of requesting Vatican intervention to allow the exit of Jews from Germany. It refers to a Jewish Agency official, Mr. Bader and to a priest named Hughes presumably assigned to the Nunciature in Palestine. Annex: presentation of the delegate Barlas of the Jewish Agency to Father Hughes.

Document 4 - Nuncio Roncalli's allusion for Vatican intervention in favor of Jewish children from Slovakia - Communication # 99 dated 3-13-1943 of Nuncio Roncalli to the Secretary of State Cardinal Maglione (page 185). The text refers to a message of an official of the Jewish Agency named Kapl in relation to the danger of deportation of 20,000 Jews from Slovakia, for whom Vatican assistance is requested.

Document 5 - Nuncio Roncalli's allusion to conversations kept with delegates of the Jewish Agency in relation to the luck of Jews from Slovakia - Communication # 4180 dated 3-13-1943 of Nuncio Roncalli to the Secretary of State Cardinal Maglione (page 185). The telegram refers to conversations kept with the delegates of the Jewish Agency Kaplan and Barlas, about the intervention request of the Holy See in favor of Jews from Slovakia.

Document 6- The Holy See confirms Nuncio Roncalli to have accomplished his intervention request in favor of Jews from Slovakia - Telegram number 153 dated 5-4-1943 of the Vatican's State Secretary Maglione to Nuncio Roncalli (page 272). It refers to the telegrams # 99 and report # 4180 of Nuncio Roncalli in which he had requested the intervention of the Holy See in favor of Slovak Jews to the Vatican's State Secretary, Nuncio Roncalli is informed that the Holy See has taken actions about it, as requested.

Document 7- Nuncio Roncalli sends to the Vatican a list of names of Jewish people received from Rabbi Ashkenazi from Istanbul requesting Papal intervention for them - Communication # 4248 dated 5-22-1943 of Nuncio Roncalli to the Secretary of State Cardinal Maglione (page 306) he attaches a note of names delivered by Rabbi Markus and requests Papal intervention to benefit those people.

Document 8- Nuncio Roncalli communicates Sister Casilda of Sion about the luck of a Jewish refugee, passenger of the ship "Sturma" - Communication # 4207 dated 4-14-1943. Nuncio Roncalli asks Sister Casilda to inform a lady called Mayer, about her daughter's luck, refugee who traveled on board the ship "Sturma" (page 310). It is worth mentioning the Nuncio's words of support in relation to the Jews persecuted by Nazism.



Document 9- Nuncio Roncalli requests Vatican intervention in favor of two groups of Jewish refugees in Slovakia and Croatia - Telegram number 114 dated 5-30-1943. Nuncio Roncalli refers to two groups of refugees (page 321) - one which one has been interned in the concentration camp of Jasenovats near the town of Starogradiskas - for whom Papal help is requested.

Document 10- The Vatican's State Secretary informs Nuncio Roncalli of the procedure requested by him in favor of Slovak Jewish and other people included in the list delivered by Rabbi Markus - Communication # 3978-43 dated 6-23-1943. The Vatican's State Secretary tells Nuncio Roncalli about the news of said subject (page 361)

Document 11- Nuncio Roncalli asks form clemency Bulgarian Jews to King Boris of Bulgaria - Note dated 6-30-1943, Nuncio Roncalli asks for King of Bulgaria's clemency in favor of Bulgarian Jews (page 371)

Document 12- The Nuncio in Bucharest, Cardinal Casullo alludes in a note to the Vatican's State Secretary to a list of Jewish people from Transnistria appropriately delivered by Nuncio Roncalli - the Nuncio in Bucharest alludes to lists of Rumanian Jews delivered by Nuncio Roncalli who asked for the intervention of the Nuncio in Rumania in favor of those people. (Page 390)

Document 13- Nuncio Roncalli informs the Vatican's State Secretary about the humanitarian actions carried out in favor of Jewish refugees with no positive results. - Communication number 4332 dated 8-20-1943 about said subject (page 348)

Document 14- Nuncio Roncalli requests the Vatican's State Secretary the Papal intervention in favor of Italian Jews, thus pointing out the convenience of allowing the emigration of Jewish refugees to Palestine - Communication # 4344 dated 9-4-1943 about said subject (page 469)

Document 15- The Chief Rabbi Herzog from Palestine recognizes Nuncio Roncalli's efforts for Jewish refugees - Note dated 11-22-1943 issued in Jerusalem by the Chief Rabbi Herzog about said subject (page 575)

Document 16- The delegate of the Jewish Agency Haim Barlas requests Nuncio Roncalli's intervention in favor of Jewish from northern Italy - Note dated 12-6-1943 issued in Istanbul about said subject (page 592)

### ***VOLUME 10:***

Document 17- The Chief Rabbi in Palestine Herzog thanks Nuncio Roncalli for his efforts in favor of Jewish refugees - Note dated 2-28-1944 issued in Jerusalem about said subject (page 161)

Document 18- Nuncio in Bucharest Monsignor Casullo informs the Vatican's State Secretary, about actions taken in favor of Jews from Transnistria (Rumania) as requested by Nuncio Roncalli - Communication # 10858 dated 3-16-1944 about said subject (page 179)



Document 19- Nuncio Roncalli informs Haim Barlas, delegate of the Jewish Agency, that the Nuncio in Bucharest will intervene in favor of Jews from Transnistria - Communication # 4521 dated 3-23-1944 about said subject (page 188)

Document 20- Nuncio in Bern, Monsignor Bernardini, informs the Vatican's State Secretary, about Nuncio Roncalli's request in favor of Jews from Budapest - Communication # 4521 dated 3-23-1944 about said subject (page 335)

Document 21- Nuncio in Bucharest Monsignor Casullo informs the Vatican's State Secretary, about the evacuation of Jews from Rumania by ship - Communication # 11127 dated 7-11-1944 about said subject. In the explanatory note it is alluded to a communication of Monsignor Casullo filed in the Bucharest Nunciature that refers to the ship that departed from Constanza to Istanbul carrying 739 Jewish refugees from Rumania, among them 250 Jewish orphans from Transnistria (these orphans arrived later to Palestine) (Page 347)

Document 22- Nuncio Roncalli informs the American ambassador in Turkey Mr. Ira Hirshman the details of the Nuncio actions in favor of Jewish refugees (Page 389)

Document 23- The Nuncio in Presburgo, Monsignor Burzio, addresses the Vatican's State Secretary, with a request of Vatican intervention by Nuncio Roncalli in favor of Slovak Jews - Telegram # 98 dated 9-15-1944. Information to the Vatican about the renewed persecution of Jews in Bratislava and accompanied Nuncio Roncalli's request (Page 418)

Document 24- Monsignor Tardini informs the Nuncio in Bern, about the efforts of the Holy See in favor of Jews from Hungary and Czechoslovakia. It refers to telegram 212 of Nuncio Roncalli - Telegram # 696 dated 10-23-1944 about said subject. In the footnote it is said that in the telegram # 212 of Nuncio Roncalli attached to Monsignor Tardini's note it is stated: *"More than 5,000 Jews are being concentrated in the Sered camp, among them approximately 2,000 are in danger of deportation, which means a certain death. We are permitted to request the intervention of the Holy See in favor of those 2,000 Jews to save them from deportation and death"* (this telegram is filed in the Istanbul Nunciature) (Page 454)

Document 25- Nuncio Roncalli (in his capacity of Nuncio in France) addresses Monsignor Montini, requesting information about Italian Jews deported to Germany - Communication # 601/45 dated 3-23-1945 about said subject (page 565)

## Testimonies and stories

In this section there are accounts by those who eye witnessed Monsignor Angelo Roncalli's humanitarian actions in favour of Jewish refugees during the Holocaust or by those people who learnt about salvage actions by means of reliable sources.



### ***Rabbi Arthur Herzberg***

Visiting Professor of Humanities at New York University in charge of the Bronfman Chair. Author of nine books, among them "the Zionist Idea" and with Aron Hirt-Manheimer, "Jews: the essence and character of a people". He recalls a touching comment heard from the Great Rabbi of Palestine during the British Mandate, Isaac Herzog, about the humanitarian disposition of Monsignor Angelo Roncalli.

"In the fall of 1941, the then chief rabbi of the Holy Land, Isaac Herzog, traveled from country to country on a mission to enlist the support of world leaders in stopping the slaughter of Jews in Europe. When the chief rabbi reached New York, his friend and my teacher, Professor Saul Lieberman, asked me to assist him. Late one night, after everybody had gone, Rabbi Herzog, who was a truly holy man, was sitting in a chair by the window reciting psalms. When he finished, he sighed and said,

"Hertzberg, I want to tell you a story. Before arriving in America, I traveled throughout the Mediterranean on neutral ships, stopping in Malta, Cairo, Istanbul, and other cities to enlist help in saving our people. Wherever I went, I met with the papal legate and always I was told, 'What can I do? My hands are tied.' Everywhere, I met with indifference or helplessness. The one exception was Istanbul, where I went to see the Vatican's ambassador to Turkey, Archbishop Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli. As I told him of the mass murders, he started to cry, rose from his chair, put his arms around me, and said, 'Rabbi, what can I do to help?'"

### ***Mordechai Arbell***

Historian and researcher. Author of several publications, former consul of the State of Israel in Istanbul and international director of Sephardic institutions.

"My great grandfather Samuel Nissimoff was a wealthy man. He donated one of his mansions to the Bulgarian Jewish community. The residence is still today the headquarter of the communitarian centre. A second mansion was rented to the apostolic delegate Roncalli. He was a neighbour of the Nissimoff's and became close friend of Samuel's children, Nissim and Albert. When Roncalli knew that they were having trouble with their Latin he helped them study and thanks to this action the boys passed their exams.

By the time Roncalli left Bulgaria he had become a close friends of the family. Both Nissimoff brothers emigrated to Israel and they were deeply surprised when Nissim Nissimoff received an official invitation to the investiture of Roncalli as Pope. Apart from the Nissimoff family, Roncalli's friends in Bulgaria were largely Jewish. Queen Joanna of Bulgaria, wife of King Boris II, was Italian, daughter of King Victor Manuel. She became great friend with Monsignor Roncalli, to the point that the relationship remained fluent even when he established in Istanbul. The story goes that Roncalli informed the Queen that he had information about the imminent deportation of Bulgarian Jews to the extermination camps in Poland. I understand this was registered in the book of the then Protocol Chief of Bulgaria, Gruev, and in a biography about the Queen Joanna".



## ***Professor Michael Berenbaum***

Professor Berenbaum is former President and CEO of the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, former Director of the Research Institute at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and author of numerous book on the Holocaust and contemporary Jewish History.

MainStreet Media, in association with the Berenbaum Group and Shenandoah Films, has produced *Desperates Hours*, a film on the Holocaust in Turkey, which first gave rise to telling the story of Monsignor Roncalli/Pope John XXIII. The producers have interviewed scholars on three continents and in five countries regarding Roncalli, including Church historians and theologians, survivors and eyewitnesses, Church officials and Rabbis.

"It is a paradox of the Holocaust that the innocent feel guilty and guilty innocent. Nowhere is this observation better illustrated than in the service of Monsignor Angelo Roncalli who, as the Apostolic Delegate in Istanbul in Turkey during World War II, was actively engaged in the rescue of Jews, and who later as Pope John XXIII, transformed Roman Catholic teaching toward the Jews to ensure that the foundations of Christian anti-Semitism were shattered.

This film is rooted in the little known story of Monsignor Roncalli in neutral Turkey during World War II and the Holocaust. Because of Turkey's strategic location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, and because it was a neutral country for most of the war, Turkey became host to scores of Allied and Axis diplomats, spies, traders, defectors, assassins, journalists and seemingly everyone in-between. To all, it was an indispensable listening post to the war in Eastern Europe. And for a small band of Jews in Istanbul, it became a base of rescue operations near the heart of the inferno.

In the early years of World War II, Monsignor Roncalli worked with Jewish emissaries from Palestine to ascertain information regarding the fate of the Jews under German occupation. He was an ally when the Jews had few, and was one of the very few who would offer them assistance while asking nothing in return. According to those who knew him, he was not motivated not by any particular affection for the Jews by his love for all humanity - without excluding Jews - and by his belief that all human beings were created in the Divine image - including the Jews.

He wrote the following from Istanbul : "Poor children of Israel. Every day I hear their moans all around me. I sympathize with them and I do my best to help them. They are the relatives and the fellow countrymen of Jesus. May the Divine Savior come to their aid".

Chaim Barlas, the chief Jewish delegate from Palestine, wrote that Roncalli cried when told about what was happening to Jews. He said, "I am going to fast and to pray for the people and our people". Teddy Kollek, a delegate from Palestine in Istanbul during the darkest years of the Holocaust who for three decades was mayor of Jerusalem recalled : "He commiserated together with us. He wasn't able to do very much. But what he could, he did".





Alarmed by what he had learned about the Jewish plight in German-occupied and German-allied Europe, he asked of the Vatican three things : to encourage countries to give temporary havens to Jewish refugees who would be supported by Jewish organizations ; to broadcast by radio that the Church was against the persecution of Jews - which in some countries played an important role in the persecutions and killings; and that the Vatican beseech Joseph Tiso, the ruler of Slovakia under the Germans and a Roman Catholic priest, to let 5000 Jews go on the condition that transit visas could be found for them. Roncalli worked with Church officials in Hungary who issued papers to individuals Jews, which said they were under the protection of the Holy See. He pleaded with King Boris of Bulgaria, in whose country he had served for a decade, not to deport his Jews. And while Bulgaria cooperated in the deportation of the Jews of Bulgarian-occupied Thrace and Macedonia, it did not consent to the deportation of its native Jews.

Yad Vashem, Israel's Memorial to the Holocaust is still examining whether Roncalli issued documentation such as false baptismal certificates that allowed Jews to pass as non-Jews, thereby saving their lives. But it is certain that he passed on certificates to Palestine and quasi-official documents indicating that the bearer was a fellow countryman of Jesus, his way of truthfully providing the limited protection he could without making a false statement. Yehuda Bauer, Israel's most distinguished Holocaust historian, reports, "There is no doubt that he exerted every influence he had to rescue Jews in Greece, in Bulgaria or other places. We don't have documentation. We have personal reports of individuals who met with him ; we have testimonials of survivors who know that he intervened in their favor." Again, Archbishop Roncalli asked nothing in return. He provided these documents as a life-saving passport to freedom without any religious coercion, such as requiring conversion.

In 1944, the United States belatedly dedicated itself to rescue. Ira Hirschmann, the representative of the War Refugee Board was dispatched to Turkey with special instructions. He could deal directly with the enemy, a trust not even enjoyed by American Ambassadors including Lawrence Steinhardt in Ankara. He used his authority to press to Romania to dismantle camps in Transnistria and to send some 3000 children to Palestine via Turkey. Working with the Jewish envoys and with Roncalli, by war's end, some 20.000 Jews were transported to Palestine via Turkey."

## Conclusions

The historical works and the documentary sources referred to in this work clearly refer to a determined and broad humanitarian measures of Nuncio Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli in favor of Jewish refugees persecuted by the Nazi regime, in different countries of the occupied Europe.

Nuncio Roncalli made written requests, exerted personal influence and mobilized ecclesiastical dignitaries (even the Pope Pious XII), leaders and officials from different nations to achieve the rescue and salvation of Jewish lives threatened by Nazism.





Likewise, Nuncio Roncalli played an active role in the collaboration with the Delegation of the Jewish Agency of Palestine in Istanbul, in the undercover delivery of immigration certificates to Palestine for Jewish refugees in Europe.

A special recognition deserves Nuncio Roncalli's decision of sending priests from different countries "temporary baptismal certificates", religious documents that allowed thousands of Jews to save their lives.

The historical and documentary sources brought together in this work clearly prove that Nuncio Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli acted in his humanitarian actions by his own initiative, without following express orders of any Vatican hierarchy, in an uninterested and altruist way.

We hope that this work of historical investigation and compilation carried out by the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation collaborates with the acknowledgement and universal evaluation of the humanitarian actions of Vatican Nuncio Angelo Roncalli in favor of all of those who were persecuted by Nazism, many of them Jews. Nuncio Roncalli is a hero of modern times, a religious leader who gave testimony of his moral commitment in dark hours of human history. He is an example for future generations.



## Vatican will receive Nuncio Roncalli report



*Pope John Paul II received Tenenbaum at the Vatican in 1995*

At the conclusion of the work of the Commission Roncalli, organized by the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation Interfaith and Inter-America, with the collaboration of historians Stanford Shaw, Turkey; Yoav Tenenbaum, Oxford, David Kranzler, USA; the Rabbis Arthur Herzberg and Simon Moguilevsky and theological

authorities headed by Prof. Renée Chouraqui and group of scholars who coordinated Jerusalem Rabbi Mario Ablin, agreed to disseminate the findings "that will surprise everyone, finding that the Nuncio Roncalli, like Raoul Wallenberg deserves to be presented as a model for our youth that will impact the entire globe" - said the creator of the sponsoring institutions and the project, Mr. Baruch Tenenbaum.

It is hoped the announcement from the Vatican for the presentation of this report and the launch of the proclamation "**Nuncio Angelo Roncalli: Savior of human lives.**"



## Re-visit John XXIII International Conference

The University of Bologna and the John XXIII Foundation for Religious Studies have decided to enhance the value of the 40th Anniversary of A.G. Roncalli's death (3 June 1963), by promoting a scientific symposium.

The high-ranking importance of the Papacy of John XXIII, along with the documents about his life and activities available, right in Bologna, can be the source and the reason of a new season of historical study.

The echos of Pope John personality and image around the globe leads to an involvement of scholars from different continents and cultural areas, in order to achieve a better knowledge of him.

### Re-visit John XXIII: Academic meeting in Bologna

By Baruch Tenenbaum

From 31 May to 3 June and with the presence of the **International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation**, the International Conference "[Revisitare Giovanni XXIII](#)", a meeting organized by the University of Bologna and the Foundation for the Religious Science John XXIII, took place.



The conference, in which participated philosophers, historians and scholars from all over the world, had as objective the commemoration of the life and work of whom is known as the "Good Pope".

His baptismal name was [Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli](#). He had been born in Bergamo, Italy, on 25 November 1881. He passed away during his pontiff, on 4 June 1963.

On the 40th anniversary of his death, history remembers him as one of the most renewing and powerful Popes, especially in the field of the interconfessional dialogue.

In the year 2000 the Wallenberg Foundation, created by the Argentine **Baruch Tenenbaum**, who leads the interfaith dialogue in Latin America, decided to initiate the activities of the



[Angelo Roncalli International Committee](#). The [ceremony](#), organized by the president of the Pontific Council "Justice and Peace", Archbishop Renato Martino, took place at the Legation of the Holy See to the UN. [Cardinal Angelo Sodano](#), Vatican Secretary of State, who attended the inaugural ceremony, approved the initiative with enthusiasm.

As Apostolic Delegate of the Vatican to Istanbul, Monsignor Roncalli saved the lives of thousands of Jews and other persecuted by Nazism.

Mr. Tenenbaum had the honor of closing the conference by reading his presentation named ["The Hebrew world and Roncalli"](#).

Professor Alberto Melloni, of the University of Bologna and a renowned specialist on the life and deeds of the former Pope, opened the meeting with his conference "Roncalli's soul". With the closure of the encounter he received from Tenenbaum the Roncalli's Commemorative Medal, a work of art specially coined by request of the IRWF and similar to the one received by Maria Nicoletta Gaida, President of the [Dionysia Center](#), in October 2002 during the celebration of the ceremony ["Nostra Aetate"](#).

Among the many activities carried out to remember Angelo Roncalli it is worth mentioning the issue of a commemorative [postal card](#) launched by the Argentine Postal Service following an idea of the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation and the Roncalli Committee.



# Lectures dictated during the international conference

The files require [Microsoft Word](#) or [Adobe Acrobat PDF](#). (Visit the corresponding links to download the plug-ins if you can't open the files).

- Alberigo, G. - [Roncalli "Privato"?](#)
- Belocil, Dominique - Le pontificat de Jean XXIII dans les medias francais (1958-1963) - Coming Soon
- Butturini, Lucia - [Le riflessioni del giovane Roncalli](#) (Sommario)
- Fouilloux, Etienne - [Le once Roncalli d'apres ses agendas parisiens](#)
- Galavotti, Enrico - [Roncalli nella quotidianità a Venezia](#)
- Intervento: la documentazione roncallyana nel fondo bolognese - Coming Soon
- Klein, Nikolaus - [Il Pontificato giovanneo nei media di lingua tedesca](#)
- Melloni, Alberto - [L'Anima di Roncalli](#)
- Martano, Valeria - [Roncalli nella quotidianità e a Atene](#)
- Moreno, Padre Horacio Fidel - Coming Soon
- Pfister, Peter - I rapporti Döpfner-Giovanni XXIII - Coming Soon
- Roccucci, Adriano - Papa Giovanni nelle certe dell'URSS - Coming Soon
- Tenenbaum, Baruch - [Papa Juan XXIII Ejemplo e Inspiracion moral para la humanidad](#)
- Tenenbaum, Baruch - [Papa Juan XXIII Ejemplo e Inspiracion moral para la humanidad](#) (Abstract)
- Tenenbaum, Baruch - [Speech presenting the Roncalli Medal Award to Professor Alberto Melloni](#) - Italian
- Treffler, Guido - I rapporti Döpfner-Giovanni XXIII-Riassunto - Coming Soon
- Velati, Mauro - [Stato delle conoscenze sulle relazioni tra Giovanni XXIII e la Curia romana](#) (Sommario)
- Vilanova, Evangelista - [Il pontificato di Giovanni XXIII nella stampa spagnola](#)
- Woodward, Kenneth L. - The [image of Pope John XXIII in the English language press](#)



## Tributes

# The IRWF postulates the Apostolic Delegate as a "Righteous Among the Nations"

Historic Catholic-Jewish meeting in New York, Tribute to Monsignor Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli. The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation postulates the Apostolic Delegate as Righteous Among the Nations



*Abraham Foxman, Baruch Tenenbaum and Cardinal Angelo Sodano in Nueva York.*

Within the framework of the **Millennium Summit**, an interfaith ceremony took place on September 7, 2000 at the **Permanent Observer Mission of the Vatican** to the United Nations in New York, organized by the diplomatic delegation and the **International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation (IRWF)**. With the attendance of the [Secretary of the Vatican State](#), **Cardinal Angelo Sodano**, a homage was rendered to the memory

of [Pope John XXIII, Monsignor Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli](#), for his humanitarian actions in favor of people persecuted by the nazi regime.

**Joao Crisóstomo**, an active Portuguese collaborator of the IRWF, opened the ceremony. The General Consul of Portugal, **Ambassador Carlos Cruz de Almeida**, read a greeting letter from **Prime Minister of Portugal Antonio Guterres**. Attending were ambassadors, chiefs of diplomatic missions of more than twenty countries, community leaders, Rabbis, Priests, government functionaries and representatives of non-governmental organizations.

The meeting opened when the Chief of the Vatican Mission, **Archbishop Renato Martino**, presented **Rabbi David Algaze**, who went on to emphasize the humanitarian work affected by Monsignor Roncalli as Apostolic Nuncio in Turkey during the Second World War.

"Being the Nuncio in Istanbul, he (Roncalli) saved the lives of the persecuted and he collaborated extensively with the Nuncio in Budapest, Monsignor Angelo Rotta, a priest who helped Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat, in his rescue mission to save tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews condemned to death by the zealous murderer, Adolph





Eichmann. What's more, we should not forget the decisive role Pope John XXIII had towards Jewish-Catholic co-existence through his convocation of the Second Vatican Council", *pointed out the religious leader born in Argentina and founder of the Hadat Israel Jewish Community in Queens, New York.*

Afterwards, [Rabbi Simon Moguilevsky](#) took the podium representing the IRWF, NGO which already includes more than twenty [heads of state](#) in its prestigious, worldwide list of members. Rabbi Moguilevsky is the spiritual leader of the main Jewish temple Argentina.

Rabbi Algaze read [a letter](#) from the IRWF signed by its founder, [Mr. Baruch Tenenbaum](#), an Argentine businessman born in the Jewish colony of Santa Fe. The missive, directed to the highest authorities of the **Holocaust Museum** in Israel, encourages that institution to declare Monsignor Roncalli ["Righteous Among the Nations"](#). "Righteous" is a term used to describe any non-Jew who helped save Jews during the **Holocaust** (1933-1945). Among the most widely recognized "Righteous" individuals are Oskar Schindler and Raoul Wallenberg. The letter was handed to **Samuel Sisso**, the General Consul of Israel and a copy was given to Cardinal Sodano. The letter also asks the Vatican to disclose any further documents that might shed light to Raoul Wallenberg's final fate. Raoul Wallenberg disappeared on January 17, 1945 after having been arrested by the Soviet army hours after the occupation of Budapest.

Towards the conclusion of the event and demonstrating exquisite skill in speaking Spanish, [Cardinal Sodano](#) remembered his last visit to Argentina in October 1998.

*"I remember [visiting the Mural](#) dedicated to the memory of the victims of the Holocaust installed inside the Cathedral of Buenos Aires. I was Nuncio in Chile for ten years and I could tell you that this work is difficult. For this reason this homage to Pope John XXIII is also for all of us who work for brotherhood."*

As a show of affection and fraternity, Mr. Tenenbaum, accompanied by **Abraham Foxman**, President of the Anti-Defamation League, presented Cardinal Sodano with a sculpture created by the Argentine artist, **Norma D'Ippolito** titled "Homage to Raoul Wallenberg".

Among the Argentine attendees were the Ambassador of the Argentine Mission to the U.N., **Domingo Cullen**; General Consul of Argentina in New York, Ambassador **Guillermo McGough** and the General Secretary of the Buenos Aires Provincial Government, **Esteban Caselli**. Letters of adhesion were read from U.S. Congressman, [Tom Lantos](#); Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Treasury Department., [Stuart E. Eizenstat](#); New York City Mayor, [Rudolph Giuliani](#); Connecticut Rabbi, [Joseph Ehrenkranz](#); New York State Governor, [George Pataki](#) and the Secretary of Religious Affairs of the Argentine Foreign Office, Norberto Padilla.

[Gratitude](#)



## Angelo Roncalli's Postal Card



Following an initiative of the Angelo Roncalli Committee of the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation the Argentine Postal Office issued a Postal Card commemorating the former Vatican's Delegate and Apostolic Nuncio.

The postal piece was printed using the offset technique, in five colours; four in process plus a metalized ink. It's dimensions are 15,5 x 10,5 cms.

The initial issue comprised 8,000 units with a value of 75 cents each one.

Its design presents themes related to John XXIII and a sentence that refers to Peace. The map was printed in silver ink.

Roncalli was the Vatican Apostolic Delegate in Istanbul in 1944 where he organized a safety net for Jews and others persecuted by the Nazis. Thanks to his actions, thousands of people condemned to death saved their lives. His work and achievements put him alongside other diplomatic saviors of the Holocaust such as Raoul Wallenberg (Sweden), Aristides de Sousa Mendes (Portugal), or Harry Bingham (United States).

In 1958, he was appointed Pope and adopted the name John XXIII. He died on June 3, 1963, following one of the most memorable papacies, in particular on the matter of the inter-confessional dialogue. In order to pay tribute to his memory and his humanitarian behavior, the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation set up the International Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli Committee with the support of Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Secretary of State of the Vatican.





Angelo Roncalli  
POPE JOHN XXIII



Fechas en la vida de

ANGELO GIUSEPPE RONCALLI - JUAN XXIII

1881, 25 de noviembre. Nace cerca de Bérgamo (Italia).

1904, es ordenado Sacerdote

y en 1918, Director del Seminario de Bérgamo.

1925, visitador y luego Delegado Apostólico en Bulgaria.

1934, Delegado Apostólico para Turquía y Grecia.

Salvador de judíos y otros perseguidos por el nazismo durante el Holocausto, desarrollando una tarea extraordinaria.

1953, Pío XII lo nombra Cardenal y Patriarca de Venecia, donde "pudo ser un pastor en la plenitud del término".

1958, octubre. Asume el Pontificado en lugar de Pío XII, con el nombre de Juan XXIII.

1959, junio. Celebración del Concilio Vaticano II, para responder a los signos de los tiempos.

1963, 3 de junio. Fallece Juan XXIII.

*Homenaje de la Secretaría de Comunicaciones*

*por iniciativa del Comité Internacional Angelo Roncalli*

*y de la Fundación Internacional Raoul Wallenberg.*



## Argentine Postal Service issues a stationery postcard dedicated to Monsignor Angelo Roncalli

The Argentine postal service has announced the 2003 issuance of a stationery postcard commemorating the figure of **Monsignor Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli**, savior of Jews and others persecuted by the Third Reich during the Holocaust.

It is one of the first philatelic pieces in the world dedicated to someone who was a diplomat for the Vatican before being elected Pope John XXIII in 1958.

The stationery postcards are cards, airmails or envelopes with prepaid postage. They are being issued in commemoration of national and international themes of interest. They already have the prices preprinted on them. The sales price to the public is the face value. Their sizes vary from approximately 15.8 to 10.5 centimeters.

The initiative counts with the support of the Apostolic Nuncio in Argentina, **Monsignor Santos Abril y Castello**, who, in a letter directed to Baruch Tenenbaum, founder of the Wallenberg Foundation, pointed out:

"I wish to express my satisfaction to you for the initiative in which you desire to honor an individual with such a humanitarian spirit, savior of Jews and others persecuted in times of sad memories such as the Holocaust."

### ***Who was Roncalli?***

When the Second World War was at its peak, it produced the largest rescue operations of Jews from the horror of Nazism. The campaign was lead by Monseigneur Roncalli, known later on as the "Good Pope".

It was what some called "Operation Baptism", a plan to baptize Hungarian Jews. Thanks to those certificates of having received the sacrament, many avoided being sent to concentration camps.

According to testimony given before the Nuremberg Trials, this allowed 24,000 Jews to be saved, although Catholic sources affirmed that 80,000 certificates had been handed out.

Nevertheless, for those who are reminded of the forced conversion of Jews by such means, the administration of the sacrament would not be a requisite sine qua non in order to obtain the certificate.



It had been some time before that that Monsignor Roncalli had begun to conceive the plan.

The **Founder of the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation**, Argentine **Baruch Tenenbaum**, assures us moreover, that Roncalli was sent to the Istanbul Nunciature, punished after having alienated his superiors for having opposed Benito Mussolini.

The activity of the then future Pope, in contrast with certain condescension towards Nazism that some sectors of the international community had ascribed to his predecessor, Pio XII, has inspired a group of persons headed by Tenenbaum --pioneer of Jewish-Christian dialogue -- to launch a world campaign in favor of the recognition of Pope John XXIII.

The campaign was already [presented to the Secretary of State of the Vatican, Cardenal Angelo Sodano](#), in September 2000, in the heart of the United Nations in New York City, and before the **President of Germany, Johannes Rau**, on March 2001. The next step is to present it to Pope John Paul II himself, for which corresponding arrangements are being made.



## Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli Medal

Presented to:

- Nicoletta Gaida
- Centro Dyonisia Per le Arti e le Culture
- Professor Alberto Melloni from the Bologna University



## Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli Stamp

Israel issued a stamp honoring a man who saved up to 24,000 Jews during World War II, and later became pope. The stamp issued July 2, 2003, honors Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, who was the Vatican delegate to Turkey and Greece during World War II. The Raoul Wallenberg Foundation launched the initiative for the stamp commemorating Roncalli, who became Pope John XXIII in 1958.





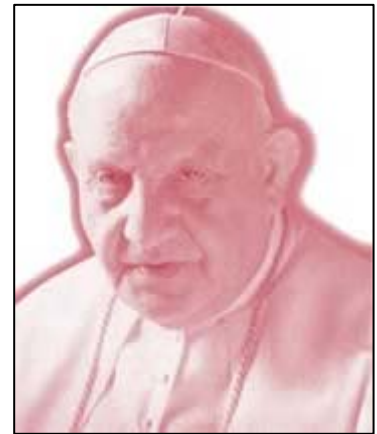


## Angelo Roncalli Brochure

The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation announced in 2000, the launch of a special committee to promote international recognition of the humanitarian actions undertaken by the Nuncio Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli (1881-1963), later Pope John XXIII. This committee was composed of renowned personalities who cooperate voluntarily in this unprecedented initiative.

The Interfaith Organization Casa Argentina en Jerusalem, which later created the IRWF, had already paid tribute to Pope John XXIII in Israel, to open a special room that bears his name in 1972.

Roncalli was elected pope in 1958 and took the name John XXIII. He began an extraordinary revolution within the Catholic Church to promote the Second Vatican Council, a historic landmark that completely redefined the relationship between the Church and Judaism.



The inflection point in the history of Jewish-Catholic relations was not the result of chance or political opportunism, was the witness who confirmed a new attitude toward the Jewish people. Caused a transformation in feelings and deep sense of reconciliation of Monsignor Roncalli.

According to reports from research conducted by the committee, Angelo Roncalli risked his position and security by providing thousands of Turkish visas, certificates of baptism "temporary" and immigration certificates, authorizing entry into Palestine of Hungarian Jews persecuted by the Nazis. According to testimony given at the Nuremberg trials, their interventions helped to save tens of thousands of people. Catholic sources say that about 80,000 certificates were awarded. Roncalli was also involved in the fate of Jews from France, Slovakia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania and Italy.

Monsignor Roncalli not only acted directly to save thousands of men, women and children condemned to extermination, was also a tireless person who during the war denounce the genocide carried out by the Nazis to the Vatican and allied nations.

The tenacity and commitment of Monsignor Roncalli given to those who suffered, his open-minded and prophetic vision, explain the coherence of his life and work. Humanity still has a lot to learn from his wonderful apostolate.

It is my privilege then to present this work which took several months of research and editing.

Sincerely,



**Baruch Tenenbaum**  
Founder IRWF

## Humanitarian actions of Monsignor Angelo Roncalli

**Humanitarian actions of Monsignor Angelo Roncalli, later known as Pope John XXIII, in favour of Jews persecuted by the Nazi regime.**

The historical works and the documentary sources used in this research clearly refer to determined and broad humanitarian measures of Apostolic Delegate Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli in favor of Jewish refugees persecuted by the Nazi regime, in different countries of the occupied Europe.

Monsignor Roncalli made written requests, exerted personal influence and mobilized ecclesiastical dignitaries, leaders and officials from different nations to achieve the rescue and salvation of Jewish lives threatened by Nazism.

Likewise, Monsignor Roncalli played an active role in the collaboration with the delegation of the Jewish Agency of Palestine in Istanbul, in the undercover delivery of immigration certificates to Palestine for Jewish refugees in Europe.



A special recognition deserves Monsignor Roncalli's decision of sending priests from different countries carrying "temporary baptismal certificates", religious documents that allowed thousands of Jews to save their lives.

This research work clearly proves that Monsignor Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli acted in his humanitarian actions by his own initiative, in an uninterested and altruist way.

Three reports have been published compiling different studies and materials about the humanitarian actions carried out by Monsignor Roncalli. The full reports and attached analysis can be read on [our website](#) .



## ***VERIFIED RONCALLI'S ACTIONS***

- Delivery of "immigration certificates" to Palestine through the Nunciature diplomatic courier.
- Rescue of Jews by means of certificates of "baptism of convenience" sent by Monsignor Roncalli to priests in Europe.
- - Intervention before King Boris of Bulgaria in favor of Bulgarian Jews.
- - Intervention in favor of Jewish refugees from Transnistria.
- - Intervention in favor of Italian Jewish refugees on request of Isaac Herzog, Great Rabbi of Palestine.
- - Intervention in favor of Jewish refugees from Rumania, Slovakia and Croatia.
- - Intervention in favor of Jewish refugees from Greece.
- - Intervention in favor of Jewish refugees from France, Germany and Hungary.
- - Monsignor Roncalli's personal disposition to help Jewish refugees taken to Istanbul or in transit to Palestine.



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## Angelo Roncalli Street

### Roncalli street naming at Peekskill, NY



[Mayor Mary F. Foster, Bishop Robert Brucato, Fr. Thomas Kiely, Archbishop Mykhayil Javchak Champion, Mr. Zvi Kichel and Rabbi Claudio J. Kupchik](#)

A moving ceremony where a street was named after Angelo Roncalli (later Pope John XXIII) took place in Peekskill, NY on May 6th, 2008. Angelo Roncalli saved Jews during the Holocaust by issuing baptismal papers and by personal protests. Later, as Pope John XXIII, Roncalli convened the Second Vatican Council, which finally acquitted Jews of Christ-Killing.

Rabbi Claudio Kupchik of the First Hebrew Congregation of Peekskill started the initiative of the street-naming, while also having in mind a symbolic value of the street - it runs from the First Hebrew building to the Holy Spirit Parish.



[Mayor Mary F. Foster, Fr. Thomas Kiely, Bishop Robert Brucato, Rabbi Claudio J. Kupchik and Mr. Zvi Kichel](#)

H.E. Mykhayil Javchak Champion, DD., MA Th.- Archbishop of New York, Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, Bishop Robert Brucato - Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of New York, Fr. Thomas Kiely - Pastor of the Holy Spirit Parish, Rabbi Claudio J. Kupchik from the First Hebrew Congregation of Peekskill and Zvi Kichel from The



International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation participated in the Ceremony together with the Peekskill Mayor Ms. Mary F. Foster.



[Rabbi Claudio J. Kupchik and Mr. Zvi Kichel with Ms. Elizabeth Lubell who was rescued by Raoul Wallenberg](#)

Ms. Rosen, the daughter of a survivor rescued by a Catholic priest joined other speakers. One unexpected speaker appeared in the event. Elizabeth Lubell approached the central stage as soon as she heard the name of Raoul Wallenberg mentioned. "I was saved by Wallenberg!" she said. Rabbi Kupchik invited her to share her story, which she told, without any prior preparation. Ms. Lubell, as well as the crowd, was moved while telling her personal story of rescue.





## "Angelo Roncalli" Kindergarten

### High Vatican Prelate inaugurates "Angelo Roncalli" Kindergarten

On Saturday, July 10, 2004, Cardinal Walter Kasper, President of the Pontifical Commission for the Relations with the Jews, inaugurated the "Monsignor Angelo Roncalli" Kindergarten at the [Raoul Wallenberg Community Center](#) of the Movement of Unemployed Workers of La Matanza (MTDLM), in Gregorio de Laferrere, province of Buenos Aires.

The ceremony was organized by the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation and the Economic General Confederation of the Argentine Republic, presided by Ricardo Faerman.

Cardinal Kasper, accompanied by the leader of the MTDLM, Toti Flores, Faerman and Mrs. Susana Caramelo, member of the Executive Council of the IRWF, unveiled the a commemorative plaque of Monsignor Roncalli installed at the entrance of the classroom. The kindergarten is attended daily by sixty children of low-income families that work in the several workshops of the Wallenberg Center.



Toti Flores welcomed Cardinal Kasper who was warmly received by the children, who sang an allusive song composed for the occasion. Flores stressed the independent character of his movement, that does not receive subsidies from the state of any kind. "Work dignifies man, not privileges or hollow charities", he said.

Cardinal Kasper transmitted to the attendance greetings from Pope John Paul II and blessed not only the plaque but also the Kindergarten, along with the Bishop of Laferrere, Monsignor Juan Horacio Suárez.

In one of the most emotional moments of the ceremony, Mrs. Majo Faerman presented to the children three complete sets of winter cloths for each one of them.

The Cardinal was born in Heidenheim-Brenz, Germany, in 1933 and was ordained priest in 1957. Accomplished Theologian and author of many books and critical essays,





Kasper studied at the University of Tübingen where he later became professor of Dogmatic Theology.

On October 3, 2001, Pope John Paul II appointed him President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, succeeding Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy. Cardinal Kasper also assumed as President of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews.

[Monsignor Angelo Roncalli](#) is a key figure in the modern history of Catholicism and the relations with Judaism. In 1958 he was appointed Pope with the name of John XXIII.

Long before, in 1944, he was responsible of organizing one of the largest rescue missions of Jews and other persecuted by Nazism during the Holocaust.

As Vatican Apostolic Delegate in Istanbul, he granted tens of thousands of [false baptismal certificates](#) to Jews condemned to a certain death in the extermination camps.





## Cardinal Walter Kasper distinguished by the Wallenberg Foundation and the Angelo Roncalli Committee

On Saturday, July 10, 2004, at the Latin-American Rabbinical Seminary of Buenos Aires, the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation and the Angelo Roncalli Committee presented to H. E. Cardinal Walter Kasper the "Memorial Mural Award", for his lifetime dedication to the causes of understanding and reconciliation between Jews and Catholics.

The ceremony took place hours after Cardinal Kasper [inaugurated the Kindergarten classroom "Angelo Roncalli"](#) in the province of Buenos Aires.



*Malkiel Tenenbaum , Rabbi Moguilevsky and Cardinal Kasper.*

The award, a reproduction in scale of the [Mural](#) that pays tribute to the victims of the Holocaust, as well as to the people murdered in the terrorist attacks against the Embassy of Israel and the AMIA Jewish community center, installed in April 1997, in the Buenos Aires' Cathedral by the then Primate of Argentina, Cardinal Antonio Quarracino, was presented to Cardinal Kasper by Rabbi Simón Moguilevsky and Malkiel

Tenenbaum, members of the executive council of the IRWF.

During the ceremony, the Wallenberg Foundation and the Roncalli Committee, created by [Baruj Tenenbaum](#), announced the granting of a scholarship to the seminarist Dario Bialer, who will finish his rabbinical studies in Jerusalem. The scholarship, approved by a special commission headed by the vice-president of the IRWF, Natalio Wengrower, was presented to Bialer due to "his spirit of solidarity and human values at the service of the Jewish-Catholic reconciliation." It was presented by Mr. Ricardo Faerman, member of the IRWF.

The moving interreligious ceremony was presided by Mario Ringler, President of the Rabbinical Seminary, its Dean, Rabbi Abraham Skorka; Father Horacio Moreno, President of the IRWF and Cardinal Kasper.

Among the people who attended the meeting were Apostolic Nuncio, [Monsignor Adriano Bernardini](#), Member of the Buenos Aires Parliament, Norberto Laporta, religious dignitaries, diplomatic officials and NGO leaders.



After the words of welcome pronounced by Mario Ringler, Rabbi Skorka explained the sense of the Jewish ceremony of "Abdalá". An instance that marks the end of the Jewish sacred day and the beginning of the others days of the week.

Father Moreno, a catholic priest, remembered the significance of the Memorial Mural as well as the determination and courage of Cardinal Quarracino who placed it inside the main Catholic temple of Argentina, but also the commitment of Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio to the causes of interfaith dialogue and reconciliation.

Filmmakers Vivian Imar and Marcelo Trotta presented to Cardinal Kasper a special copy of the movie ["First Primate Pilgrim"](#), a documentary film that narrates Quarracino's visit to the Holy Land as the first Argentine Primate that officially visited Israel as such. Imar and Trotta are also the directors of the worldwide-awarded documentary ["Legacy"](#), a film that tells the story of the Jewish immigration to Argentina, produced by the Wallenberg Foundation.

Cardinal Kasper read a [moving speech](#) in which he stressed the imperious need of Catholics, Jews and Muslims alike to promote interreligious dialogue, one of the essential elements for promoting peace in the world.



Among the many letters of endorsement from all over the world it is worth mentioning those sent by the US Congressman, Tom Lantos; Israel Ambassador to the Vatican, Oded Ben-Hur; National Director of the Anti-Defamation League, Abraham Foxman; the Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the UN, Stefan Tafriv; the Bishop of the Concepción del Río Cuarto, Monsignor Artemio Staffolani; Archbishop of Ranchi, India, Cardinal Telesphore Toppo; the President of the Pontifical Council of Legum Textibus, Cardinal Julián Herranz and the former President of Guyana, Janet Jagan.

An actual-size replica of the Mural will be installed this year at the "Vaterunser" church in the city of Berlin. The event is organized by the Wallenberg Foundation and the Evangelical Church of Germany.





## **Speech of Cardinal Walter Kasper on the occasion of the bestowal of the Memorial Mural Award**

After this wonderful celebration and the words of appreciation that were addressed to me, it is my first obligation to express my deep and profound gratitude to the Angelo Roncalli – International Committee. I am very moved by what you said and by the award you bestowed on me. Yes. It is true, I am committed to the Jewish Christian relations and their improvement, but I stand on the shoulders of many others, of those who started the process of reconciliation long before me, and of those who work with me.

Thus I accept this award also in representation of all the others who work in the Catholic Church for this purpose, which, over the last 40 years has become one of the most important tasks of all Christian Churches and their commitment to peace in the world. Therefore I would like to express my highest appreciation and esteem for the work that your Committee is doing in order to overcome old prejudices, and to foster mutual understanding, reconciliation and co-operation between this two monotheistic abrahamic religions.

Indeed, both Judaism and Christianity have in Abraham their common root and their common father in faith. They share a common heritage in what we Christians call the Old Testament, in their monotheistic faith, the Ten Commandments, their messianic hope. The Jews are, as Pope John Paul II put it, our elder brothers in the faith of Abraham. The covenant that God established with his people was never broken; the Jews remain the beloved people of God. We Christians are grafted on this root, which bears and nourishes us. Jews and Christians belong together, since the promise was given to our common father Abraham; because in him all nations will be blessed, Jews and Christians together have a common responsibility for *shalom*, for peace in the world.

It is one of the deepest and most tremendous dramas in the whole history of mankind that Jews and Christians fell apart, became estranged, developed mutual prejudices so that a language of contempt emerged and they often became enemies. Such anti-Judaism cuts off the Church from its own roots, which nourished her, thus weakening her inner life. Besides, anti-Judaism paved the way to anti-Semitism, which was a stupid and primitive modern not a Christian but a pagan race theory and which finally led to the abominable atrocities of the Holocaust. The Holocaust, or as Jews prefer: the Shoah, not only destroyed individual lives of so many people but still today has also repercussions on the political situation and conflicts in the Middle East, and so on one of the most urgent challenges of today, the relations between Christians and Muslims.

I have mentioned very briefly our present situation only to point out the importance and even the urgency of our Christian-Jewish relations for the Churches themselves and for the peace in the world as well. I am firmly convinced that we can heal one of the worst and deepest wounds of our time only if we go back to its deepest roots and to the very core of the problem: the



reconciliation between Judaism and Christianity, which should more and more become the nucleus of a "trialogue" between Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Reconciliation between Jews and Christians does not mean unification. The definitive solution for the relations between Jews and Christians will only be an eschatological one. Within history Jews and Christians are and will remain different. However, this insight cannot be a pretext for inactivity or resignation. On the contrary, Biblical hope is to be understood as an impulse for active hope. It does not hold us back but encourages us to overcome all forms of old and new anti-Semitism, which unfortunately crop up again. It impels us to recognise our common heritage and to take over our common responsibility. Christians and Jews, even if different, can and must be partners respecting each other's identity and even so collaborating for the good of all mankind. Together they can and should bear practical witness to their common values: dignity of the human person, sanctity of life, social justice, family values, and –last but not least: hope. All of these are values and attitudes often missing in our modern world but absolutely essential for our survival and the survival of our Judeo-Christian Western culture.

In this context it is not possible to develop a whole theological theory and a whole practical program of Jewish Christian relations. More than programs, which could remain paper and abstract theory, we need living examples, concrete persons witnessing what they feel and think. Your Committee has such a patron, highly esteemed and praised by many Catholics and non-Catholics, by Christians and non-Christians alike: Angelo Roncalli, better known as Pope John XXIII.

Angelo Roncalli was not a man of great theories. He was a Christian, a true Christian who became Pope. He was a saint. He always said and did – mostly in a very simple, but not naïve way – what a Christian should say and do according to the Gospel and inspired by the Spirit. He saved the lives of many Jews, and called Jews his brothers. He cancelled ambiguous and offensive formulations in the liturgy of Good Friday and – on suggestions made to him by Jules Isaak – he decided to initiate what later became the Council's famous Declaration "Nostra aetate", of which we will celebrate the 40th anniversary next year.

"Nostra aetate" is the watershed in the relations between Jews and Christians, a revolution in the original and best sense of the word, a new begin after the dark ages of lack of mutual understanding. We are still at the beginning of this new begin. Some fundamental theological problems remain still unsolved. From a practical point of view, much has been done but much more can and must still be done. As usual in life, setbacks occur and sometimes old prejudices on both sides return. The sad and bloody conflicts in the Middle East – in the Holy Land, in Jerusalem, the city of peace! – are further burdens for our dialogue; it is not always easy to take a balanced position doing justice to the legitimate concerns of both sides.

Nevertheless, the developments of the last 40 years can be considered almost as a miracle from an historical perspective. Relations and visits at the highest institutional level – inconceivable 40 years ago- take place today; today there is a scholarly co-operation between rabbinical and Christian theologians and institutes; a great deal of symposiums, conferences, meetings and institutions like yours and our modest Pontifical Commission for religious relations with the Jews are organised; there are mighty signs and symbols as the memorial of





the Holocaust in the cathedral of Buenos Aires; and –most important of all– friendships are developing, which represent the basis and core of any human relations and communities. Angelo Roncalli is the exemplary realisation of such hearty relations. He is the very patron of Jewish-Christian relations and friendship, and –in this– Pope John Paul II is his true successor, who gave many further impulses to the dialogue between Jews and Christians.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me come to a conclusion on an issue which has not yet found a conclusion. I thank you for the honour of this award; I thank you for your commitment -in the footsteps of Angelo Roncalli- to this task, which is essential for the Jewish-Christian reconciliation and for the peace in the world. Indeed you are working for the peace in the world in a special and decisive way.

The Letter to the Ephesians in the New Testament explains something very important for the Jewish-Christian dialogue. It affirms that the dividing wall between Christians and Jews, between Church and Synagogue has broken down. It says that Christ has come and made peace. This peace is the goal we are attempting to achieve. The peace process between Jews and Christians is irreversible, it goes on, even if so little is said about it at the moment because of the conflict in the Middle East and even if much more needs to be done. "Schalomisation" we could call it. The Letter to the Ephesians tells us that this is not an illusion or an utopia: this is authentic hope. Let's go on. Schalom!

**Cardinal Walter Kasper**



## ARTICLES

September 12, 2000

# Jewish group wants Pope John XXIII declared "Righteous among the nations"



Catholic News Service

Source:

A Jewish group announced on Thursday that it was seeking to have Pope John XXIII recognised by the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Israel as one of the "righteous among the nations".

In ceremonies at the Vatican mission to the United Nations in New York, a copy of a letter to Yad Vashem from the **International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation** was presented to Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Vatican secretary of state.

Samuel Sisso, Israeli consul general in New York, accepted the letter for transmittal to Yad Vashem. Tenenbaum's letter said the foundation was "gathering information and preparing documents from many sources" to demonstrate the significance of John XXIII's work on behalf of Jews when he was apostolic delegate to Turkey.

The foundation is also "asking the Vatican to provide us with additional primary sources" about his tenure in Turkey, the letter said.



September 12, 2000

## Two Italian productions about the "Turkish Pope" who saved Jewish lives

Source: [Turkish Cinema Newsletter](#)

Two television productions are under way on the life of John XXIII who lived in Istanbul as Cardinal Nuncio Roncalli. British actor Bob Hoskins, 59, will play the "Good Pope" in a TV film directed by Ricky Tognazzi and written by several authors, including Marco Roncalli, one of the Pontiff's relatives. Filming will begin in November. The producer is Mediaset, whose principal shareholder is Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's family. The Italian public network RAI, Berlusconi's immediate competitor, will also produce a TV film on John XXIII. In this film, directed by Dominique Othenin-Girard, the Pope will be played by American actor Ed Asner, 72. Filming will begin by year-end.

On September 7, 2000, the **International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation (IRWF)** launched an international campaign aimed to acknowledge the humanitarian measures undertaken by Nuncio Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, later Pope John XXIII and was the Vatican Representative between 1935-1945 in Istanbul. During those years, many did not understand his work. However, in 1936 he wrote in his "Diary of a Soul": "A few years from now, they will surely thank me for it." Although a diplomat, Roncalli was above all a pastor and man of peace. Turkey has not forgotten him, and now even thanks their "friend the Pope." Istemihan Talay, Minister of Culture from Ankara, was in St. Peter's Square yesterday, leading the Turkish delegation, which was later received by Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Vatican Secretary of State, and by Cardinal Paul Poupard, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture. "Roncalli lived in Istanbul for 10 years as a guest worthy of esteem, respected and admired, yet, unable to establish direct relations with the government of the country," his faithful secretary, Monsignor Loris Capovilla, wrote in the prologue to the biography, "Jean XXIII, Friend of the Turks," written by Rinaldo Mammara, and published for the occasion by the Turkish Ministry of Culture.

Since that time, Roncalli maintained an extraordinary relation with Numan Rifat Menemencioglu, Turkish ambassador, who later shared his life in Paris and eventually visited him in Venice. "A year or so later, Menemencioglu congratulated Roncalli on his election to the Papacy, and anticipated the development of new and closer relations between the Turkish nation and the Vatican," Capovilla wrote. The Door to the East was indeed closer: on April 11, 1960, Nureddin Vergin, the first Turkish ambassador to the Vatican, presented his credentials to John XXIII. Roncalli's activities was also portrayed in the documentary, *Desperate Hours* by Victoria Barrett, that premiered at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2001, chronicling one of the least known of the Jewish people's Turkish connections - the often heroic attempts made by Turks to save Jews during the Holocaust in Turkey and in Nazi



occupied Europe. Last year, Olcek Sokak, the street in Sisli, Istanbul where the Vatican Istanbul Embassy is located, was renamed "Pope Roncalli Street". These are the events related to Nuncio Roncalli's interventions which was the basis for his later canonization.

- Jewish refugees who arrived in Istanbul and were assisted in going onto Palestine or other destinations by Nuncio Roncalli.
- Slovakian children who managed to leave the country as a result of Nuncio Roncalli's interventions.
- Jewish refugees whose names were included on a list submitted by Rabbi Markus of Istanbul to Nuncio Roncalli.
- Jews held at Jenovats concentration camp, near Starogradiskas, liberated thanks to Nuncio Roncalli's intervention.
- Bulgarian Jews who left Bulgaria thanks to Nuncio Roncalli's request to King Boris of Bulgaria.
- Romanian Jews from Transnistria who left Romania as a result of Nuncio Roncalli's intervention.
- Italian Jews helped by the Vatican as a result of Nuncio Roncalli's interventions.
- Orphaned children of Transnistria on board a refugee ship that weighed anchor from Constanza to Istanbul, and later arriving in Palestine as a result of Nuncio Roncalli's interventions.
- Jews held at the Sered concentration camp who were spared from being deported to Polish death camps as a result of Nuncio Roncalli's intervention.
- Hungarian Jews who managed to save themselves thanks to the conversions into Christianity through the Baptismal Certificates sent by Nuncio Roncalli to Hungarian Nuncio, Monsignor Angelo Rota.



May 27, 2001

# When John XXIII baptized Jews

By Sergio Rubin

Source: **Clarín.com**  
Por internet en Argentina

**A group of Jewish personalities vindicates the commitment made by monsignor Giuseppe Roncalli, later John XXIII, during the Second World War. His stratagem saved the lives of thousands of Hungarian-Jews.**

The chubby monsignor put his chair near that of his visitor's and in a mid tone of voice asked him: *¿Do you think that Jews would voluntarily accept to be baptized?*

It took a few seconds for the interlocutor to answer until with a lot of common sense he said: *Look, if that could save their lives, I think they would be willing to do it*". The religious person's answer was instantaneous: *I already know what I am going to do.*

The dialogue belongs to whom at that moment was the Apostolic Nuncio in Turkey, monsignor Giuseppe Roncalli, named Pope John XXIII in 1958 and later called "the good Pope", and to the War Refugee Board delegate in Istanbul, the American Ira Hirschmann. It took place at the height of the Second World War, and it gave birth to one of the greatest operations to rescue Jews from the horror of Nazism. It was what some people call "Baptism Operation", a plan to baptize Hungarian-Jews: thanks to these certificates that proved that they had received the sacrament, many avoided being sent to the concentration camps. According to the testimonies given to the Nuremberg tribunals, this allowed to save 24,000 Jews, though catholic sources state that 80,000 certificates were granted. Nevertheless, for those who this resource reminds them of the forced conversion of Jews, the administration of the sacrament would not be a



## *sine qua non*

requisite to get the certificate. It would be invented if necessary. It neither forced the baptized to profess the Catholic cult. According to the formula chosen by the Apostolic Nuncio in Turkey and the ambassador Hirschmann, diplomats at last, it would depend on the baptized Jews whether they decided to stay in Church or not. Monsignor Roncalli did not seem to be improvising in front of Hirschmann, because he had been thinking of the plan for a while. In fact, he told his visitor that he had reasons to believe that religious women of the Sisters of Sion congregation had already granted some baptismal certificates to Hungarian-Jews. And even that the Nazis had recognized these documents as valid for the bearers to leave



Hungary. The last part of the meeting was dedicated to plan the first implementation steps of "Baptism Operation," where members of the refugees' commission made contact with Church dignitaries in Hungary. They would organize Jews baptisms at great scale, which many times would end up being celebrated in unorthodox places, such as the air-raid shelters in Budapest. The plan prepared by Roncalli -who years later, as Pope, would call the Vatican Council II, that actualized Catholicism- was the most important action of the future John XXIII, but not the only one, of a series of actions, of which it is worth mentioning the channeling of immigration certificates to Palestine.

### *Against the tide*

A striking fact is that according to the ecclesiastic history, Roncalli was not considered an outstanding diplomat. Tenenbaum even affirms, that the future Pope was sent to the Istanbul Nunciature as a punishment after having falling out with his superiors for opposing Benito Mussolini. Even more: some people say that the next transfer of Roncalli to the Paris Nunciature, though it meant a promotion for him, had a very different meaning for the Vatican: to snub the French government, that was exerting pressure for a figure close to the regime, with another "not too bright a diplomat". The future Pope's attitude, in contrast with certain condescension towards Nazism that his predecessor, Pius XII, was blamed for having by some sectors of international community, has made a group of Jewish personalities, headed by an Argentine, Baruj Tenenbaum - pioneer of the Jewish-catholic dialogue -, to launch an international campaign for the acknowledgement of John XXIII. This includes the creation of a distinction carrying the name of Roncalli, for the diplomats who stand out by their humanitarian measures, among other initiatives. Postal stamps allusive to the personality of the late pontiff will be issued, memorial murals will be built, courses about his actions will be given and there will also be contests about his figure. And even the creation of a web page on the Internet. In Argentina, Tenenbaum -who presides the International Rauol

Wallenberg Foundation, which carries the name of another diplomat, in this case a Swedish, who disappeared towards the end of the war, who is also believed to have saved many Jews from the Holocaust - has joined in this initiative with the president of the Israeli Confederation in the Argentine Republic, rabbi Simón Moguilevsky, among other Jewish personalities. The Vatican's Secretary of State, cardinal Angelo Sodano, has already introduced the campaign during the last visit of the cardinal to the UN branch in New York. The organizers already presented the plan in Germany to the president of that country, Johannes Rau. Arrangements are being made for the next step that it is to present it to Pope John Paul II. This gesture takes place in the same year of the journey of John Paul II to Israel and the asking of forgiveness to the Jewish community for the indifference of some Catholics to anti-Semitism. It will allow a new and hopeful stage in the Jewish-Catholic relationships.





November 26, 2001

# The Legacy of John XXIII

By Marcos Aguinis

Source: [LANACION.COM](http://LANACION.COM)

A reddish sun was setting over the waters that washed the glittering coasts of Istanbul. From an elevated viewpoint, not far from Palace Topkapi, a man of strong complexion looked fascinated by the wonder of dusk. There was no sign of pleasure in his heart, but anguish instead. He half-closed his eyes to see the remoteness and send his blessing to a fragile ship of Jewish refugees that at that moment was escaping from Nazi persecution and pretended to enter Palestine that was closed by the United Kingdom. Humanity had increased its monstrous practices, by persecuting and killing with abominable speed.

He remembered that, when he had arrived to Turkey in 1934 as apostolic delegate, he did not even imagined that he was to become an engine of rescue, that would be seen as the last hope of thousands, that would bombard Nuncios from other countries and overwhelm the Vatican's Secretary of State and even the Holy Father himself with his help demands.

Monsignor Angello Giuseppe Roncalli had been born on November, 1881, near Bergamo, yesterday it was exactly 120 years, in a family of rustic farmworkers. He entered the seminar during his puberty, and in 1904 he had a Ph.D. in Theology and became a priest. He continued his studies with great determination and worked for nine years at the secretariat of the episcopacy in Bergamo, where he acquired a vast experience of social miseries. During the First World War he was chaplain. Later he was called to Rome and after that he was sent to Bulgaria as an apostolic representative. There, he had an interest in knowing deeply the oriental churches; his remarkable activity promoted him to Nuncio to Greece and Turkey, where he spent the years of the Second World War.

In 1944 he was transferred to Paris, after that he acted as first permanent observer of the Holy See to UNESCO and in 1953 he was appointed Cardinal and Patriarch of Venice, a title with which he was hoping would put an end to his career. But in 1958 the most unexpected event took place: he was chosen Pope. He adopted the name of John XXIII in homage to the youngest and most appreciated of the apostles, and because the Popes with that name had had short periods; he was already 76 years old. But a short period of five years was enough to prove wrong those who considered him a transition character.

In his first speech he showed a deep interest in Christians separated and world peace. In less than three months he put into practice the works of the transcendental Second Vatican Council. He signed two encyclicals that made history: *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in terris*. He changed the *aggiornamento* and created in church a renovation and exemplifying atmosphere which astonished everyone.



### ***The hero's works***

He was called the Good Pope, but more than good he was coherent and possessor of an impressive courage. When I had the luck to be at his side in Castelgandolfo, as a member of a medical delegation, I could perceive his simplicity, resolution and kindheartedness, things that I will never forget.

He is admired by how much he did as a Pope, but little is known about his previous merits. In those secret and risky works his heart was on fire. He went through gloomy corridors that taught him to be expedite and convincing. He met the separated brothers and knew the persecuted Jews closely. He knew them so well, and understood the tragedy of their millenary story in such a vibrating way, that he wrote a poem in which he accused anti-Semites of carrying the infamous sign of Cain. It was him who abolished the absurd accusation of the killing of god and inaugurated a dialogue that does not stop growing.

The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation inaugurated a campaign for the acknowledgement of the humanitarian actions carried out by Nuncio Roncalli during the Second World War. The launching of this action took place at the Permanente Mission of the Holy See to the UN, with the attendance of Vatican's Secretary of State, Cardinal Angelo Sodano.

The historic research of the actions he put into practice during the sinister years of the Holocaust had already began. It is the less known part of his biography. He kept close contact with the Zionists' leaders in Palestine and intervened to diverse personalities expressing that he considered fair the right of the Jews to return to the Holy Land in order to get his independence in their ancestral native soil.

### ***Dark times***

Although he was Nuncio to the governments of Greece and Turkey, he took care of the victims who appeared everywhere. Hannah Arendt, in her book *Men in dark times* tells that when the war started the German ambassador Franz von Pappen asked him to intervene to Rome so that the Holy See could provide an explicit support to Hitler. His answer was: "And what am I supposed to say about the millions of Jews that your fellow countrymen are killing in Poland and Germany?"

In 1940 he received Polish refugees who told him about what was going on in his fatherland; he took note of what they told him and then he helped them travel to the Holy Land. He became interested in the Jews of France and asked for the intervention of that country's Nuncio. He did his best to rescue 20,000 Jews from Slovakia in danger to be deported to the death fields. He intervened in Croatia. He begged King Boris of Bulgaria to grant clemency to the threatened Jews. In 1943 he took care of the Jews from northern Italy, whom he considered his fellow countrymen. He asked the commitment of Rumania's Nuncio to prevent the tragedy of the Jews settled there and, personally, rescued hundreds of orphans. He also achieved that the Rumanian government allowed the departure of a ship chartered by Turkey



to the Holy Land with 1,500 persecuted people. He got involved in Hungary when the Nazi occupation had just started.

Two extraordinary initiatives have to be added to that feverish activity. One of them is the delivery to the Archbishop of Budapest, Angelo Rotta, by means of the Vatican's secret mail, of thousands of "immigration certificates" to Palestine. With this instrument he could save countless lives. They were passports or nationality certificates issued by neutral countries, often Latin American countries, which were delivered at no charge by diplomats of noble spirit or were bought to corrupt consular officials.

The second initiative were the "convenience baptism" certificates. It was an audacious invention of Roncalli which was in the limit of being illegal to Cannon Law. But there were no limits due to the urgency of helping crowds condemned to the gas chambers. Thousands of children, women and men who went through baptism ceremonies which did not bind them definitively, but that Nazis, in their arbitrary theoretic constructions, recognized as a credential which allowed them to leave the country.

Years later, when he was a Pope, he received representatives of Jewish communities from all over the world. He descended from the throne, arms open, and he reproduced one the most touching scenes from the bible. With tears running down his cheeks he exclaimed: "I am Joseph, your brother!" when inaugurating the Second Vatican Council, though there were no diplomatic relations with Israel, he asked that the flag of that country were present at Saint Peter's Square.

His tenacious and determined commitment with those suffering, his broadmindedness and his prophetic vision explain the coherence of a life and a work. Humanity still has a lot to learn from that marvelous apostolate.



## A tireless friend

By: Baruch Tenenbaum

Source: **THE JERUSALEM POST**

***Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli (later known as Pope John XXIII) was born 128 years ago, on November 25, 1881.***



Pope John XXIII

His role as pope is well known, especially his decisive contribution to the establishment of a respectful ecumenical dialogue between Catholics and Jews, as set out in the Decretum de Judaeis ("Decree on the Jews") which was drafted for the Second Vatican Council in 1962. The draft openly mentions the "wrongs done to the Jews in the past or in our time. Whoever despises our persecutes this people does injury to the Catholic Church."

He served as Father of that council and insisted on dealing with the teachings of the Church about Judaism and Israel. This led to his beatification in 2000.

But Roncalli's actions prior to his papacy are less well known. As the apostolic delegate in Istanbul during the Holocaust, Angelo Roncalli played a major role in the efforts to save Jews.

A thorough investigation launched by the International Angelo Roncalli Committee, Casa Argentina en Israel - Tierra Santa and the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, with the participation of world-renowned scholars, shows that Roncalli went out of his way to help the beleaguered Jews. Among many other deeds, he was responsible for dispatching "certificates of immigration" to Palestine via the Vatican's diplomatic courier as well as "certificates of baptism." He also openly intervened in favor of Slovakian and Bulgarian Jews.

The three aforementioned NGOs are due to present the findings of the investigation to Yad Vashem and request the bestowal of the title of Righteous among the Nations on Angelo Roncalli.

EVEN LESS known is what was related to me in a recent meeting I had with former minister Yair Tzaban regarding Roncalli's warm attitude toward the Jews and his contribution to the establishment of the State of Israel.

During the 1950s, Tzaban was the personal assistant to the late Dr. Moshe Sneh, who in 1947 held the senior post of head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency in Europe and was also in charge of the aliya and illegal immigration portfolio. It was Sneh who revealed Roncalli's involvement.



In 1947, Moshe Shertok (Sharett), Sneh's boss at that time, was worried about the voting pattern of the Latin American countries in the upcoming UN General Assembly that was about to address the partition plan. He had great concerns about the influence of the Vatican on those countries, fearing that it would guide them to vote against the plan, contrary to their original intentions. Shertok called Sneh from Lake Success and instructed him to try and persuade the Vatican not to object to the voting preferences of the Latin American countries, where the Catholic Church wielded an unparalleled status.

Shertok knew that in order for the partition to be accepted, a majority of two thirds would be required. The Latin American countries were inclined to vote in favor of the motion. Without their favorable vote, the motion would be rejected.

Sneh was befuddled by Shertok's request. He confided to his assistant (in Yiddish): "How could I, Moshe ben Shimon Klainboim, from the small village of Radzin, possibly reach the pope?" Eventually, Sneh turned to his friend, the priest Alexander Glasberg, with whom he had been in touch due to the latter's involvement in assisting the illegal immigration efforts.

Glasberg said to Sneh that he knew the right person for the job, "a great humanist who helped the Jews during the Holocaust," and introduced him to Angelo Roncalli (who at that time was the nuncio in Paris).

Sneh's meeting with Roncalli was characterized by a warm atmosphere. Roncalli promised he would do his utmost to help, and a few days later he confirmed an audience with the Vatican's secretary of state, Cardinal Domenico Tardini. The meeting was scheduled for October 3, 1947, and Roncalli moved forward his trip to Rome to be close to the scene, just in case he would be needed.

While Tardini did not make any promise to Sneh, the latter felt that he might have succeeded in having conveyed his case. After the audience with Tardini, Sneh met Glasberg and Roncalli and reported his impressions to them. Roncalli was not satisfied. Obviously, he expected a firm commitment from Tardini and went even further by hinting that "Pope Pius XII might lose the opportunity of redeeming himself for his lack of action in favor of the Jews during the Holocaust."

Eventually, it would appear that Sneh's mission turned out to be successful indeed. To be sure, other factors may have contributed to this achievement, but one could assume that the meeting with Cardinal Tardini had a positive impact. Most Latin American countries voted in favor of the motion. A few abstained. Only Cuba voted against it.

COINCIDENTALLY, SOME years before my conversation with Tzaban, Moshe Tov, a skillful Israeli diplomat who like me was born in Argentina, related to me the lobbying efforts that preceded the voting. Indeed, Tov was an instrumental figure in persuading the Latin American countries to vote for the partition plan prior to Sneh's mission. Glasberg (together with his brother Vila) was posthumously recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous among the Nations in January 2004. This was not an easy decision, for the priest was originally a Jew who had converted to Christianity, and according to Yad Vashem's rules, Jews cannot be awarded



the prestigious title.

Despite this obstacle, Tzaban and others had managed to persuade Yad Vashem that for this purpose Glasberg should be deemed Christian. Part of the story told here was included in Tzaban's speech at Yad Vashem, at the award ceremony.

In a single decade, Angelo Roncalli managed to help the Jews both during the Holocaust and in the establishment of the State of Israel.

Jews and Israelis, as well as people from all faiths who adhere to the most basic values of human solidarity, owe this great hero eternal gratitude.

*The writer is the founder of The International Raoul Wallenberg organization.*





December 4, 2001

# Remembering Monsignor Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli

By Father Horacio Moreno

Source: **LA NUEVA PROVINCIA**.com

## On the 120th anniversary of Pope John XXIII's birthday

Nowadays the social changes are faster than the fastest of the ideas. They look towards the horizon searching for the surmounting of its present.

In contrast to that, the aggiornamento of the Catholic Church, promoted by Pope John XXIII with the Second Vatican Council, was inspired and fed on the sources of its origin themselves. That potential and fecundity was the germ that its founder created.

That is why Pope John XXIII, put the whole universal ecclesiastical community in the opening of dialogue, he activated the Christian faith in the patriarch Abraham as a father of the believers in the only God. His baptismal name was Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli. On November 25, it was the 120 anniversary of his birthday.

For the first day in history, this Pope receives, in 1960 at the Vatican, a group of more than 100 American Jews. To everybody's surprise, he receives them arms wide open exclaiming as the Biblical Joseph to his brothers in Egypt: "I am Joseph, your youngest brother".

This fraternal action was not just a mere political speculation, but the confirming testimony of a whole interior-vindicating attitude of the chosen people by God in the Old Testament and that had just been massacred during the Holocaust.

To the Second Vatican Council also corresponds the abolition of the perfidy stigma with which in the cult of the Holy Week the Jewish people was remembered.

The rescue of Jews stood up his mission as Apostolic Nuncio in Istanbul, Turkey, during the Shoah.

These actions of rescue are, for the first time, organically vindicated due to **Baruj Tenenbaum's** initiative, who is the founder of the **International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation**. With the approval of the Vatican's Secretary of State, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, historical and testimonial materials have been exhumed which document the actions that Monsignor Roncalli developed, making explicit his security and that of his apostolic representation.



He did not only exercised a direct action to save thousands of men, women and children condemned to extermination but also he was restless in the act of revealing to the Holy See and the allied countries of the horrendous genocide that was taking place.

The memory of John the good sets new paths of renovation not only for the Catholic Church but also for the whole humanity responsible of the supreme values of life, the fundamental equality of people and freedom.

*\*Father Fidel Horacio Moreno is the president of Casa Argentina en Jerusalem NGO.*

*Translation: IRWF*



October 28, 2003

# 'Nostra Aetate' Commemoration Recalls Pope John XXIII's Legacy

By Melanie Capiccioni

With the prominence of religious tension and divisiveness in today's global affairs, this Oct. 28 marks a significant anniversary for all people coming to terms with diversity of beliefs and practices. Forty-one years ago, the Second Vatican Council issued "Nostra Aetate," a declaration on the Catholic Church's position toward non-Christian religions. Commissioned by Pope John XXIII, the initiative condemned anti-semitism and sought to facilitate a new era of peaceful interfaith relations. From America to Israel and from Northern Ireland to Sudan, the Nostra Aetate precedent is a vital memory if the worthwhile vision of religious equality and respect is to be realized.

"This point of change in the history of Judeo-Catholic relations was not a chance result or political opportunism," said Baruch Tenenbaum, a Jewish leader and founder of the Angelo Roncalli Committee, which promotes the humanitarian legacy of the man who would become Pope John XXIII. "[Nostra Aetate] was the testimony that confirmed a new attitude toward the Jewish people, a real transformation originating in the sentiments and profound sense of reconciliation of John XXIII."

Angelo Roncalli's service in the Church is marked by respect toward and dialogue with non-Catholic religions. As Apostolic Delegate in Turkey and Greece after 1935, he engaged peaceably with the worlds of Orthodoxy and Islam. When World War II erupted, he risked his position and security to provide thousands of Turkish transit visas, "temporary" baptismal certificates, and immigration certificates, authorizing Hungarian Jews persecuted by the Nazis to escape to Palestine. He also aided Jews of France, Slovakia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania and Italy. Catholic sources note that he issued 80,000 protective certificates. Testimonies at the Nuremberg trials credit him with helping to save tens of thousands of lives.

Roncalli not only took direct action to rescue so many people. He also denounced before the Vatican and the Allied nations the genocide carried out by the Nazis. This spirit of inclusiveness and commitment to relieve suffering, regardless of religion, are the backdrop to his convocation of the committee that issued the Nostra Aetate on Oct. 28, 1965. Said Tenenbaum, four decades later, "Humanity still has much to learn from his wonderful apostolate."

The Angelo Roncalli International Committee is composed of people of different religions and ideologies. All are united by the will to publicize the brave rescue of persecuted peoples during the Holocaust, by someone who later became Pope John XXIII. The Angelo Roncalli Committee is part of the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, a nongovernmental



organization whose mission is to develop educational programs and public awareness campaigns that promote the moral legacy of Holocaust saviors.

*Melanie Capiccioni is a IRWF volunteer.*



March 3, 2004

# Catholics and Jews could overcome prejudices and distrust

By Sergio Rubin

Source:  Clarín.com

The relationship between Catholicism and Judaism has been marked for centuries by prejudices and distrust. On the Catholics' side the prejudices were based on a misinterpretation of the Gospels about the role played by the Jews. On the Jews' side the distrust was a consequence of centuries of persecutions which reached their peak in the XX century with the Holocaust. Prejudices and distrust in spite of invoking the same God, of sharing the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible, of professing the faith of Abraham and Moses, and of the teachings of the Ten Commandments.

But in the last decades strong approaching signals were shown by the Catholicism, which not without clearing their own obstacles, enlightened a phase of increasing fraternity and intensive dialogue. Everyone agrees that the most important architect of this turning point was John XXIII, who in 1959 - a year after having taken on his papacy - did away with the controversial reference of "the treacherous and unfaithful Jews", in the traditional prayer of the Good Friday liturgy. Today we know that John XXIII - while being Papal Nuncio in Turkey - saved thousands of Jews from the Concentration Camps by handing them Baptism Certificates.

The following step taken by the Good Pope was to summon for the Second Vatican Council, which updated the Church and opened the doors of the dialogue with the other Christian and non Christian religions wide and especially with the Judaism. *Nostra Aetate* was the Council Document which put an end to the ignominious interpretation which lays the responsibility on the Jews for Jesus Christ's death: "Whatever has been done in His Passion, can neither be indiscriminately imputed to all the Jews that lived in those days nor to those who live nowadays (.) . Jews cannot be pointed out as if they were either condemned or cursed by God according to the Holy Scriptures."

Paul VI made progress in this process when, in his trip to the Holy Land in 1964, he said that the patriarchs were "our Fathers in the Faith". But it was John Paul II who sealed the reconciliation with a succession of historical signals: he was the first Pope who visited a synagogue ( the one in Rome, in 1986), on this occasion he spoke of the Jews as "our elder brothers in the Faith". And he was also the first Pope who visited a concentration camp ( Auschwitz, in 1979). During his papacy , the Vatican published the text " A Reflection on the Shoa" (1998), where he pondered whether " some Christians prejudices against the Jews did not encourage the Nazi persecution".



It was also during his papacy that the Holy See established diplomatic relations with Israel (1993). On the occasion of the Jubilee of 2000, John Paul II requested the Jews to forgive the "hostility and bad faith of many Christians against the Hebrews which lasted for centuries, something which represents a painful action", He also asked about the relationship between the prejudices against the Jews and the Nazi persecution. Shortly afterwards, on his trip to Holy Land, he requested the Jews for their forgiveness while standing in front of the Wailing Wall, where he invoked the victims of the Holocaust and he said that the Church "is deeply sorry" for some Christians' anti-Semitism.

### ***In Argentina***

Argentina - home of one of the largest Jewish communities in the world - joined in in this process. Just like it happened all over the world, the first steps were not easy. To the prejudices against the Jews in certain sectors, a vernacular nationalism was added. But the process could not be stopped. In the fifties and in the sixties personalities such as Monsignor Gustavo Francheschi, Jorge Mejía, who is Cardinal nowadays, Guillermo Schlesinger, who was the Great Rabbi of the Israelite Congregation in the Argentine Republic in those days, and Father Carlos Cucchetti largely contributed to this process. But there were personal rather than institutional contacts.

In the mid sixties there appeared Baruj Tenenbaum, a young lay Jew, expert on Bible studies, who - being only 33 years old - launched the Argentine House in Israel Holy Land, which fostered the inter-religious fraternity. The incipient institution would play an important role in the approach. Monsignor Ernesto Segura - Assistant Bishop of Buenos Aires and General Secretary of the Episcopate - became to be its first president, encouraging the dialogue with the Jews. Cardinal Antonio Caggiano, who was the Archbishop of Buenos Aires in those days, was the first Primacy who visited a synagogue and the first member of this institution.

As time went by, the Argentine House financed the trip of dozens of priests to Holy Land and organized innumerable events to encourage the Jewish - Catholic fraternity. Much closer to our times, in 1993, it encouraged and succeeded in making Cardinal Antonio Quarrachino to become the first Primacy who visited the old headquarters of the AMIA. It happened as a consequence of the visit to the country of Faruk Zoabi, the Kadi of Jerusalem - the most important Islamic authority in Israel - who had been invited by the Argentine House. The photograph of both, Schlomo Ben Hamú, the Great Rabbi of Buenos Aires, holding hands, which stands there, is another strong signal of the process.

But the most important milestone achieved by the Argentine House was the installation of a mural in the Metropolitan Cathedral in 1993 which reminds us of the victims of the Holocaust, a decision taken by Monsignor Quarrachino (see "A unique mural."). The agreement of Monsignor Quarrachino - who had asked to be buried by the mural - contributed to strengthen this dialogue.

The list of important personalities and entities contributing to this approach is longer. For example, the Congregation of the Sisters of Sión, with Nun Alda; the Rabbi León Klenicki; the Latin-American Rabbinical Seminar and Rabbi Marshal Mayer, its founder, Monsignor Justo





Laguna and the members of the Religious Freedom Council, presided by Ángel Centeno y Norberto Padilla.

All of them made this country an example of cohabitation

*\*Translation: Nora Bellettieri.*



July 8, 2004

# Nourishing the Ties Between Judaism and Catholicism

Source: **ZENIT**

## *Interview with Baruch Tenenbaum, Founder of Wallenberg Foundation*

JERUSALEM, JULY 8, 2004 ([Zenit.org](http://Zenit.org)).- As the 18th international meeting of the Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee was closing in Argentina, ZENIT interviewed Baruch Tenenbaum, an Argentine-born Jew who established the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation and the Angelo Roncalli Committee.

The Wallenberg Foundation was named after the Swedish diplomat who helped save tens of thousands of Jews from the Nazis during World War II.

The Angelo Roncalli Committee recognizes the work of diplomats who risked their lives to save Jews persecuted by Nazism.

At the time of the interview, Tenenbaum was traveling in Israel.

**Q: Mr. Tenenbaum, your visit to Israel is full of initiatives.**

Tenenbaum: So it is. We are working intensely to continue with the organization of the commemorative events of the 40th anniversary of the declaration "Nostra Aetate," the 42nd anniversary of our interreligious dialogue movements and, also, the 70th anniversary of the death of the greatest poet of the Hebrew language, Najman Bialik, whom I had the opportunity and privilege to translate during my years of study as a seminarian, as well as other greats of Jewish poetry like Uri Zvi Grinberg.

Not only must we remember those who saved bodies but also those who every day redeem our souls.

**Q: In an unusual gesture, Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, will reserve, in his tight schedule in Argentina, time this Saturday for the Wallenberg Foundation. Why?**

Tenenbaum: On Saturday, July 10, in the morning, the "Monsignor Angelo Roncalli" kindergarten room will be inaugurated. The event will be presided over by Cardinal Walter Kasper.



It will take place in the Raoul Wallenberg Community Center, headquarters of the Unemployed Workers Movement of La Matanza, in an extremely poor slum of Buenos Aires province.

School materials and clothing will be donated. In the Educational Complex, named after Raoul Wallenberg since May 14, 2004, there is a kindergarten and productive undertakings such as a bakery, a silkscreen printing workshop, a publishing house, a sewing workshop, and a trade school.

On Saturday the 10th in the afternoon, after the Shabat, the Raoul Wallenberg International Foundation and the Angelo Roncalli Committee will confer on Cardinal Kasper the Memorial Mural Award for a lifetime's dedication to causes of understanding and reconciliation between Jews and Catholics.

The presentation will take place at the headquarters of the Latin American Rabbinical Seminary. Undoubtedly, an unbeatable interfaith framework.

The award is a replica to scale of the mural that remembers the victims of the Holocaust, and those killed in the attacks against the Embassy of Israel ..., installed in Buenos Aires Cathedral in April 1997 by the then primate of Argentina, Cardinal Antonio Quarracino.

A replica in the Mural's original size will be installed this year in the "Vaterunser" church of the city of Berlin. The event is being organized by the Wallenberg Foundation and the German Evangelical Church.

On the occasion, the Wallenberg Foundation will announce the granting of the Angelo Roncalli scholarship to a Jewish seminarian for his academic dedication, spirit of solidarity, and human values placed at the service of Jewish-Catholic reconciliation. Another interfaith gesture of which we are proud.

**Q: How are the programs related to the Wallenberg Foundation dedicated to paying homage to the saviors of humanity and those promoting interconfessional dialogue?**

Tenembaum: Both have as their common denominator the famous phrase: "And thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." It was no accident that the dictum was the inspiration of Hillel and later of Jesus.

The saviors are the light, the personification of the concept of the Messiah, understood as the opportunity that each one of us has to do good, to do something for our neighbor.

Hope is the concept that unites both Jews and Catholics. Love, solidarity and courage placed at the service of one's neighbor are like the water that runs down from the mountain to fertilize the sowing and allow it to prosper.

This allegory alludes to the need for us all to come down to the plain, to the level of the common people, and not stay on the heights, with those who see the world from on high.



There is also a very cynical interpretation of "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," which claims to understand the dictum as loving the neighbor so long as he is like yourself. An interpretation that can only be accepted provided that the being of "yourself" refers to the human race.

It is no accident that this movement was born in the Argentina republic, a country where there were no ethnic struggles as in other latitudes of the planet.

We celebrate the fact that, 42 years after starting this endeavor, led among others by Monsignor Ernesto Segura, auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires; Rabbi Guillermo Schlesinger; and Jorge Luis Borges, today other organizations of diverse confessions raise these flags.

**Q: Among the saviors there are notable figures such as Raoul Wallenberg and many others who even risked their lives to save those of different cultural and confessional origins who were persecuted.**

Tenembaum: So it is. There are no better examples to serve as guides of action than those given by these persons.

As you well point out, outstanding among the thousands of heroes is Monsignor Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, later Pope John XXIII, and another Italian, Giovanni Palatucci, the police chief of Fiume during the Second World War, who will soon be beatified by the Supreme Pontiff.

They are, in all truth, the other face of indifference, a very dangerous attitude that is functional to the realization of evil.

It is much more comfortable, but also extremely risky to practice indifference and to abstain from assuming a commitment. On this topic, important thinkers have written some memorable aphorisms.

Edmund Burke wrote: "All that is necessary for evil to prosper is that the good man do nothing." Einstein said: "The world is a dangerous place. Not because of those who do evil, but because of those who do nothing to avoid it."

And, among others, George Bernard Shaw pointed out: "Indifference is the essence of humanity."

Let us recall what pastor Martin Niemoller said, later popularized by Bertolt Brecht: "First they came for the Communists, but as I was not a Communist, I did not raise my voice. Then they came for the Socialists and the trade unionists, but as I was neither, I didn't raise my voice. Then they came for the Jews, and as I am not a Jew, I did not raise my voice. And when they came for me, there was no longer anyone left to raise his voice to defend me."



**Q: We must not forget Aristides de Sousa Mendes, that notable Christian who avoided the extermination of thousands of persecuted people by issuing visas in his capacity as consul of Portugal in Bordeaux, in the south of France, in 1940.**

Tenembaum: Precisely, Sousa Mendes was remembered by our Foundation last June 17 with the organization of more than 80 tributes in 30 countries.

Sousa Mendes was a pioneer and is the paradigm of the one who sacrifices everything to be on the side of the weakest. He defied the Portuguese dictatorship which ordered him to do nothing, and because of this died in the most terrible poverty, condemned and sick.



August 20, 2004

# Pope John XXIII and the Jews

By Joseph D'Hippolito

Source:  **FRONTPAGEMAG.COM**

For almost 60 years, angry controversy has surrounded the Roman Catholic Church's response to the Holocaust. A recent event that received minimal attention, however, illustrates another side to the story.

On July 10 near Buenos Aires, the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation dedicated a kindergarten named for Monsignor Angelo Roncalli. The kindergarten, part of the adjoining Raoul Wallenberg Community Center, serves children of poor families. Among those presiding was Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Vatican's Pontifical Commission for Relations with the Jews.

Roncalli – who would become Pope John XXIII – played a pivotal role in saving the lives of thousands of Jews while serving as the papal representative to Turkey during World War II.

"Much blood and ink have been spilled in the Jewish tragedy of those years," said Chaim Barlas, who worked closely with Roncalli as head of the Palestine Jewish Agency's Rescue Committee. "But to the few heroic deeds which were performed to rescue Jews belong the activities of the apostolic delegate, Monsignor Roncalli, who worked indefatigably on their behalf."

The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation asked the Holocaust Museum of Israel to designate Roncalli as "Righteous Among the Nations," an honor reserved for non-Jews who helped Jews during the Holocaust. Rabbi Simon Moguilevsky, chief rabbi of Buenos Aires, called Roncalli "a man truly created in the image of God."

Roncalli displayed the behavior that earned such praise long before the Holocaust. As the papal representative to Bulgaria from 1925-34, Roncalli worked diligently not only to serve the needs of Bulgaria's small Catholic community but also to reduce intense suspicion from the overwhelmingly Orthodox majority.

Three examples speak loudly. Nine days before Roncalli arrived in Bulgaria, terrorists tried to assassinate King Boris III by placing a bomb in the dome of Sofia's main Orthodox cathedral. The explosion sent the dome crashing on the congregants, killing 150 and injuring 300.

Roncalli visited the wounded in a Catholic hospital that offered free care to everyone, regardless of religion. Boris was so impressed that he received Roncalli days later – a significant





gesture because Roncalli had no diplomatic standing; his official title was "papal visitor." Boris would prove indispensable to Roncalli 20 years later.

In July 1924, Roncalli visited a town where anti-Catholic sentiment erupted into violence. As Lawrence Elliott wrote in his biography, *I Will Be Called John*, "he returned glares of hostility with smiles. Then he preached a sermon of such friendship and unqualified good will that afterwards, the Orthodox vice-prefect, a wild-eyed anti-Catholic, came to pay his respects."

In 1928, a series of earthquakes devastated central Bulgaria. Roncalli personally directed the distribution of food and blankets in the ravaged areas and even slept in emergency tents among the homeless, "comforting them with his presence when he had nothing else to offer," Elliott wrote. Roncalli also solicited papal and private funds for a soup kitchen that fed everyone who came for nearly two months.

Six years later, the Vatican sent Roncalli to Istanbul as the apostolic delegate to Turkey and Greece. Though he held no diplomatic standing with Turkey's secular government, Roncalli developed cordial relationships with diplomats and various officials as the Vatican's only representative. Those contacts became vital when World War II started and neutral Istanbul became a hive of diplomatic intrigue and espionage.

Roncalli first heard about the plight of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe when he met Jewish refugees fleeing Poland in September 1940 – and helped them reach Palestine, then a British colony.

"We are dealing with one of the great mysteries in the history of humanity," Roncalli wrote about the Holocaust. "Poor children of Israel. Daily I hear their groans around me. They are relatives and fellow countrymen of Jesus. May the Divine Savior come to their aid and enlighten them."

Roncalli even communicated his outrage to the Germans. He rebuked German Ambassador Franz von Papen, a devout Catholic who suggested that the anti-Communist Pope Pius XII demonstrate public support for Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union.

"And what shall I tell the Holy Father," Roncalli replied, "about the thousands of Jews who have died in Germany and Poland at the hands of your countrymen?"

Nevertheless, even von Papen became useful. Roncalli wrote to the Nuremberg tribunal that von Papen – one of the Weimar Republic's last chancellors who barely escaped death in a 1934 Nazi purge – "gave me the chance to save the lives of 24,000 Jews."

As the persecution increased, Roncalli accelerated his activities. In January 1943, he forwarded Berlas' request for the Vatican to inquire whether other neutral countries could grant asylum to Jews, to inform the German government that the Palestine Jewish Agency had 5,000 immigration certificates available and to ask Vatican Radio to broadcast that helping Jews was an act of mercy approved by the church.



Though the Vatican declined, Roncalli remained determined. With the help of Bulgaria's King Boris, a reluctant Axis ally, Roncalli used the Red Cross to save thousands of Slovakian Jews who had been deported to Bulgaria prior to extermination.

In February 1944, Roncalli met twice with Rabbi Isaac Herzog, chief rabbi of Jerusalem. Herzog asked him to intercede for 55,000 Jews interred in Romania, another Axis ally. Though Roncalli notified Rome, only 750 Jewish refugees – 250 of them orphans – were saved when their ship arrived in Jerusalem.

"The limits on Roncalli's ability to help Jews were now cruelly apparent," Peter Hebblethwaite wrote in his biography. "There was very little room left for maneuver."

Yet in 1944, Roncalli launched his riskiest gambit.

That summer, Roncalli received Ira Hirschmann, a special envoy from the American War Refugee Board and a Hungarian immigrant. Germany invaded Hungary in March, and Hirschman brought statistics and eyewitness accounts of the resulting anti-Semitic purge.

"Roncalli listened intently as I outlined the desperate plight of Jews in Hungary," Hirschmann later recalled. "Then he pulled his chair up closer and quietly asked, 'Do you have any contact with people in Hungary who will cooperate?'"

The monsignor had heard reports of Hungarian nuns distributing baptismal certificates to Jews, mostly children. Nazi officials recognized the certificates as legitimate and allowed the bearers to leave Hungary unmolested. Roncalli planned to reinforce and expand the operation – regardless of whether Jews were actually baptized. Hirschmann readily agreed.

"It was clear to me that Roncalli had considered the plan before my arrival," Hirschmann remembered, "and that he had created an atmosphere in which to test my credentials, my discretion and my ability to help put the operation into practical effect."

Roncalli used diplomatic couriers, papal representatives and the Sisters of Our Lady of Zion to transport and issue baptismal certificates, immigration certificates and visas – many of them forged – to Hungarian Jews. A dispatch dated Aug. 16, 1944 from Roncalli to the papal nuncio to Hungary illustrates the intensity of "Operation Baptism":

"Since the 'Immigration Certificates' we sent you in May contributed to the saving of the Jews they were intended for, I have accepted from the Jewish Agency in Palestine three more bundles, begging your excellency to pass them on to the person they were intended for, Mr. Miklos Krausz."

Miklos Krausz was Moshe Kraus, Budapest secretary of the Palestine Jewish Agency.

"Operation Baptism" proved so effective that when the Soviets captured Budapest in February 1945, "some 100,000 Jews (200,000 in the whole of Hungary) had been spared," Elliott wrote.



By that time, Roncalli was in his third month as papal nuncio to France, considered the choicest position in the Vatican's diplomatic corps. In 1952, Pius XII made him a cardinal and the patriarch of Venice. Six years later, Roncalli became Pope John XXIII and reigned until his death in 1963.

John XXIII's pontificate is best known for the Second Vatican Council, which he initiated to modernize Catholic practices and attitudes. One product of that council was the encyclical *Nostra Aetate* ("In Our Time"), which stressed Christianity's Judaic roots and sought to repair centuries of hostility between both faiths. Some excerpts:

"Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues."

"Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures."

"Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone."

Though John XXIII died before the encyclical became public, it expresses theologically the attitude he bravely demonstrated two decades earlier.

"To Roncalli, who referred to the virtual obliteration of European Jewry as six million crucifixions," Elliott wrote, the mission to save Jews from Hitler "was in no way singular but indeed mandatory on anyone who claimed to love God and humanity."

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*Joseph D'Hippolito is a columnist for Frontpagemag.com, whose main focuses are religion and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.*



December 4, 2004

## Illuminating the lives of a saint

Source: **heraldscotland**

**Angelo Roncalli brought Catholicism to the people but, argues HUGH MACDONALD, his triumph was as a man not a pope**

It is perhaps an irreverent notion, but given the perplexing ubiquity of popularity polls it is tempting to suppose that the title of Greatest Pope would lie between two twentieth-century titans, namely Pope John XXIII and the present incumbent. Thomas Cahill, I suspect, would see it as a one-horse race with the peasant from Lombardy gathering the spurious, temporal honour. His biography is more than sympathetic, indeed it borders on hagiography in the truest and best sense of the word in that it is literature that deals with the life of a saint. Angelo Guiseppe Roncalli, Cahill quietly and persuasively asserts, was a pope of special gifts.

Cahill, a former director of religious publishing at Doubleday, has been enlisted to Weidenfeld's eclectic and unorthodox brief life series which has already seen Edmund White on Proust and, less successfully, Paul Johnson on Napoleon among other attempts at fresh, iconoclastic biography. Cahill, therefore, has been encouraged to walk his own path and this biography is a constantly provocative, informative account of the history of a Church. It seeks to place Pope John in his time and in the history of papal Catholicism. It succeeds brilliantly on both counts although, as Cahill concedes, it is an essay rather than a definitive biography. Cahill argues that the supremacy of the bishop in Rome is based on the premise of the Donation of Constantine, a document that was almost certainly bogus.

He then shows how the papacy waxed and waned in terms of temporal power. Once emperors would bow at the knee of a pope, heeding his every command. Now, at best, the pope provides either spiritual guidance or a nagging conscience on matters moral, cultural, religious nor even political. Occasionally, a pope can escape these bonds and significantly change the face of the world. The present pope has been praised in internal CIA documents as the man who defeated communism.

The political achievement of Angelo Roncalli, also known as Pope John XXIII, was no less spectacular. He played a leading, mediatory role in defusing the Cuban missile crisis of 1963. But he will be remembered, too, both as a personality and powerful influence in the modernisation of the Church.

He was in his 70s when he won the papal vote as a compromise candidate after a church career that included duty as a spiritual director at a seminary then apostolic roles in Bulgaria, Turkey, and Paris. He had only five years as pope before his death from stomach cancer. He did not waste one moment. He took the papacy to the people, abandoning the constrictions of the Vatican to visit children's homes and converse with his flock. "The secret of everything," he



said, "is to let yourself be carried by the Lord and to carry the Lord." He opened up the Vatican to visiting dignitaries, re-establishing the papacy as a factor in world affairs. **He re-wrote liturgy to avoid any crude condemnation of Jews, tens of thousands of whom he had saved from the Holocaust when he was an apostolic administrator in Turkey.**

But it was Vatican II that summed him up as man and pope. The council he summoned to Rome confounded the conservatives by its wide-ranging remit. The pope, humbly and wisely, stayed in the background as the Church wrestled with the issues that still snap at its heels today. Would Pope John have pushed for the abolition of celibacy? Would he have agreed to some use of contraception? His death rendered these questions as speculative as his successor, Pope Paul VI, removed such revolutionary topics from discussion.

However, Angelo Roncalli's greatest triumph was as a man. One of 12 children born to a peasant family, he knew of hard times. His career included work as an orderly during the carnage of the First World War and he was regularly out of step with Church conservatism, once teetering perilously close to excommunication. But he was simply, and wonderfully, good. He was embraced, literally at times, by his flock.

He was humble and humorous but had an unwavering sense of what was right and possessed the strength of mind to pursue it. He encouraged people to laugh and to pray, knowing that sometimes they are the same thing. But, crucially, he was a man, accepting he was prey to faults and fears.

Returning from the funeral of a beloved sister, he muttered to an aide in existential despair: "Woe betide us if it turns out to be an illusion." It is strangely comforting to know that the spiritually strong can share the great doubt but continue to live in faith, knowing that it can never be transmuted into certainty.



January 18, 2005

## For Pioneer in Jewish-Catholic Dialogue, a Day to Remember

Source: **ZENIT**

### *Says Founder of Raoul Wallenberg International*

ROME, JAN. 18, 2005 ([Zenit.org](http://Zenit.org)).- For Baruch Tenenbaum, founder of the Raoul Wallenberg International Foundation, and one of the pioneers of the dialogue between Jews and Catholics, this was a historic day.

For the first time, a Pope, John Paul II, received in private audience a group of some 160 rabbis and Jewish leaders and their relatives, who were in Rome to thank him for his contribution to the reconciliation between the children of Abraham, and to the struggle against anti-Semitism.

The meeting commemorated the 40th anniversary this year of the Second Vatican Council's declaration "Nostra Aetate," which marked a turn in Judeo-Christian dialogue.

Tenenbaum was born in Argentina, in a settlement of Jewish immigrants who had fled the 1880 pogroms in Russia.

In a telephone statement to ZENIT, he expressed his emotion to see the great progress in Jewish-Catholic relations, which he has been promoting with exponents of the Catholic Church in Argentina since he was a student in that country's Rabbinical Seminary in the 1950s.

"Today's meeting is exciting, as it makes one see how that idea, launched more than 50 years ago, has been very successful," he said.

"The one who multiplied geometrically those initial efforts was Angelo Roncalli, the 'Good Pope,'" who as John XXIII convoked Vatican II, he explained.

"I think it is an important day," Tenenbaum said.

He also found it significant that the Vatican decided to loan manuscripts of the great Jewish philosopher and rabbi Maimonides, who died in 1204, so that they can be exhibited in Israel's Museum this spring.

"It is an opportunity for many people in the world to discover his legacy," Tenenbaum stressed.





To reveal the spirit with which he has promoted dialogue with Christians, Tenembaum believes that the key is "friendship and love of neighbor."

"The neighbor is the 'next one,' whom we feel is close to us," he said. "We think that when we approach someone, we can dialogue with him and alter the knowledge, the information that we had before.

"When dialoguing we wish to observe the best of the other. We want to ratify what the Creator willed and the gifts that the Creator has given each one. The Creator made us different and it was not by accident. Harmony means different voices that integrate in one expression."

Tenembaum is convinced that many prejudices can be overcome with information, and mutual knowledge. "The greatest enemy we have is ignorance and our greatest friend, truth," he said.



April 6, 2005

# The Pope of Fraternity

Source:  Clarín.com

During the course of his long papacy, John Paul II turned out to be the worthy heir to pontiff John XXIII, as the driving force of revolutionary changes within the Church in its relation with the Jews. Many are the different initiatives of Peter's successor that allowed him to establish the conditions for the construction of a harmonic atmosphere to foster the reconciliation between Catholics and Jews. The visit he paid to the Synagogue of Rome, his pilgrimage to the Holy Land and his asking for forgiveness on March 12th. 2002, in a declaration which states: "We are deeply sorry for the behavior of those who, along the course of history, had made your sons suffer and, on asking for your forgiveness, we commit ourselves to exercising fraternal and authentic relations with the Jewish people". That spirit of understanding and respect for differences has been one of the most outstanding virtues of John Paul II during his twenty six years at the service of the Catholic Church.

**Father Horacio Moreno**  
**Natalio Wengrower**  
**José I. García Hamilton**  
**Baruch Tenenbaum**  
**International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation**



April 18, 2005

# Pope's legacy is a few shades short of golden

By Daniel Koffler

Source: [valedailynews.com](http://valedailynews.com)

It would be nice to see, if only once, credit for the overthrow of Eastern Europe's Soviet political apparatus awarded to the captive peoples who, risking confiscation of property, imprisonment and execution, actually did the overthrowing. Our media seem to find it more compelling, however, to assign responsibility for the Velvet Revolution to various Western political leaders, all of whom single-handedly put an end to the menace of the USSR. Thus, less than a year ago, we learned that Ronald Reagan had toppled the Berlin Wall by the sheer moral force of his bombast. Historical chains of causation being subject to revision by a pundit class in need of a narrative, the lesson of the (literal) carnival of death in Rome this past week seems to have been that John Paul II personally won the Cold War in a spiritual battle with the Politburo.

Some things can be true even if they fulfill a cultural need for instantaneous analysis, and the late pope does deserve praise for playing a catalyzing role in the dissolution of the Eastern bloc in its twilight years. Throwing the influence of the Catholic Church behind the proto-democratic dissident movements of Eastern Europe was not only the crowning achievement of his papacy, but was unequaled by any pope this century.

Unequaled except, perhaps, by Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, who during World War II issued baptismal papers and made personal protests to save European Jews from extermination. Later, as Pope John XXIII, Roncalli convened the Second Vatican Council, which, among other things, finally acquitted the Jews of Christ-killing.

I raise the example of John XXIII because to understand John Paul's historical relationship to John is to understand just how catastrophic were the moral errors of the former's final years as pope. Exhibit A must certainly be John Paul's manic desire to canonize John's immediate predecessor, Pius XII, pope during World War II and, as any historian of the period not interested in promoting Catholic hagiography will tell you, one of the greatest cowards in all of history. While Cardinal Roncalli was risking his own neck to protect the innocents targeted for mass-murder, Pius did not so much as utter a word in condemnation of the National Socialist regime or its genocidal project. Not even the massacre of 350 Romans by the Gestapo in the Ardiatine caves -- more or less under the windows of the papal estate -- could move Pius to speak, much less act.

John Paul was not only committed to transforming Pius into an object of religious veneration for Catholics, but also to suspending centuries-old rules governing the canonization process in order to put Pius into an express lane for sainthood.



And Pius is not by any means the most egregious of John Paul's attempted elevations to sainthood, because Pius, though spineless, was not an active collaborator with fascism. Both honors -- most egregious of the pope's sanctifications, and active collaborator -- belong to Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac, who as Archbishop of Zagreb during World War II cultivated a friendly relationship with the Ustase, a Croatian fascist regime whose bloodthirstiness and brutality in its persecutions of Orthodox Christians and Jews offended even the sensibilities of the Germans.

For those of us not brought up in a Catholic tradition, it might have seemed reasonable to assume that the saints were deserving of admiration if not religious devotion. But if such a man as Stepinac is canonized, the very least that can be said is that the papacy of John Paul obliterated the Catholic saint as a category worthy of any respect or distinction whatsoever.

A further consequence of John Paul's reign -- one with which we Americans are already familiar -- is the irreversible tarnishing of the Catholic priesthood. According to John Paul's conception of the Church's "perennial theology," pre-marital sex, contraception, masturbation, never mind abortion, are sins endangering one's mortal soul. Ordination of women would contravene natural law. Church policy on priestly celibacy and marriage reflect undebatable, eternal truths. Homosexuality is part of an "ideology of death." And yet, miraculously enough, no absolute conclusions can be derived from this theology about the moral status of child molestation.

Through the decades it was led by John Paul, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church responded to certain knowledge of far-widespread abuses of children by covering up the crimes and reassigning offending priests to new pools of victims. John Paul's personal response to the scandal was to surround himself with Opus Dei fanatics who, when willing to acknowledge that the Church's involvement in child-rape was indeed a problem, assigned blame for it to homosexuals' obdurate insistence on existing. (Given his already-discussed empathy for prelates who were soft on fascism, John Paul's canonization of Josemaria Escriva, the founder of Opus Dei and the de facto spiritual advisor to Francisco Franco, might be said to be the apotheosis of his papacy.)

Among the small group of priests performing rosaries on the steps of St. Peter's Basilica last week was none other than Bernard Law, the Archlizard of Boston, who should be serving the first of several life sentences for active facilitation of the rape of children. But because the majesty and mystery of the Church remains unassailable, and because he carried the favor of the late pope, Law is instead shielded from merely secular justice and will be voting in the election of the next pope. This outcome is what John Paul II's papacy has wrought. His jubilant adorers, so eager to construct an idol of him, have failed to notice that the only material available for that construction is papier-mache.

*Daniel Koffler is a junior in Calhoun*



June 24, 2005

## Foundation Recalls John XXIII's Assistance to Jews

Source: 

### *42 Years After His Death*

NEW YORK, JUNE 24, 2005 (Zenit.org).- Blessed John XXIII will pass into history as the one who gave impetus to Catholic-Jewish dialogue, said the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation.

In a statement to commemorate the 42nd anniversary of the death of Angelo Roncalli, Pope John XXIII, the foundation said that it was this Pope who initiated the Second Vatican Council, "the event which gave birth to the 'Nostra Aetate' declaration, a document that highlighted the Jewish roots of Christianity, in an attempt to repair centuries of hostilities between the two religions."

The Raoul Wallenberg International Foundation is dedicated to remembering those who risked their lives to save persecuted people during the Second World War.

Saved lives

The foundation recalled that as apostolic nuncio to France, Archbishop Roncalli used "diplomatic couriers to obtain baptismal certificates and blank visas for the Jewish people in Hungary."

These documents, said the foundation, were used "to save the lives of tens of thousands of Jews persecuted by the Nazi regime."

Archbishop Roncalli also met with the chief rabbi of Jerusalem, Issac Herzog, "and interceded at the request of the rabbi in favor of the Jews of Romania."

The archbishop also assisted Haim Barlas, delegate of the Jewish Agency in Istanbul, to get Jewish refugees into Palestine, and "interceded before King Boris of Bulgaria to prevent the deportation of the Jewish population," said the statement.

"Symbol of love"

According to the foundation, "the humanitarian action of Nuncio Roncalli to save the lives of thousands of Jewish refugees during the Holocaust, combined with his determined attitude of



religious closeness to -- and dialogue with -- Judaism, in his capacity as Pope John XXIII, make his figure an undying symbol of love of neighbor and of interreligious dialogue."

In 2000, the foundation created the Angelo Roncalli International Committee, to pay tribute to the humanitarian action of Archbishop Angelo Roncalli, then apostolic nuncio to France, to save Jewish refugees persecuted by the Nazi regime during World War II.

The Angelo Roncalli International Committee is made up of renowned figures, such as Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity; professor André Chouraqui, a translator of the Old and New Testaments and the Koran into French; and Cardinal Renato Martino, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.





October 27, 2005

# The great encyclical that united Jewish and Catholic people

By Baruch Tenenbaum

Source:  Clarín.com

**It is the 40th anniversary of a valuable text inspired by John XXIII which is the milestone of the interreligious dialogue later developed by John Paul II.**

Under the sign of interreligious dialogue, a new era was inaugurated by John Paul II according to the principles of the Second Vatican Council, an extraordinary landmark born from the inspiration of Pope John XXIII, Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli.

The theological expression of the Council related to the non-Christian religions was the declaration "Nostra Aetate" (Our Era), proclaimed on October 28th, 1965, in coincidence with the anniversary of John XXIII's election as Pope in 1958.

The revolutionary document inaugurated a new era in the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people after centuries of prejudices and persecutions. The origins, however, come from the humanitarian actions of Monsignor Roncalli during the Holocaust.

Bishop Radini Tedeschi, member of the Italian nobility and one of the most progressive Prelates of Italy at that time, passed away in 1914. His secretary, Angelo Roncalli, decided to write the biography of his mentor and sent it to Pope Benedictus XV, personal friend of Bishop Tedeschi. Once the WWI ended, the chief of the church called Roncalli and designed him Director of the Office for Attention to the Foreign missions. Later, Pope Pio XI named him Apostolic Visitor to Bulgaria in March 1925. After 10 years in Sofia, Roncalli was named Apostolic Delegate in Turkey. It was precisely in Istanbul, during WWII, where Roncalli lead one of the most memorable rescue missions remembered by history.

Ira Hirschman, delegate of the United States War Refugee Board, writes in his memoirs a conversation he had with Roncalli: "He listened to me with attention while I described the desperate fight of the Jewish people of Hungary, the last Hebrew community of Europe threatened by the Final Solution. He pulled his chair up closer and quietly asked: 'Do you think that the Jewish people would voluntarily undergo a baptism ceremony?' I answered that, according to my impression, they would if that was enough to save them from the extermination camps. 'I know what I am going to do', he sentenced. He said he had reasons to believe that some of the certificates of baptism were already given by nuns to Hungarian Jews. The Nazis had recognized them as credentials and allowed the owners to flee the country"



This is how, from Istanbul, Roncalli coordinated with the apostolic nuncio in Budapest, Angelo Rotta, the massive distribution of baptismal certificates, with the understanding that, once the war ended, each person will be able to decide which religious condition he/she will maintain.

The Baptist Operation started with the blessing of the future "Good Pope."

According to the testimonies given in the Nüremberg trials, the initiative helped save 24,000 Jewish lives. However, Catholic sources confirm that 80,000 certificates were given.

**Baruch Tenenbaum**  
**Raoul Wallenberg Foundation**  
**Angelo Roncalli International Committee**



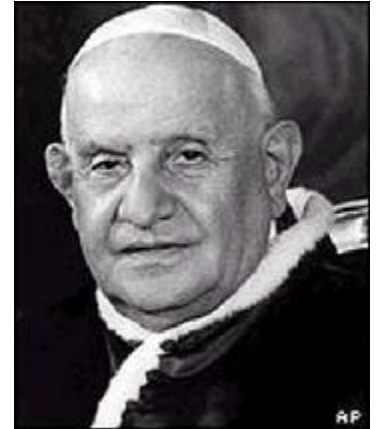
December 4, 2006

## Pope John XXIII lobbied to save Jews

Source: **THE JERUSALEM POST**

An Israeli scholar has discovered evidence that a Vatican emissary and future Pope tried to challenge the Catholic Church's perceived indifference to the Nazi mass murder of Europe's Jews during World War II.

Searching the little-known papers of an Israeli emissary who worked to save Jews during the war, Dina Porat, a professor of Jewish history from Tel Aviv University, found evidence that that Giuseppe Roncalli - who later became Pope John XXIII - criticized the policies of Pope Pius XII, lobbied to save Jews and passed on information about the death camps at Auschwitz months earlier than the Vatican acknowledged receiving it.



Pius XII, who was Pope during the war, has come under criticism for decades for his silence and that of his church in the face of the Holocaust, when six million Jews were killed by the Nazis in an official effort to wipe out the Jews of Europe.

Porat, a prominent Holocaust scholar, researched the diaries and correspondences of Haim Barlas, an emissary dispatched by the Jewish Agency in the 1940s to save Jews in Europe. His papers are held in a private archive in Israel, the owners of which have refused to be publicly identified but who granted access to Porat, she said.

Barlas's papers have significant historical value, Porat said, but have been unknown so far because the documents are not in an official archive and are mostly in Hebrew.

In the 1940s, Barlas and Roncalli were both posted to Istanbul - Barlas as a Jewish Agency emissary and Roncalli as a Vatican nuncio, or ambassador. The two men became friends, Porat said, and their letters - mostly in French, a language both men spoke fluently - indicate that Roncalli "gently" expressed criticism of the Vatican's silence in the face of what was increasingly emerging as the Nazi genocide in Europe.

In 1943, Porat found, following a request from Barlas, Roncalli wrote to the president of Slovakia asking him to stop the Nazi deportations of Jews to death camps.

On June 23, 1944, Barlas received a copy of a chilling 30-page report that became known as the "Auschwitz protocols," compiled by two Jews who escaped from the camp that April. The report made it clear that the camp's purpose was the mass killing of Jews and others who the



Nazis considered undesirable. At the time, the Nazis were in the midst of killing 400,000 Jews from Hungary.

In his papers, Barlas wrote that he rushed a copy of the protocols to his friend Roncalli on June 24, and that Roncalli sent a synopsis to the Vatican by telegram that day. This contradicts the Vatican's official version, Porat said, which is that it received the report only in October 1944.

Vatican officials, when asked about the alleged discrepancy in the dates, suggested that the question be directed to historians of that period.

While many believe a concerted Vatican effort could have led to steps to stop the killing, Emma Fattorini, contemporary history professor at Rome's La Sapienza University, said the matter of "this month versus that month" was not critical.

"The question is not, 'they knew or didn't know.' By now it's a well-grounded (fact) that the Vatican knew, just like everyone else," she said.

All of Roncalli's correspondence with his church superiors has been preserved in the Vatican archives, Porat said - but the part that could clarify when he sent the protocols has not been made available to scholars.

For years, the Vatican has struggled to defend its wartime pope, Pius XII, who had earlier served as a Vatican diplomat in Germany, against claims he did not do enough to save Jews from the Holocaust. Pius XII's 1939-1958 papacy spanned the war years, and Roncalli replaced him - as John XXIII - when he died.

In 2003, the Vatican made available documents from the offices of the papal nuncios in Berlin and Munich in a bid to deflect contentions that the Vatican had been silent in the face of the Holocaust. The Vatican has insisted Pius XII had spearheaded discreet diplomacy that saved thousands of Jews.



December 4, 2006

# New research bares Vatican criticism of Nazi-era pope

By Amiram Barkat

Source: **HAARETZ.com**

New research reveals rare criticism from within the Vatican of Holocaust-era pope Pius XII for his silence in the face of the destruction of European Jewry. Pius XII is controversial due to claims that he knew of the genocide as early as the early 1940s but did not act to stop it. In 1999, the Vatican appointed the International Catholic-Jewish Historical Commission to investigate the charges against Pius XII, however the panel disbanded after it was refused access to archival material.

Prof. Dina Porat, who headed the Project for the Study of Anti-Semitism at Tel Aviv University, centered her research on criticism of Pius XII from the Papal Nuncio Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, who 15 years later became Pope John XXIII. According to Porat's research, in 1943, Roncalli, then the nuncio in Turkey, wrote to the Catholic president of Slovakia asking him to stop the deportation of Slovakian Jews to Auschwitz. He wrote at the behest of Jewish Agency delegate Haim Barlas with whom he had a close personal relationship.

In 1944, Barlas received the "Auschwitz Protocols," detailed accounts by Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler, who had escaped the concentration camp in April of that year. Barlas sent the diaries directly to Roncalli, later writing in his memoirs that a shocked Roncalli read them with tears. According to Barlas, after reading the eyewitness accounts, Roncalli told him he was filled with resentment towards his superiors, "whose power and influence are great, but who refrain from action and resourcefulness in extending concrete help."

Roncalli told Barlas he would send the protocols to the Vatican immediately. This does not correspond with the official Vatican version that Pope Pius XII only received the protocols in October of that year. Days after Roncalli's conversation with Barlas, the pope sent a letter to Hungarian Regent Horthy asking him to stop the "human suffering" in his country, without explicitly referencing the Jews.

Deportations to Auschwitz did stop shortly after that, but only after 400,000 Hungarian Jews lost their lives there.



December 5, 2006

# Vatican Holocaust claim disputed

By Christian Fraser

Source: **BBC NEWS**

The man who later became Pope John XXIII tried in vain to challenge the Vatican's perceived indifference to the Nazi Holocaust, a new study has found.

Papers and diaries show then Archbishop Giuseppe Roncalli posted an urgent telegram in 1944 to Pope Pius XII on the atrocities at Auschwitz.



The telegram's date contradicts the Vatican's official version of when it received a report.

The new insight comes from the papers of a Jewish emissary, Haim Barlas.

He had befriended Archbishop Roncalli, then the papal nuncio to Istanbul, in the 1940s.

## ***Scribbled synopsis***

The exchange of letters between Barlas and Roncalli, mostly in French, was recently uncovered in a private collection in Israel.

The letters show that Roncalli was frustrated by the Vatican's silence in the face of what was emerging in Europe.

They show that in 1943, the archbishop took it upon himself to write to the president of Slovakia asking him to stop the Nazi deportation of Jews.

On 23 June 1944, Barlas passed Roncalli a chilling 30-page report.

The document, now known as the Auschwitz protocols, had been compiled by two Jews who had escaped the camp that April.

The archbishop quickly scribbled a synopsis of the report and sent it by telegram.

His message made clear that the camp's purpose was the mass killing of Jews.





The date the telegram was sent contradicts the Vatican's official version that it only received details of the report in October 1944.

Vatican officials, when asked about the alleged discrepancy, suggested the question be directed to historians of the period.

But while all of the archbishop's correspondence with his Church superiors has been preserved in the Vatican archives, the part that could clarify when he sent the details has not been made available to scholars.



January 2, 2007

# Pontiff-to-be helped rescue thousands of Hungary's Jews

By Jay Bushinsky

Source: **The Washington Times**

JERUSALEM -- Newly discovered records document the role of Monsignor Angelo Roncalli, a Vatican diplomat in Istanbul during World War II who later became Pope John XXIII, in helping rescue thousands of Hungarian Jews from the Holocaust.

They also lend weight to arguments that Pope Pius XII, who was pontiff during the war, failed to do all he could to prevent the systematic massacre of millions of Jews.

The memoirs, documents and letters stashed away in the private collection of a Jewish associate of Monsignor Roncalli describe frequent late-night meetings in the Vatican compound in the heart of Istanbul.

There, the two men composed urgent messages to the Holy See and obtained false papers to enable Jews to escape the reach of the Nazis and their allies.

Examined recently by Tel Aviv University professor Dina Porat, an internationally respected authority on the Holocaust, the documents attest to a unique relationship that had consequences of historic importance.

Monsignor Roncalli was serving as papal nuncio in Istanbul, essentially the Vatican's ambassador. He went on to become one of the most beloved popes and, by convening the Second Vatican Council in 1962, opened the Catholic Church to a wave of modernization that included a revised liturgy and major efforts to unite with other Christian denominations.

His ally in the effort was Chaim Barlas, who had been sent to Istanbul as an emissary of the Jewish Agency Rescue Committee, established by the Jewish community in what was then Palestine to try to save European Jews from the Nazis.

"Roncalli allowed Barlas to meet him in the middle of the night to draft urgent letters to Pope Pius XII about the plight of Hungarian Jewry," Mrs. Porat said in an interview. "He told Barlas that he sent cables to [Pius], but did not receive replies. It seemed to him that his ecclesiastical superiors who could act did not, and he wondered why."



Mrs. Porat said she found several handwritten letters from Monsignor Roncalli to the pontiff, composed with the help of Mr. Barlas, which included criticism of the Vatican and others for failing to do enough to help the Jews.

The men intensified their efforts after the receipt in June 1944 of a report by two Slovakian Jews who had escaped a month earlier from the Auschwitz death camp in Poland.

That and a subsequent account describing the grisly massacre under way there came to be known as the Auschwitz Protocols.

Mr. Barlas "translated it into German, drafted a precise summary dated June 23, 1944, and was granted an audience with Roncalli a day later," Mrs. Porat said. "Roncalli wept upon reading its contents and relayed it immediately to the Vatican."

Pius subsequently wrote a letter to Adm. Miklos Horthy, a Nazi ally serving as president of Hungary, urging him to halt the deportation of Hungarian Jews to Poland, which was being expedited by Nazi officer Adolf Eichmann.

"By July 7, 1944, they were stopped," Mrs. Porat said.

Yitzhak Minerbi, one of Israel's leading specialists on the Vatican's conduct and policies during World War II, said Monsignor Roncalli's contribution goes far beyond alerting the Holy See to the genocide.

As confirmed by the Barlas papers, he also issued transit passes and approved false baptismal certificates that enabled 12,000 Jews to escape Hungary, Mr. Minerbi said.

Monsignor Roncalli's efforts also have been lauded by Baruch Tenenbaum, head of the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, named after the Swedish diplomat who plucked outbound Jews from deportation trains and hid them in safe houses throughout the Hungarian capital.

Asked about Pope John XXIII, Mr. Tenenbaum said: "He should be cited by Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust memorial, as the foremost name on its list of righteous gentiles."

Those honored at the memorial are non-Jews who risked their lives to rescue Jews from the Nazis.



June 13, 2008

## Marco Roncalli receives accolade

Source: **ZENIT**



Vatican City - Friday, June 13th, 2008  
([Zenit.org](http://Zenit.org)). [The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation](http://The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation) recognizes John XXIII for his advancement of religious dialogues. Also honored was the intellectual, Marco Roncalli.

Roncalli is one of the leading authorities on John XXIII. His research, published in various books and articles, has helped to highlight aspects of the life of this Pope. One particular event emphasized in Roncalli's work took place during the WWII era. This was before John XIII had become Bishop of Rome, where he was able to save so many persecuted Jews.

Roncalli, born in Bergamo (Northern Italy), whose grandfather was actually the younger brother of the Pope of that time (Angelo G. Roncalli), has been researching John XXIII over the past 25 years.

On June 12th, the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation awarded him the Angelo Guiseppe Roncalli medal. He received the award in the Centro Rusia Ecumenica, just feet from the Vatican.

Representatives from the Diplomatic Corps participated in the ceremony. Among them was the British ambassador for the "Holy See", Francis Martin-Xavier Campbell and the current Argentine representative for the Vatican, (who is still waiting the appointment of an ambassador), Hugo Javier Gobbi.

Gary L. Krupp, one of the religious representatives, is the founder of the "Pave the Way Foundation", an institution that promotes interreligious dialogue

The founder of the IRWF, Baruj Tenenbaum, shared a word with the participants of the ceremony. In his message he reminded them of how monseñor Roncalli, while representative for the Pope, saved the lives of Jews in Bulgaria and Turkey.

As apostolic delegate for the Pope, in Istanbul, in 1944, he "organizad a rescue network for Jews and others persecuted under Naziism. Thanks to his actions, thousands who had been condemned to death were spared," said Tenenbaum.



Tenembaum went on to say that "a new era of relations between the Catholic Church and followers of Judaism were opened with the Papacy of John XXIII, the "Good Pope". It was a new period of understanding and tolerance, after years of denigration, prejudice and religious persecution."

"The doors for interreligious dialogue that were opened due to the efforts of John XXIII, continued to creak open during the papacy of Pope John Paul II, the Pope that would often refer to the Jewish people as, "our older brothers". John Paul also visited the Nazi concentration camps as a sign of respect for the Jewish victims. He even took the pilgrimage to the Holy Land, in the state of Israel", Tenembaum said.

In the last few years, the Wallenberg Foundation has done a significant amount of research focused on bringing to light the humanitarian labor performed by monseñor Roncalli.

"This award could not have been given to a more deserving candidate than the distinguished intellectual, Marco Roncalli. He is a man of letters and of compassion. And we humbly recognize him for his efforts.

"Marco Roncalli fulfills a double labor, being faithful to the historical truth and also to ethics of journalism. He gave the public the best version possible of the truth and likewise documented the events of daily life with great precision and investigative zeal."

The medal was given to Roncalli by Jesus Colina, Zenit news director.

During his acceptance speech, Roncalli recognized the Wallenberg Foundation's contribution, "For the work of historic reconstruction performed by Angelo G. Roncalli, through his actions and attitude, in favor of the Jews residing in Turkey and Bulgaria, who were subsequently persecuted by the Nazi regime."

According to Roncalli, this work has been a source of encouragement. He has increased his efforts to expand the "Righteous People Among the Nations" program. The Yad Vashem committee developed this initiative in order to recognize individuals that risked their lives in the act of helping persecuted Jews.

The writer thanked the IRWF for the extensive research put into documenting the life-long labor of the arch-bishop Roncalli. He expressed his gratitude on behalf of the Roncalli family and the village of Sotto il Monte (where the pope was born).

*Translation: Brandon Pipkin*



November 4, 2008

# Jewish Leader Wants Honor for John XXIII

Source: **ZENIT**

## Says Pope Should Be Declared "Righteous Among the Nations"

ROME, NOV. 4, 2008 (Zenit.org).- The founder of the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation wants Pope John XXIII to receive the honorary title given to those who took extraordinary measures to save Jews from the Holocaust.

Baruch Tenenbaum is proposing that the Italian Pope be given the title "Righteous Among the Nations" by the Yad Vashem.

"If we fail to declare Pope John XXIII as 'Righteous Among the Nations,' our kids will be the ones who will do that," Tenenbaum said.

The Jewish leader's appeal comes as the Church has just marked the 50th anniversary of John XXIII's election to the See of Peter, on Oct. 28, 1958.

Tenenbaum noted that before being elected Pope, Bishop Angelo Roncalli "interceded in favor of the Bulgarian Jews before King Boris of Bulgaria and he did the same before the government of Turkey in favor of the Jewish refugees that had escaped to their country. He also did everything possible to prevent the deportation of Jews from Greece and he became a source of information for the Vatican as far as the annihilation of millions of Jews of Poland and Eastern Europe was concerned."

"During the time he was stationed as the apostolic delegate of the Vatican in Istanbul in 1944, he organized the rescue of Jews and other people who were persecuted by the Nazis," he continued. "Thanks to his actions, thousands of people who were condemned to death had their lives saved. His deeds and historic figure is therefore close to many other diplomat rescuers from the Holocaust."

The foundation founder also lauded the advances made in Jewish-Catholic dialogue under the guidance of John XXIII: "A new era in Catholic-Jewish dialogue started when John XXIII was elected Pope."





*Angelo Roncalli*  
POPE JOHN XXIII



June 21, 2009

## Interview to Baruch Tenenbaum: "Thousands of Jews owe their lives to John XXIII"

Source: [Semana.co.il](http://Semana.co.il)

*Baruch Tenenbaum is a well-known Argentinean Jewish business man and ecumenical activist, founder of the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, together with his late friend Tom Lantos. More active than ever, he is always in search of testimonials of people who saved Jews during the Holocaust... as a duty and as a obligation.*

Baruch Tenenbaum is a well-known Argentinean Jewish business man and ecumenical activist, founder of the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, together with his late friend and US congressman Tom Lantos, the only holocaust survivor to serve in the US Congress, saved by the Swedish diplomat who disappeared in action.



Tenenbaum, whose work day would scare off 20 year old youngsters, shares his life between New York, London, Buenos Aires and Punta del Este. These days, he is in Israel visiting the Foundation's Jerusalem headquarters and having meetings related to his humanitarian activities. The Wallenberg Foundation, stresses Tenenbaum, is the only institution in the world that actively investigates and documents untold stories of rescuers.

Once documented, the Foundation creates educational programs aimed at highlighting the rescuers' historical legacy. These programs titled "Wallenberg in the classrooms", are presented by volunteers within the curriculum approved by several Education Departments of various countries in Latin America. "The Foundation, through our teams of professionals and volunteers carries out a number of investigations regarding untold stories about rescuers who risked their lives during the Holocaust", stated Tenenbaum.

At the end of 2008, one of these investigations culminated in the posthumous delivery of the title "Just among the nations" to Stanisława Slawinska, a polish catholic woman who sheltered



Jews in her own home, in Grodzisk Mazowiecki, 30 km from Warsaw. Slawinska's descendents embraced fraternally one of the women saved by her. The event was covered by [Semana](#)

Presently the Wallenberg Foundation, through a group of professional and volunteer investigators, is investigating and documenting tens of rescuers' stories, common people and diplomats from several countries, with different religions and beliefs. Among the diplomats investigated by the Foundation, we find Julio Palencia, Sebastián Romero de Radigales and Eduardo Rolland de Miota (three Spanish diplomats that helped save Jews during the Holocaust), as well as a number of Turkish Muslim diplomats, especially the late Turkish Vice Consul in Marseille, Necdet Kent.

Evidence shows that Kent issued Turkish Citizenship Certificates (that protected their holders) including Jewish Turkish descendents who were entitled to Turkish citizenship according to the laws effective at the time. Besides, according to his own testimonial, Necdet Kent was the key actor of a historical rescue.

A few years before his death, Kent revealed that in 1943, he was alerted by his faithful Jewish collaborator and interpreter, Sidi Iscan, that the Nazis were going to deport about 70 Turkish Jews. Kent and Iscan showed up at the train station in Marseille (probably, Saint Charles) and boarded the train, refusing to get off unless the Nazis freed the Turkish Jews that were confined there in inhuman conditions, on their way to extermination. The Nazi Commander did not heed to Kent's demands and the train left (probably on the way to a French concentration camp before its final destination in Germany) and when it stopped in Arles or Nimes (Kent did not remember precisely due to his advanced age), the Nazi Commandant in charge of that station excused himself and insisted that Kent get off the train together with his aide. Kent refused to get off without "his fellow citizens". After a few tense minutes of negotiation, where Kent displayed his diplomatic privileges, the Nazi Commander allowed Kent to disembark with his aide and his "fellow citizens".

Tenembaum told that the Wallenberg Foundation was "doing the impossible to document testimonials about this, and many other dramatic events by consulting files in various countries to collect information." In a few days, Tenembaum will go to Europe to explore aspects related to this investigation. He asked "We urge and plead that anyone who can provide more information about this dramatic event contact our foundation, or any of our offices, through our website: [www.raoulwallenberg.net](http://www.raoulwallenberg.net)".

A short while ago, Tenembaum gave an interview to the prestigious [Jerusalem Post](#), that caused a great uproar. In this interview, he spoke of the "Holocaust survivors' moral obligation to reveal who saved them." "I am aware of the survivors' pain, but I believe that the younger generations have the right to know the rescuers' stories, and this right is stronger than the right to silence", declared Tenembaum. Last week, in Tel Aviv, the Wallenberg Foundation's founder met with former Absorption Minister Yair Zaban. Both share a common goal: recognize the heroic act of Angelo Roncalli, Vatican's Apostolic Delegate in Istanbul during the Second World War, that saved many Jews from cruel extermination.



Roncalli was better known as Pope John XXIII (deservedly called "the good Pope"). Tenenbaum tells us that, thanks to his good friend Zaban, he learned that Roncalli not only saved a great number of Jews from the Nazis, but that, before the UN's decisive vote that resulted in the creation of the State of Israel, Roncalli played an important role that facilitated that historical event. Petitioned by Moshe Sharet (Shertok), and through Dr. Moshe Sneh's intervention, Roncalli pressured the Vatican's authorities not to interfere with the decision of the Latin American countries to vote in favor of the establishment of a Jewish State. "Roncalli was a great friend of the Jewish people. Thousands of Jews owe their lives to him, and it can also be said that he helped establish the Jewish State... For all of this, the Jewish people owe Roncalli eternal gratitude," concluded Tenenbaum.

*Translated by: Judith Rostenne*