



# HOUSES OF LIFE PRESSBOOK VOL. I





## Introduction

"Houses of Life" is an educational program promoted by the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation (IRWF) that seeks to identify those places that have given shelter to people during genocides or persecutions of ethnic, ideological, political or religious character.

The program began in Rome recognizing the "Houses of Life" that offered refuge to persecuted Jews during World War II. The scientific research carried out to support this program has allowed 200 candidates to be discovered only in the Eternal City, between religious houses, private houses and other institutions.

To date, in Italy, France, Greece, Denmark, Hungary, Poland, Netherlands and Belgium numerous "Houses of Life" have been recognized, most of them monasteries or Catholic religious communities that helped persecuted in the Holocaust.

The plaques that the Wallenberg Foundation set up in the different European cities remind all visitors and passers-by that, although the Holocaust was one of the darkest periods of humanity, many people opposed this terrible evil and their actions marked a difference.

The mission of the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation is to develop educational and outreach projects that promote the values of solidarity and civic courage, ethical pillars that animated the actions of the Saviors of the Holocaust. Raoul Wallenberg is the Swedish diplomat who disappeared in January 1945 after saving the lives of thousands of Jews and others persecuted during World War II. The president of the FIRW is Eduardo Eurnekian and its founder, Baruch Tenenbaum.

**Houses of Life already proclaimed  
by the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation**

<b><u>Institution</u></b>	<b><u>Date of Proclamation</u></b>	<b><u>Location</u></b>	<b><u>Page</u></b>
Adami-Cardini Family Home	06/03/2018	Siena	03
Chiesa di Vignano	06/03/2018	Siena	03
Church of all Saints	07/06/2017	Warsaw	06
Staderini Family Private Home	05/06/2017	Rome	10
Portuguese Pontifical College	31/05/2017	Rome	13
French Pontifical Seminary	09/05/2017	Rome	17
Society of Sisters of Social Service	26/04/2017	Budapest	19
Institute De Merode	14/02/2017	Roma	21
Bispebjerg Hospital	01/11/2016	Denmark	24
L'Oratoire Du Louvre	27/09/2016	Paris	26
Convent Nostra Signora de Sion	21/09/2016	Roma	28
Hospital Fatebenefratelli	21/06/2016	Roma	30
Church of San Gioacchino	14/06/2016	Roma	32
Town of Lastra a Signa	10/05/2016	Italy	35
Convent Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows	13/01/2016	Florence	36
Town of Terzone di Leonessa	21/12/2015	Italy	39
Island of Ereikousa	30/06/2015	Greece	42
Institute Notre-Dame de Sion	12/05/2015	Paris	44
Istituto delle Suore di San Giuseppe	16/04/2015	Rome	46
Istituto Nobile Collegio Mondragone	15/04/2015	Rome	49
Monastery Santissimo Salvatore di Santa Brigida	15/01/2015	Rome	53
General Curia of the Franciscan Capuchins	23/11/2014	Rome	56
Monastery Franciscan Missionaries of Mary	19/11/2014	Florence	59

## Raoul Wallenberg Foundation unveiled two “Houses of Life” in Siena

In November 1943 the Jews of Siena were warned of the impending German incursion. The person who organized the rescue of the threatened Jews was Monsignor Don Luigi Rosadini of the Vignano church, where he sheltered the persecuted. He also managed to get other persecuted people to hide in the residence of the Adami-Cardino Catholic family. Both the church and the residence were declared Houses of Life.



On 6 May 2018 the initial event was held in the 13<sup>th</sup> century building of the Palazzo Pubblico in the Piazza del Campo area of Siena, Italy. The hall was packed and there was standing room only by the time the meeting began at about 11.15. Representatives of the Jewish community of Rome, Florence and Siena attended the ceremony, as well as a large number of the extended Sadun and Cardini/Adami families. Piero Alessandro Cardini, a relative of one of the rescued families, conducted the ceremony. Ms. Jill Blonsky represented the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, the driving force behind the educational program “Houses of Life”.





There were six speakers. Among them, the Archbishop of Siena, Antonio Buoncristiani the Rabbi of Siena, Crescenzo Piatelli; Mr. Corsini, Annalisa Sadun, a member of the rescued Sadun family, and Ms. Blonsky who travel specially from London where she lives. Each speaker thanked the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, an NGO chaired by Eduardo Eurnekian and created by Baruch Tenenbaum. When Mr. Corsini showed the commemorative plaque there was warm and enthusiastic applause.



The meeting continued for about one hour and the audience dispersed for a visit to the first plaque unveiling – the Cardini-Adami family home in San Pietro street. This is located about 10 minutes from the Piazza del Campo up a very steep flight of steps and along a narrow side street, all part of the beautiful old town. Here the unveiling took place by Annalisa Sadun, who was the youngest member of the rescued family.





At 3.30 the crowd moved to St Agnes, the parish church of Don Luigi Rosedini who began the initial rescue of the Sadun family. The church lies some five kilometres from Siena. Here the second unveiling was also conducted by Annelisa Sadun. A Mass followed suit.

Afterward the audience went to the cemetery nearby where Don Luigi and the Cardini-Adami family are buried. Here respects were paid to these heroes of the Holocaust.

## **Warsaw church named 'House of Life' for helping Jews**

*The Roman Catholic All Saints Church in Warsaw, which provided help to Jews in World War II during the Nazi German occupation of Poland, has been recognized as a "House of Life".*

A ceremony to unveil a commemorative plaque in the church on Wednesday was attended by representatives of the government and Jewish organizations, Catholic Church leaders, the diplomatic corps, and the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation.



The Church of All Saints, which is located within the perimeter of what was the city's Jewish Ghetto during World War II, provided wide-ranging assistance to Jews.

### **Help for fleeing Jews**

It issued false baptismal certificates to hundreds of Jews who decided to escape from the ghetto, offered meals and accommodation on the parish premises and placed Jewish children in an orphanage set up in a Warsaw suburb in a house that belonged to the family of the parish priest, Father Marcelli Godlewski.

In 2009, Father Godlewski was posthumously awarded a Righteous among the Nations medal from the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem.

Samuel Tenenbaum, the son of the founder of the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, said during the ceremony that after the Nazi German invasion of Poland, Father Godlewski could not stand idly by and "provided shelter and food to Jews within the walls of this church, even though he realized that offering any kind of assistance to Jews was punishable by death."

### **'Darkness could not defeat it'**

"Life has its headquarters in this church and darkness could not defeat it," he said.

In a letter to participants in the ceremony, President Andrzej Duda described Poles who risked their lives to help Jews as "the nation's heroes".



The House of Life project is an initiative by the Wallenberg Foundation, named after a Swedish diplomat who saved tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews while serving as Sweden's special envoy in Budapest in 1944.

Its goal is to identify and mark sites across Europe (mainly churches, convents, and monasteries) that served as shelters for the victims of German Nazi persecution and extermination during World War II.

The inscription on the plaque reads: "This building served as shelter to innocent people who were persecuted by the Nazis. The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation is proud to declare this site as a House of Life in tribute to rescuers who upheld the values of solidarity and civic courage in accordance with the legacy of Raoul Wallenberg."



## ***The President's letter at the ceremony proclaiming the Church of All Saints in Warsaw as the House of Life***



PRESIDENT.PL



The ceremony proclaiming the Church of All Saints in Warsaw as the House of Life.

*Organizers and Participants of the ceremony proclaiming the Church of All Saints in Warsaw as the House of Life. Your Excellency, Most Reverend Bishop Markowski, Excellencies, Ambassadors, Distinguished Representatives of the Foundation, Reverend Father Waleńdzik, Honourable Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*The ceremony today honours a symbolic space which at the time of barbarity and terror became an enclave of justice and humanity. In the years when Hitler`s Third Reich occupied Poland, amid immense misery inflicted by German Nazis, the Warsaw Church of All Saints served as a place where Poles were helping Jews in an unusual way. It was possible thanks to the determination and heroism of a group of people led by Reverend Prelate, the late Marcei Godlewski – the then parish priest of the local church, which for some time was situated within the boundries of the ghetto.*

*Faced by unbelievable evil and bestiality, Priest Godlewski decided that it was indispensable to act, to stand unequivocally on the side of good. Together with his supporters he stood up against extermination plans of the German occupiers and their relentless law aimed at breaking the solidarity of Polish people with their Jewish fellow citizens and neighbours. In Poland, and further to the east, any help to Jews was punishable by death. And indeed it was enforced, as proved by numerous examples, including the history of the Ulma Family from Markowa, or that of the Kowalski Family*

*from Ciepielów. Despite the real threat, Poles risked their own lives and those of their families, demonstrating extraordinary bravery and courage. In 1942, the Council to Aid Jews "Żegota" was established. One of its activists, Irena Sendlerowa, saved almost 2,500 Jewish children. Jan Karski and Witold Pilecki – representatives of the Polish Underground State – informed the world about the Holocaust in their reports. We will certainly never know the names of all the Poles who saved their Jewish fellow citizens. Nevertheless, all of them are our national heroes. The Republic of Poland is proud of them.*

*One of them, Priest Marcei Godlewski – referred to as the parish priest of the ghetto – helped Jews by issuing false documents, smuggling food and medicines, trying to find shelter for Jewish children. More than 100 people found hiding thanks to him, but presumably thousands of Jews turned to Father Godlewski for assistance. This wonderful chapter in the history of the local parish church constitutes, in a sense, the implementation of the eternal idea of the Ark – a safe refuge which allows to survive and save one`s life, even in the darkest of times.*

*Therefore, I wish to thank cordially the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation for awarding to the Church of All Saints – for the first time in Poland – the honourable title of the House of Life. I am truly delighted. I consider this to be the sign of gratitude and acknowledgement of the heroism and courage of all Poles who were saving Jews during World War II.*

*For our nation the principles by which they were led: solidarity with their neighbours, human brotherhood and loyalty vis-à-vis fellow citizens are always valid. Also today, the sovereign Polish State wants to be the Republic of Friends. We want to remain faithful to our historical tradition and values – the same as those followed by Marcei Godlewski and hundreds of thousands of our compatriots across Poland who risked their lives by helping Jews. May this newly awarded distinction contribute to preserving their deeds in the collective memory of both our nations: the Polish and the Jewish one, as well as in the awarness of Europe and the world.*

*Respectfully yours,*

***The President of the Republic of Poland***

***Andrzej Duda***

## Family House, House of Life



“House of Life” plaque in Staderini family house.

In tribute to **Fausto Staderini** and his wife **Bice Gilardoni**, Righteous among the Nations, who heroically saved lives of Jews persecuted during World War II, the **International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation** declared their home as “**House of Life**”. This programme highlights the places where victims of Nazi persecution found shelter thanks to the courage of those who risked their lives by doing so. Its mission is to mark the physical sites that gave refuge.

Upon proclamation, the Houses of Life are easily recognizable by means of a special commemorative plaque which is affixed at the façade of the building, attracting numerous passers-by, visitors and tourists and raising awareness to the deeds of the rescuers.

The moving ceremony, held on June 5, took place in the Staderini family house, in Via Nicotera 4, in Rome.

There was an introduction by **Professor Alesandra Staderini**, daughter of the Righteous, **Silvia Constantini**, Vice President of the Foundation and **Dr. Irma Staderini**, granddaughter of the Righteous.

Several personalities were present, such as Dr.

Sabrina Alfonsi, representing the Municipality and Professor Giampaolo Malgeri and Professor Gennaro Colangelo, both from the University of Lumsa in Rome.



## The Story

Fausto Staderini, an engineer, was born in Rome. He was the owner of a print shop, and employed 200 people. He was married to Bice, the daughter of Prof. Annibale Gilardoni, a member of the Italian parliament in the 1920s and a well-known anti-fascist. The Staderinis were blessed with six children, the youngest of whom was born in 1942. They were liberal humanists and had many Jewish friends. Bice was especially close with a Jewish woman named Graziella Perugia.



Professor Irma Staderini.

After the German occupation of Italy on September 8, 1943, the Perugia family took shelter in a building that belonged to a monastery in Rome. One day, 15-year-old Anna Maria Staderini overheard Graziella Perugia speaking to her mother, Bice, about how worried she was about her daughter Elvira and her husband, Cesare Campagnano, as well as their children, Bianca and Marcello.

The next morning, the children were brought to the Staderinis' house, where they were received with open arms and quickly made to feel at home. The Staderini children were forbidden from inviting their friends to their home any more, as they needed to keep the presence of the Jewish children there a secret. The danger the Staderinis were exposed to by sheltering Bianca and Marcello Campagnano was even greater because the family was known as anti-fascist, and Bice's father was wanted by the Germans.



Bianca Campagnano – saved with his brother Marcello  
by Fausto and Bice Staderini.

Elvira and Cesare Campagnano and Graziella and Arturo Perugia hid in an attic in a building in Rome, where they remained until the liberation of the city. While in hiding, the Staderinis supplied them with weekly provisions, brought to them by their former housekeeper. The Staderinis also safeguarded the Perugias' valuables and money until after the war.

After the war, the bonds of friendship between the two families continued for many years.

On November 15, 2009, Yad Vashem recognized Fausto and Bice Staderini as Righteous Among the Nations.

## The IRWF declares the Portuguese Pontifical College as “House of Life”



Pontifical Portuguese School is House of Life.

In a commemorative ceremony held on May 30, 2017, the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation declared the Pontifical Portuguese College as “House of Life” for its solidarity and civic courage during the Holocaust. In this Catholic institution, shelter, food and medicines were provided to Jews persecuted by Nazism and its allies. In the presence of representatives of the NGO presided by Eduardo Eurnekian, of his eminence, the Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon, senior officials of the Portuguese clergy, members of the diplomatic corps, the current rector Monsignor José Fernando Caldas Esteves and personalities related to the university, Silvia Costantini, Vice President of the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, read a speech delivered by the Roman Jewish community president, Ruth Dureghello, and presented the plaque “House of Life”.

During the event, the courage of Father Joaquim Carreira, vice-rector of the College from 1943 to 1944 was recalled. Thanks to his actions, more than 50 refugees persecuted by the fascist Nazi regime were able to avoid death.

The recognition also had the presence of Luigi Priolo, a witness of those times in the Portuguese Pontifical College between December 1943 and June 1944, six months in which he lived with Father Carreira and knew his extraordinary personality.





Silvia Constantini, Cardinal Manuel Clemente, Luigi Priollo, Antonio Marujo, Don Fernando Calvas Esteves.

The profile of Father Carreira is described in the book by Antonio Marujo, a Portuguese writer who was also present at the ceremony with his new book, "La lista del Padre Carreira" (*Padre Carreira's List*). The book describes stories and episodes of refugees in the Portuguese Pontifical College during the period of fascism, highlighting the extraordinary heroism of the priest posthumously named "Righteous Among the Nations."

The ceremony had extraordinary media coverage.

<http://www.agencia.ecclesia.pt/noticias/internacional/vaticano-pontificio-colegio-portugues-distinguido-pelo-apoio-a-judeus-durante-ii-guerra-mundial/>

[http://it.radiovaticana.va/news/2017/05/31/riconoscimento\\_al\\_pontificio\\_collegio\\_portoghese/1315891](http://it.radiovaticana.va/news/2017/05/31/riconoscimento_al_pontificio_collegio_portoghese/1315891)

**"Houses of Life"** programme marks with commemorative plaques public and private locations, including convents, monasteries, churches, schools, homes, in which people persecuted by Nazism and their allies found refuge. After more than 70 years of the end of World War II, the proposal aims to thank those who stood up in the front line and risked everything, even their own lives, to help others.

To date, around 500 religious locations have been located throughout Europe. These refuges are, almost all, churches, convents, monasteries, colleges and Catholic boarding schools. In them lives were saved by giving shelter, education and food, to thousands of persecuted by Nazism and its allies. Plaques have already been placed in religious institutions in Rome, Florence, Leonessa, Lastra a Signa, Copenhagen, Paris

and Ereikousa island, in Greece. Soon it will be the turn of institutions in Poland, Belgium and Hungary.

Recently, Eduardo Eurnekian, chairman of the IRWF, discovered the plaque that declared the Istituto delle Suore di San Giuseppe (Institute of the Sisters of St. Joseph) as “House of Life”, also in Rome.

VIDEO OF THE CEREMONY: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZwopecfcOk>



## **French Seminary in Rome honored for protecting Jews from Nazis**

A plaque recalling the rescue of 50 Jews hidden in its walls from 1943 to 1944 was inaugurated Tuesday, May 9 at the French Pontifical Seminary in Rome.

The French Pontifical Seminary of Rome was rewarded, Tuesday evening, May 9, for its action during the Second World War when 50 Jews were hidden within its walls in 1943 and 1944.

A plaque donated by the Raoul-Wallenberg Foundation, which designates the seminary as "House of Life", was unveiled in the presence of the French ambassador to the Holy See, Philippe Zeller. During the ceremony, the names of these 50 Jewish people, hidden after the roundup of October 16, 1943, were read by seminarians.



### **A hundred "outlaws"**

Some passages from the archives of the seminary, read on Tuesday evening by Bishop Antoine Hérouard, his rector, recently ordained Auxiliary Bishop of Lille, provide a better understanding of what happened between October 1943 and June 1944.

On October 26, 1943, he indicates that, despite a return "more reduced than ever" because of the mobilized seminarians, "a dozen requests from Italians" were refused, for lack of space. At the time of the liberation of Rome, in June 1944, the newspaper becomes more precise: "It is now allowed to write that the seminary hid during these eight months, in the year 1943, a hundred of" out-law". Since October, we have always had thirty to forty.

### **In front of the German Kommandantur**

In addition to Belgian, French, American and Alsatian soldiers, Italian soldiers "refusing to fight alongside the Germans", fifty Jews were hidden under sometimes difficult conditions: the German Kommandantur was indeed right in front of the seminary!

A few days before Christmas, the seminar got wind of a possible search obliging to evacuate the house in spite of a Vatican document explaining that "the French Pontifical Seminary is under the responsibility of the Sacred Congregation of the seminaries and, as such, is not not liable to search or requisition ". "What was not

really followed effects," said Bishop Hérouard who recalled that Jews had also been hidden in the false ceiling of the conference room during a search.

### **300 places that served as shelters identified**

For the past two years, the Raoul-Wallenberg Foundation has identified more than 300 places that "served as a refuge for victims of Nazi persecution and extermination during the dark days of the Holocaust," awarding them the title of "House of Life". », Including a very large number of churches, convents and monasteries such as, in Paris, the Notre-Dame de Sion Institute and the Protestant Temple of the Oratory of the Louvre.

Founded by Argentine Baruch Tenenbaum, and named after the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg (1912-1952) who saved several thousand Hungarian Jews during the Second World War, the Raoul-Wallenberg International Foundation is engaged in the recognition and promotion people who saved the Jews from the Holocaust.

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## **"This distinction is a way of transmitting this memory to younger generations"**

In early May, the Raoul-Wallenberg International Foundation awarded the title of "House of Life" to the French Pontifical Seminary in Rome for hiding Jews during the Second World War.

Interview with **Monseigneur Antoine Hérouard**, former rector of the French Seminary in Rome, recently ordained Auxiliary Bishop of Lille.



The French Pontifical Seminary in Rome was honored on Tuesday, May 9 for hiding Jews during the Second World War. What does this recognition mean?

The Raoul-Wallenberg International Foundation committed to promoting the people or institutions that saved the Jews during the Holocaust contacted me in 2016, because they had done a historical study that recognized that the French Pontifical Seminary in Rome fulfilled the criteria of attribution to obtain the title of "House of life". I told them that I was honored with this distinction and that we accepted it. The New York Foundation has identified more than 300 places of life (churches, convents, monasteries) around the world. The French Seminary is the third place of French life



recognized after the Notre-Dame de Sion Institute and the Protestant Temple of the Oratory of the Louvre in Paris.

**What do the archives of the French Pontifical Seminary in Rome reveal?**

Several documents testify that Catholic priests of the seminary have hidden many refugees: a list of Jewish refugees during the 1939-1945 war, a book-book that details the contributions of Jews hosted. We also have a document indicating that there should be no raids without an agreement of the Congregation in Italian and German.

**Do we have a very precise list of people who have been hidden under the law?**

In a confidential note of the Journal de Communauté (internal newspaper NDLR) dated June 5, 1944, it is mentioned that Catholic priests of the French Seminary of Rome hosted in two stages for eight months (1943-1944) a number of refugees including 50 people of Jewish confession, an American captain, a French flying lieutenant, six young Frenchmen, two Poles, some Italians refusing to fight alongside the Germans and Abbe Battmann, Alsatian deserter.

**Is it Pope Pius XII who asked the Roman communities to hide Jews?**

Pope Pius XII asked the religious communities of Rome to welcome all those who were in distress: all the refugees and in particular the Jews. I think it is important to remember this episode because it was criticized Pius XII not to have positions clear enough compared to the drama of the deportation of Jews and the Holocaust. He really encouraged the reception of Jews in religious communities. Pius XII tried - via the state secretariat - to protect the communities: convents and religious houses of Rome. As such, these places could not be searched without the prior agreement of the Vatican. It seems that this instruction was not respected because there was a search.

*Elenco dei profughi israeliti nel Pont. Seminario Francese*

1 Antonini Benedetto	25	Sacerdoti Figlio
2 Antonini Marco	26	Schindel Albert
3 Antonini Mario	27	Schnitzler
4 Amati Michele	28	Schwarz
5 Barberet Emile	29	Scazzochio Giuseppe
6 Parth Francesco	30	Sammio Giorgio
7 Demperad Bruno	31	Sammio Cullio
8 Berger Kissdi	32	Toscano Enrico
9 Fano Mario	33	Toscano Cullio
10 Garrone Cullio	34	Spagnolo Giorgio
11 Giacomini Nino	35	Spagnolo Vittorio
12 Grün Hermann	36	Sulfina Michele
13 Mantel Anatole	37	Yung Francois
14 Montbillard Robert	38	Scazzochio Sara
15 Artolani	39	" Fernanda
16 Parienti	40	" Marcella
17 Parisi Guido	41	" Luisa
18 Parisi Mario	42	Sammio Alberto
19 Peseuti	43	" Emma
20 Properti Giuseppe	44	" Ernesta
21 Properti Roberto	45	" Luciana
22 Rosenzweig Maurice	46	Spagnolo Franco
23 Sacerdoti Padre	47	" Vittoria
24 Sacerdoti Figlio	48	" Gabriella
	49	" Emma
	50	" Guido

***A Vatican document explains that this rescue also entailed risks since the Gestapo searched the premises ... Can you tell us this episode?***

The Kommandantur was located right in front of the French Seminary in Rome, across the street, Via Di Santa Chiara during the war. During a search in 1943 by the Germans, the refugees were hidden in the false ceilings.

***Where was the commemorative plaque "House of Life" put?***

My first idea was to put it outside in the street, near the front door so that passers-by could read it. The foundation had proposed that it be written in English, I suggested that it be written in Italian and French. Finally, we decided with the foundation officials to pose it in the entrance hall of the Seminary on the way to the chapel. Thus, all the visitors who come to the seminary will pass by and will be able to read it.

***What is written on it?***

"In accordance with the legacy of its founder, the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation has the honor of awarding the title of " House of Life "to the French Pontifical Seminary, as a tribute to the Fathers of this House who, by their bravery, have demonstrated exemplary civic and brotherly behavior. "

***You leave your office at the moment when the French Seminary of Rome receives this recognition, do you see a sign?***

No, not really because it was a year between the time the foundation contacted me and the ceremony. I met the Italian head of the Raoul-Wallenberg Foundation twice. We chose together the date of May 9 for the installation of the plate, I did not know then that I was leaving Rome. This distinction is a beautiful sign, a way of transmitting this memory to younger generations.

**Interviewed by E. Delanoë**





## Sisters of Social Service of Budapest was declared House of Life

On 26 April the Society of Social Sister of Budapest (SSS) was declared "House of Life" by the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation.

The Sisters of Social Service are a Roman Catholic religious institute of women founded in Hungary in 1923 by Margaret Slachta. The sisters adopted the social mission of the Catholic Church and Benedictine spirituality with a special devotion to the Holy Spirit.

"Houses of Life" is an educational program lead by the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation aiming to identify, pay tribute and spread the actions of solidarity of institutions or individuals that extended a hand to the persecuted by the Nazis during the Holocaust.



Dr. Gabor Bagdy.

Ferenc Orosz, head of the Raoul Wallenberg Society of Budapest, spoke on behalf of The Raoul Wallenberg Foundation about the role and mission of the Houses of Life educational program. He mentioned the activity of the Holocaust rescuers, Wallenberg and others. He closed his speech quoting some thoughts from Pope Francis' prayer on God Friday, and mentioned that the Pope is one of the founding members of the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation.

Then, Agnes Pataki spoke about the history and activity of the Society of Social Sisters. She spoke in details their work during WWII and the Holocaust. They saved more than 1000 Jewish people. Some persons' activities were mentioned in details. Margit Schlachta, founder and leader



Agnes Pataki

of the society, recognized by Yad Vashem; Sara Salkahazi, killed by the Arrow Cross people (Hungarian Nazis), beatified, recognized by Yad Vashem, and Katlin Roza Peitl, who led the rescuing activity at the very same place where the plaque was placed.

The plaque was unveiled by Dr. Gabor Bagdy, Vice-Major of Budapest and President of the Christian Democratic Party in Budapest, and blessed by Dr. Janos Szekely, Catholic Bishop.

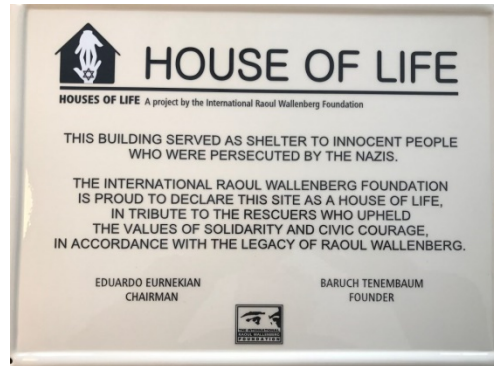


The event was attended by Dr. Jozsef Szecsi, general secretary of the Christian-Jewish Society, by Dr. Endre Bela Huff, executive of the RW Association and by Laszlo Ernyei, councilor of church issues, 2nd District of Budapest. During the ceremony, Ms. Monika Kiss conducted works of chamber music by Liszt, Mozart and Vivaldi.

This is the first House of Life plaque in Hungary donated by the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, an educational NGO chaired by Eduardo Eurnekian and created by Baruch Tenenbaum.

## School San Giuseppe De Merode of Rome is new “House of Life”

*It was officially declared by the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation*



On February 14, 2017 the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, an educational NGO headed by **Eduardo Eurnekian**, declared Collegio San Giuseppe, Istituto De Merode as “House of Life”.

The ceremony, held at the institution, meters from the Plaza España of the Italian capital, was attended by more than two hundred people.

During the Nazi occupation the San Giuseppe College clandestinely opened its doors to the persecuted, mostly Jews, and gave them food, assistance and medicines until the end of the war.



Cacciotti, Fausto Zabban, Gianni Polgar.

The director of the school, **Father Alessandro Cacciotti**, and the representative of the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, **Silvia Costantini**, opened the event and illustrated the audience on the “Houses of Life” program.

Then there was an audiovisual presentation for the students of the school.

The president of the Museum of the Shoah, **Mario Venezia**, the president of the Jewish community in Rome, **Ruth Dureghello**, and the president of the National Union of Jewish Communities in Italy, **Noemi Di Segni**, also spoke to the audience.



Silvia Costantini, Father Cacciotti.

The ceremony was completed with testimonies from people saved at the school and their descendants. Among them, **Fausto Zabban**, **Gianni Polgar**, **Paolo Emilio Barbano** and **Maria Giovanna Barbano**.

The closing of the act was in charge of **Father Robert Schieler**, secretary general of the Community of Merode.

## Copenhagen: Raoul Wallenberg Foundation declares Bispebjerg Hospital “House of Life”



On 1 November 2016 the prestigious Bispebjerg Hospital of Copenhagen was recognized as **“House of Life”**. The ceremony was celebrated in the chapel of the institution, a venue that *“played an important role in the hiding of Jews before being spirited off to Sweden. Therefore, this is the right place to conduct this ceremony”*, said **Janne Elsborg**, Chief Executive Officer of the hospital.

*“This is a tribute to the unparalleled effort by the Danish people to rescue their Jewish compatriots from the Nazis”*, stressed **Eduardo Eurnekian**, Chairman of the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation.

**Sophie Haestorp Andersen**, Chairman of the Regional Council, said that the Hospital *“is a place with a long and ambivalent history. The history both contains a bloody chapter, but also very compassionate, humanitarian, episodes.”*

### **Facts of the past**

During the Second World War, the Danish people were involved **in one of the largest rescue operations known by mankind.**

As a result of this orchestrated effort, the great majority of the 8,000 Jews who were living in Denmark at that time were saved. Thousands of Danes helped hide the Jews and eventually managed to transfer them to fishing villages from where they were ferried out to neighboring Sweden.

In this riveting story, the Bispebjerg hospital played a key role.



Left to right. Janne Elsborg, Chief Executive Officer of the Bispebjerg Hospital; Sophie Haestorp Andersen, Chairman of the Regional Council; Silvia Costantini.

In the summer 1943, the number of sabotage and other illegal activities increased. The number of wounded and injured member of Danish Resistance fighter increased as well. Bispebjerg Hospital soon became known as safe place for treatment.

Furthermore, surgeon K.H. Koster, Ellen Christense and other doctors and nurses made Bispebjerg Hospital one of the big places for collection and transport of Jews to Sweden.

Generously, almost all of the 130 nurses opened their private homes for people in need. Each nurse took care of up to 10 persons. Several doctors living at the hospital premises did the same.

About 1500-2000 Danish Jews found refuge in the Bispebjerg Hospital chapel, clinics, ambulatories and nursing homes during two weeks of October 1943.

During the war the Hospital also experienced losses among the members of its staff. Doctor Eric Hagen and hospital priest Julius Grundfor were among them.



Notably, after the end of the occupation most Jewish Danes that came back to Denmark found that their neighbors had protected their businesses and assets.



*“The **Houses of Life educational program** is about paying tribute to flesh and blood heroes who risked their lives under those brick and mortar buildings. The House of Life plaque we are about to unveil will be a monument to their heroism. An eternal reminder of the spirit of good for visitors, patients and tourists alike”,* stressed **Silvia Costantini**, European Vice President of the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation.



Former Chief Rabbi Bent Melchior and Silvia Costantini.

Former Chief Rabbis, Bent Melchior and Bent Lexner; Mr. Dan Rosenberg Asmusse, President of the Jewish Community and Israeli Consul, Ms. Einav Shalev, were among the attendants.

On 2 October 2013 the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation (IRWF) bestowed the “Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Medal” upon the Prime Minister of Denmark, Helle Thorning-Schmidt. The ceremony took place at the Royal Danish Opera.

The Prime Minister received the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Medal on behalf of those Danes who contributed to the rescue of thousands of Danish Jews in 1943. **Baruch Tenenbaum**, founder of the IRWF, presented the award.

## L'Oratoire de Louvre is a new House of Life



On 27 September 2016 the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation marked L' Oratoire de Louvre (the Oratory of Louvre) as "House of Life".

The Protestant Temple of l'Oratoire de Louvre, also known as Eglise de l'Oratoire Réformée Louvre, is a historic Protestant church located at 145 rue Saint-Honoré – 160 rue de Rivoli in the 1st arrondissement. It was founded in 1611 by Pierre de Bérulle as the French branch of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri. It was made the royal chapel of the Louvre Palace, declared by Louis XIII on December 23, 1623.

In 1933, the Protestant pastor Paul Vergara became pastor of the Oratory. He resisted during the occupation with his wife Marcelle and worked tirelessly to save Jews from Nazi persecution. Thanks to their actions they managed to preserve the lives of sixty-three children and a dozen adults.

The ceremony was attended by representatives of the Swedish Embassy and the Argentina Embassy in Paris. Also, Itzhak Revah, Jean Moutappa and Abe Radkin of "Aladin Project", Carla Arigoni, President of Culture of the first district, Frederic Jumeno, representing the City, Chansia Euphrosine, director of the children's center "La Clairière" (where the hidden Jewish



children were saved), and Alain Villain, a child survivor from the Holocaust.

Alexis Bulgari, representative of the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, opened the event. Mr. Bulgari is the son of Constantino Bulgari, Righteous Among the Nations, who in 1943, along with his wife Laura, gave refuge to three Jewish women in his house in Rome. Because of their generous action, on December 31, 2003 both were honored with the title of Righteous Among the Nations in Jerusalem.



Alexis Bulgari's speech

Then Philippe Braunstein, historian of Protestantism, spoke. He recalled the constant opposition that those responsible for the Parish of Oratoire made against discrimination of the Jews, despite the German Official regularly attended numerous functions.

Finally, pastor Marc Pernot spoke; he highlighted the heroic act of salvation carried out by the former Pastor Paul Vergara, his wife, and assistant Marcelle Guillemot.

In the end, Alexis Bulgari and Marc Pernot discovered the "Maison de Vie" (House of Life) plaque, making it public to presents and passersby.

### [VIDEO OF THE CEREMONY](#)



## Convent Our Lady of Zion is a new “House of Life”



Nostra Signora di Zion

On 21 September 2016 the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation marked as “House of Life” the former convent of Our Lady of Zion in Rome, now the headquarters of the prestigious Catholic University of America and the Catholic University of Australia.

David Dawson, director of both universities, said that “historical memory is important to understand the present and not fall into the mistakes of the past, particularly for the education of young people.”

Sister Oonah O’Shea, superior general of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Zion, recalled those terrible moments of the Second World War, when the monastery gates were opened to give shelter to many Jews persecuted by the fascist allies of the Third Reich.

“It was thanks to the courage of Virginia Badetti (Mother Superior Maria Agustina), Emilia Benedetti (Mother Marie-Agnes), both recognized with the honorary title of “Righteous among the Nations ” that more than two hundred people found a safe haven in this convent.”

Ferruccio Sonnino, (90 years), who hid in the convent from April to May 1944, until a few days before the arrival of the Allies, gave a moving testimony. “It was a very special period” said Sonnino, referring to the Nazi persecution. “The Italian people responded with great generosity. We must also recognize the role played by the Catholic church. It should be remembered and recognized. ”

In his speech, the President of the Jewish Community of Rome, Ruth Dureghello, said “Is very significant that this place today is an educational institution. Equally significant



is that two of the hidden young Jews have become teachers in Hebrew schools. Both of them, present here today, have dedicated their lives to the future generations.”

Finally, Gabriele Rigano, a history professor at the University of Perugia, said that about 6,000 Jews were hidden in the city of Rome, inside about 160 religious institutions, with the help of individuals and parishes. It is a considerable number since in Rome there were about 14,000 Jews and were deported about 1,800, during the German occupation.

The commemorative “House of Life” plaque was presented by Silvia Costantini, European vice president of the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation. Among those attending the ceremony were Rafael Erdreich, of the Israeli Embassy in Rome, Claudio Procaccia, director of the Department of Jewish Culture in Rome and Mrs. Elena Castelli, granddaughter of Sebastian Romero Radigales, Spanish diplomat, Righteous Among the Nations.

[VIDEO: Testimony of Ferruccio Sonnino](#)





## The incredible story of the false “K disease” who saved Jews from the Nazis

*Hospital of the Brothers of St. John of God recognized as “House of Life”*



Gabriele Sonnino and Luciana Tedesco, two of the Jews rescued by the Fatebenefratelli hospital, in front of the new commemorative plaque marking the Fatebenefratelli hospital as House of Life. Franco Ilardo.

The name was terrible, but the “K disease” was not a lethal virus. It was the great invention of Professor Giovanni Borromeo and religious of the Hospital of the Brothers of St. John of God, located on the Tiber Island in Rome, to save the lives of dozens of Jews persecuted by the Nazis during World War II.

When the SS entered the hospital, medical and religious explained to the Germans that behind the doors of two special wards, there were patients suffering from this terrible disease, some terminally ill. The officers did not dare to open the doors.

If they did, they would have met with Jewish families. In one room, men, on the other, women and children.

To remember this singular feat of creativity and courage, the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation bestowed, on June 21, upon the hospital, one of the oldest and renowned in the Eternal City, the prestigious recognition of “House of Life”.

In the courtyard of the hospital a plaque was placed in the presence of the highest representatives of the Jewish community of Rome, in particular its president, Ruth Dureghello; the vice president of the hospital, brother Giampiero Luzzatto; the President of the Shoah Foundation Museum of Rome, Mario Venezia; as well as religious and hospital executives.



The emotion clouded the eyes of many of those present when Luciana Tedesco spoke. She was a child of ten during the German occupation. The hospital saved her life and the lives of her entire family .

“I think that there was no patient in this hospital,” Luciana, now 83, said with a smile on her face. “All the people I saw were healthy. We were refugees who found a home here.”



During the ceremony the Polish religious Maurizio Bialek was remembered, head of this community of the Order of St. John of God, who set up a clandestine radio station in the basement of the hospital, which was in continuous contact with the partisans of Rome and the region. The religious gave the false sick documents and alternative shelters in monasteries of the Italian capital.

Professor Borromeo, a highly prestigious doctor at the time, had a good sense of humor, and baptized the illness of his invention with the letter “K”, the initial of the last name of a Nazi officer in Rome, Herbert Kappler. “K” was also the first letter of the the infamous General Albert Kesselring, stationed in Rome.

At the ceremony also another survivor attended, Gabriele Sonnino, who entered the hospital on October 16, 1943, at the age of four: “There were kids my age -states to Aleteia.org-. We could not do anything all day, and did not know why we were locked up there. We felt it was a punishment. Today we know it was salvation. ”

With tears in his eyes Gabriele recalled brother Maurizio Bialek: “It was my second father. I owe him my life. ”

The plaque that from now on will be seen by thousands who daily cross the courtyard of the hospital, states: “This place was a beacon of light in the darkness of the Holocaust. It is our moral duty to remember these great heroes for new generations to recognize and appreciate them.”



## Church of San Giocchino in Prati is a new House of Life



On 14 June 2016 the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation unveiled a plaque that declares and identifies as **House of Life** the church of San Giocchino in Prati, in Rome. Dozens of children were hidden and saved there during the Holocaust.

Among the attendants and speakers there were Father Ezio Marcelli, the priest that conducted the research; Miriam and Gianna Moscati, daughters of one of the people rescued; Enrico Modigliani from Projecto Memoria; Claudio Procaccia, Director of the Dipartimento Beni e attività culturali de la Comunidad Judia de Roma and Gennaro Colangelo, professor at the Università Lumsa. At San Giocchino 35 people were saved, jewish individuals and political refugees. The ceremony was a tribute to the rescuers. Father Antonio Dressino and Suore Margherita Bernès, as well as to Pietro Lestini and his daughter Giuliana.

Houses of Life is an educational program created and develop by the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation. It was launched in 2014 and aims to identify locations, most of them religious ones, where persecuted people found refuge during Second World War.





Padre Ezio Marcelli, Miriam and Gianna Moscati.

So far, the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, a global NGO chaired by Eduardo Eurnekian and created by Baruch Tenenbaum, has located numerous buildings and institutions that qualify to be declared House of Life. In Rome alone almost two hundred were found. Other Houses of Life were identified in France, Poland, Greece, Germany and Denmark, among other countries.

In almost all the cases the refugees were mostly children whose parents were taken prisoners and conducted to concentration camps. These children were protected until the end of the war when they were reunited with relatives that had survived. This is the case of Emmanuel and Raffaele Pacifici, sons of Rabbi Riccardo Reuven Pacifici of Genoa (killed by the Nazis), who were protected by Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, in Florence. A grandchild of them is the current President of the Jewish community in Rome.

The purpose of the “Houses of Life” program is to identify and honor those who reached out and helped people in need by risking their own lives, as well as the life of family and friends. There are public places such as convents, monasteries, churches, schools, and privately owned homes, where Jews persecuted by the Nazis were sheltered and were given food and medicines. “Seventy years after the end of the Second World War this educational proposal has an impact as it acknowledges and awards those who were on the front line and risked everything to help their fellow man”, Eurnekian said.



The program takes place throughout Europe with the cooperation of Aleteia, a Catholic news agency, and the participation of Silvia Costantini and Jesús Colina.

## **Saved from Nazi persecution disguised as Franciscans**



Silvia Costantini (FIRW) unveils "House of life" plaque.

Firenze – Jews and members of the resistance to the Nazi-fascist regime saved their lives in the Tuscan town of Lastra a Signa, thanks to the courage of Franciscan friars who welcomed them in their monastery, masquerading them as religious to rescue them from the Nazi raids.

To remember the heroism of those who risked their lives and saved defenseless persecuted, the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation declared the former monastery of the Franciscan friars of St. Lucia as "House of Life". This temple is located in this town of 20,000 inhabitants, 12 kilometers from Firenze.

The Raoul Wallenberg Foundation is an educational NGO. Its president is Eduardo Eurnekian and its founder, Baruch Tenembaum.

The ceremony took place on May 10 in a moving meeting in which Eugenio Giani, president of the Italian region of Tuscany, civil Authorities and security forces of the city participated.

The climax occurred when Mr. Pier Damiano Marini, 91, who was saved by the friars, bursted into tears as he recalled the heroism of two friars who did not hesitate to challenge the Nazis to save him and his persecuted friends.

From September 1943 until August 1944, the walls of this ancient monastery hosted numerous people persecuted by the Fascists and the Nazis because of their origin or their opposition to the regime.



Eugenio Giani, president of Toscana.

At first, the superiors of the Franciscan community, hesitated to welcome the persecuted, because of the consequences that could fall on the entire religious community if they were discovered by the Nazis.

However, they soon decided to open the monastery gates. The decision was taken thanks to the courage of the superior, Father Elpidio Perugini. Refugees, particularly Mr. Marini, recalled a poor friar, Benigno Salvadori, who devoted himself to attend their unexpected guests.

It was him who devised the getaway from the monastery to lead them to a safer place, another religious house in the Piazza Savonarola of Florence, wearing the refugees with the Franciscan habit.

During the operation, the fugitives were arrested by paratroopers of the German SS. Fray Benigno interposed between the Germans and the Persecuted to convince them that they were really religious. He was so eloquent, that the SS allowed them to pass.

Among the people who could save their lives in the monastery, was Giorgio Lasz, a Jewish engineer of Padua, who worked as director of the Italian railways company until the racial laws were enacted.

On September 8, according to the chronicle written by one of the friars of the Convent of St. Lucia, "given the ruthless persecution of the Jews," the engineer Lasz "requested and obtained hospitality to our convent. He is a very gentle and polite man, very reverent with the priests, and very respectful of our religion. "



In fact, Lasz had Monsignors in the Vatican as friends, who helped his daughter to receive a visa so that she could travel to Brazil and meet her husband.

Giorgio Lasz was welcomed at the convent from September 8th until November 1943, when he could travel hidden to Rome, where he was welcomed by another community of priests who served deaf-mute people.

Among those present at the ceremony was Patricia Finzi, the only granddaughter Giorgio Lasz had, who has been able to reconstruct the deeds that helped save the life of his grandfather and the heroic testimonies of the Franciscan friars.

The President of Tuscany, Eugenio Giani, documented the numerous instances of heroism that took place in the Italian region during the Second World War, both by the resistance as by the safety net that the Catholic Church interwove through its monasteries, convents, schools and parishes driven by the Archbishop of Florence, Cardinal Elia Dalla Costa, who was declared by Israel as Righteous Among the Nations, and whose cause is in the process of canonization.

Father Roberto Bellato, representative of the Franciscans of Tuscany, said that the plaque placed by the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation and the City Council cannot remain as just a memory of the past, but must become a lesson for the present, where the danger of violence or persecution still exists.

On behalf of President Eduardo Eurnekian and founder Baruch Tenenbaum, Silvia Costantini, vice president of the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, said that this celebration aims to make “memory of good” an inspiration to children and youth.

In fact, among those present, there was a group of adolescents who constitute the “Municipal Council of Boys”, an institution which democratically chooses a “Mayor” as a representative of the youngest of the city.

Ms. Silvia Costantini, unveiled the plaque on behalf of the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation. She said: “This plaque will remind all visitors and passersby that notwithstanding that the Holocaust was one of the darkest periods of humanity, many people opposed the terrible evil and made a difference.”



## Florentine sisters saved 12 Jewish girls, the convent became 'House of Life'



The Convent of Sisters serves Mary SS. Sorrowful in Florence was identified as the 'House of Life' by Raoul Wallenberg International Foundation for hiding 12 Jewish girls persecuted during World War II.

On Wednesday, January 13, at the General House of the Institute, on Faentina Street 195, the memorial plaque will be unveiled.

In the autumn of 1943, the General Superior of the Congregation, Mother Maddalena Cei (declared in 1998 righteous among the nations), responding to the invitation of Cardinal Florence Elia Dalla Costa, housed and hid among the educators, 12 Jewish girls from Poland, from Belgium and France. At the end of the war almost everyone found parents or relatives. Sara and Michal Nissenbaum in the convent took the name of Odette and Michelina Laurent, but had lost all the family and the Minor Tribunal entrusted her home to the chief rabbi in Florence. They later wanted to remember the time spent in the convent and Sister Maddalena was recognized as one of the nations.

Now the recognition of the Convent of the Wallenberg Foundation, a non-profit, non-governmental organization, titled the Swedish diplomat who saved the lives of thousands of Jews and others persecuted. The Foundation aims to develop educational programs and awareness-raising campaigns based on the values of solidarity and civic courage that animated those who saved so many people from the Holocaust.

## In the Nazi-Fascist persecution, an Italian village became "House of Life"



The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation gives recognition to the Church of San Pedro, in the Terzone di Leonessa locality, where its inhabitants risked their lives to welcome a Jewish family

When the Nazi-fascist persecution intensified in 1943 and 1944, a mountain village in the center of Italy became a "House of Life" to welcome a persecuted Jewish family.

Terzone di Leonessa, a town that today has 340 inhabitants, near Rieti, made a real feat by risking the lives of its men, women and children to give home and food for months to the five members of the Pisetzky family (the mother, the father, two teenage sons, and grandmother), who fled Rome to escape safe deportation to the Nazi death camps.

For this reason, in an emotional celebration, which gathered on December 21st the inhabitants of several of the nearby towns, the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation gave the "House of Life" recognition to the Church and the parish house of San Pedro, where the family found refuge.

At the ceremony, the mayor, Paolo Trancassini, clarified that "this recognition is particularly important at a time like this, in which the understanding and respect of different cultures and worlds are discussed by fanaticism of a religious nature."

"I want the example of our grandparents and grandmothers to be a teaching for future generations, educating them in the values of human dignity, respect and mutual tolerance," added Trancassini.

The Bishop of Rieti, Monsignor Domenico Pompili, acknowledged the pedagogical importance of this initiative of the Wallenberg Foundation and proposed to the inhabitants of the village to repeat the example given by their grandparents, welcoming one of the thousands of families who today flee from the persecution, seeking refuge in Europe, as Pope Francis has requested.



Actually the events that took place in Leonessa during the Second World War have been reconstructed thanks to the testimony of Marco Pisetzky, recently deceased, one of the two children of the refugee family.

Pisetzky, in January 2013, returned to Leonessa to revive along with the local population those months that, paradoxically, in his adolescence, were "the happiest of his life", because in the middle of the persecution, the population offered him a extraordinary welcome.

Marco's family, of Polish origin, came to this village at the suggestion of one of the ladies who worked as a servant in their house in Rome, who put them in touch with the pastor of the Church, Don Lorenzo Gnocchi.

"Don Lorenzo - Marco Pisetzky has testified - never tried to convert us or asked us for money. Moreover, knowing that we did not have liquid money, he himself went to the countryside to ask the peasants for eggs and meat. "

The inhabitants of the place knew that the Pisetzky were Jews. The partisans fed them at night. The ceremony was attended by Professor Andrea Ungari, professor of History at LUISS-Guido Carli University, who illustrated the value of the peasants: on the one hand, they risked reprisals from German soldiers if they discovered that they were hiding Jews.

On the other hand, the peasants denouncing the Jewish family could have received a reward and grown in recognition by the occupation.



And yet, as Ungari continued, none of those humble mountaineers, who spent a moment of serious shortages and difficulties, betrayed the Jewish family.

It was the solemn opportunity for this mountain population to join the Jubilee of Mercy that Pope Francis has called.

The Wallenberg Foundation, presided over by Eduardo Eurnekian, and founded by Baruch Tenenbaum, presented this recognition in the form of a gravestone, which was placed on the facade of the parochial church of the little town.

This plaque, explains the Foundation, "will remind all visitors that, although the Holocaust was one of the darkest periods of humanity, many people opposed this terrible evil and thus made the difference."

The project "Houses of life" not only recognizes the example of people who gave refuge to persecuted during the Holocaust, but also in other situations of persecution and genocide, as happened in the case of the Armenians, who sometimes could be saved thanks to the generosity of Turkish citizens.

## The island of Ereikousa declared “House of Life”



House of Life plaque for Ereikousa, Greece.

In a moving ceremony that took place at the island of Ereikousa, the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, represented by its Vice-President, Danny Rainer, unveiled the House of Life plaque at the Museum of Ereikousa.

The museum was chosen to symbolically represent the courageous islanders of Ereikousa who, during the dark days of WWII, gave refuge to a Jewish family from Corfu.

The story of Ereikousa is singular. In fact, it illustrates a collective effort by Father Andronikos and the local islanders to save the lives of Savvas Israel, his daughters; Spera, Nini and Julia, along with Savvas' adopted granddaughter Rosa, whose sons, Peretz and Abraham attended the ceremony.



Lina Orfanos Bambinis and Andrea Goulis.

Savvas Israel was a tailor from Corfu, who conducted periodical visits to Ereikousa to serve his customers.

He and his relatives were sheltered most of the time at the house of the local priest, Father Andronikos, but from time to time, they switched houses, especially when the German soldiers or Nazis in disguise came to the island.

The people of Ereikousa have displayed a joint spirit of civic solidarity, very much in line with the legacy of Raoul Wallenberg.

Since Father Andronikos' house, where the Savvas were sheltered most of the time is located in a remote place and since they sometimes moved to other houses in the island, we unveiled the House of Life plaque in the Museum of Ereikousa, as a gesture of recognition to the brave people of Ereikousa at large.



Danny Rainer.

The ceremony was organized together with the Association of Friends of Greek Jewry (Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue & Museum), the municipal authorities of Ereikousa, Yvette Corporon, who wrote a book inspired in this story ("When the Cypress whispers"), as well as relatives of the rescuers and survivors, including Abraham and Peretz Hassid, sons of the late Rosa Belelli, who was adopted by Savvas Israel and saved in the island.

The event took place at the Museum and at the Plateia (Town Square) of Ereikousa with the attendance of more than 200 people.

The Kehila Kedosha also presented the Award of Moral Courage to the people of Ereikousa.

Acclaimed opera singer, Lina Orfanos Bambinis, accompanied by guitarist Kostas Tsoukalas, performed a number of songs.



The speakers were Andrea Goulis, Deputy Major of Ereikousa; Marcia Ikonomopoulos of the Kehila Kedosha; Yvette Corporon, Spyros Orfan, Maayan, Rosa's granddaughter; Abraham Hassid, Rosas's son; Gilad Yafet, from My Heritage and Danny Rainer.



Peretz Hassid and Emilia Capecis.

All of them highlighted the courageous spirit of solidarity of the islanders.

A message from the Chairman of the Wallenberg Foundation, Eduardo Eurnekian, was read aloud during the ceremony: *"Let us celebrate and promote the "admirable feats of courage and civic solidarity displayed by the people of Ereikousa who reached-out to the persecuted ones, disregarding their own risk."*

After the ceremony, the Hassid family, Yvette Corporon and Danny Rainer went to the house of Ms. Emilia Capecis, a 94 year old resident of the island. Ms. Capecis told about her experiences as a youngster, during the war, and the war remembrances she has from her bond with Rosa, while she was hidden in the island.

## Wallenberg Foundation. Notre-Dame de Sion is declared "Maison de Vie"



The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation bestows the title of **"House of Life" to the Notre-Dame de Sion Institution**. It is a tribute to the people of the school who exercised the values of solidarity and civic courage by offering refuge to individuals persecuted by the Nazis. The ceremony took place in Paris, on 12 May 2015.

A commemorative plaque was unveiled with a text engraved in French that reads:  
"This institution has offered refuge to innocent people who were persecuted by the Nazis. According to the legacy of Raoul Wallenberg, the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation is honored to bestow the title of "House of Life" to the Notre-Dame de Sion Institution, in tribute to the people of this school who, through their courage, have proved an exemplary behavior of civil solidarity and fraternity. **Eduardo Eurnekian, Chairman – Baruch Tenenbaum, Founder.**"



Jesús Colina and Silvia Constantini.

“**Houses of Life**” is an educational program lead by the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation aiming to identify, pay tribute and spread the actions of solidarity of institutions or individuals that extended a hand to the persecuted by the Nazis during the Holocaust.

The program is taking place throughout Europe with the cooperation of Aleteia, the Catholic news agency and its Editorial Director, **Jesús Colina** and Institutional Relations Manager, **Silvia Costantini**, <http://www.aleteia.org/en>.

[WATCH THE VIDEO!](#)



## Istituto delle Suore di San Giuseppe is a new House of Life

On 12 June 2015, Eduardo Eurnekian, Chairman of the Wallenberg Foundations, unveiled in Rome a plaque that declares and identifies as House of Life the Istituto delle Suore di San Giuseppe.



Eurnekian also presented the Wallenberg Medal to Sister Emerenziana Bolledi who, as a novice, gave shelter to children persecuted by the Nazis. "There were 60 people rescued from the Nazis between 1943 and 1944 in this house: 60 lives that were saved thanks to true mothers who honored life," said Eurnekian. [Eduardo Eurnekian and Sor Emerenziana](#)

Houses of Life is an educational program created and developed by the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation. It was launched in 2014 and aims to identify locations, most of them religious ones, where persecuted people found refuge during Second World War.

So far, the Wallenberg Foundation, a global NGO created by Baruch Tenenbaum, has located numerous buildings and institutions that qualify to be declared House of Life. In Rome alone almost two hundred were found. Houses of Life were also identified in France, Poland, Greece and Germany.



[Raoul Wallenberg Medal.](#)

The refugees were mostly children whose parents were taken prisoners and conducted to concentration camps. These children were protected until the end of the war when they were reunited with relatives that had survived. This is the case of Emmanuel and

Raffaele Pacifici, sons of Rabbi Riccardo Pacifici of Genoa (killed by the Nazis), who were protected by Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, in Florence. A grandchild of them is the current President of the Jewish community in Rome.



Silvia Costantini and Jesús Colina.

The purpose of the “Houses of Life” program is to identify and honor those who reached out and helped people in need by risking their own lives, as well as the life of family and friends. There are public places such as convents, monasteries, churches, schools, and privately owned homes, where Jews persecuted by the Nazis were sheltered and were given food and medicines. “Seventy years after the end of the Second World War this educational proposal has an impact as it acknowledges and awards those who were on the front line and risked everything to help their fellow man”, Eurnekian said.

The program takes place throughout Europe with the cooperation of Aleteia, a Catholic news agency, with the participation of Jesús Colina, Editor in Chief and Silvia Costantini, Institutional Relations Manager. <http://www.aleteia.org/en>

## **Villa Mondragone recognized as “House of Life” for saving children from the Holocaust**



Giuseppe Novelli, rector of the University of Tor Vergata and Riccardo Pacifici, Chairman of Rome’s Jewish Community.

On 15 April 2015, the Villa Mondragone, of the Tor Vergata University of Rome, academic institution with over 30,000 students, has been recognized as “House of Life” for hiding, behind its walls, several Jews during the Nazi occupation in Italy. The feat was accomplished thanks to the heroism of the Jesuit priest of Maronite origin, Raffaele de Ghantuz Cubbe.

The recognition is attested in a commemorative plaque at the entrance of this former rest of Popes. It was awarded by the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, an educational NGO chaired by Eduardo Eurnekian and founded by Baruch Tenenbaum. On behalf of the Wallenberg Foundation the plaque was presented by Jesús Colina and Ms. Silvia Costantini, Chief Editor and Institutional Relations Manager of the Catholic News Agency, Aleteia. <http://www.aleteia.org/en>

When in 1943 the Nazis occupied the Eternal City, Mondragone, located in Frascati, a town located 20 kilometers from Rome, it was a school run by the Jesuits. Two unrelated Jewish families visited the rector, Jesuit Father Raffaele de Ghantuz Cube, and asked him to hide among students their three sons: Mario and Graziano Sonnino (11 and 9 years old) and Marco Pavoncello (9 years old).





Marco Graziano Sonnino and Pavoncelli (back),  
saved in Mondragon, Giuseppe Novelli, and Silvia Costantini.

The priest kept the Jewish identity of the three boys in secret to prevent that other small children betray them during a German inspection. The three boys lived in the school with a false name until the liberation day in 1944. Then they continued their studies with their real name until 1948.

The ceremony was attended by Graziano Sonnino (his brother Mario passed away) and Marco Pavoncello (80). Both remembered with affection the testimony of Father Raffaele de Ghantuz Cubbe, who always respected their Jewish identity.

“Father Cubbe risked his life. Then we realized that if the Nazis had known what was going on here, they would have murdered him.”, admitted Mr. Sonnino.

In 2010 Yad Vashem recognized Father Raffaele de Ghantuz Cubbe as Righteous Among the Nations.

The ceremony was also attended by two nephews of the priest, Francesco and Riccardo de Ghantuz Cubbe. Riccardo, in particular, explained that the origin of the family is in Aleppo, the great Syrian city, meeting place for Muslims, Jews and Christians, which allowed the Maronite Jesuit understand the importance of the interreligious dialogue.

The bishop of the diocese, Monsignor Raffaello Martinelli, one of the writers of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, illustrated the extraordinary progress that has experienced the dialogue between Catholics and Jews after the Second Vatican Council, convened by Pope John XXIII.



Bishop of the Diocese, Monsignor Raffaello Martinelli.

Meanwhile, Riccardo Pacifici, president of the Jewish Community of Rome, praised the mission and work of the Wallenberg Foundation and assured collaboration for individualizing more “Houses of Life” that remain to be discovered.

“Given what is happening in the world nowadays initiatives like this one are more necessary than ever,” said Novelli, recalling in particular the recent killing of 147 young people at the University of Garissa, in Kenya.

### Villa Mondragone’s Program.

Villa Mondragone. Virtual tour.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GVFE2bQZ00>

Get more on the Houses of Life program

## A Jew survived the Holocaust thanks to a nun for saving his life and dignity



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When he was 15, Piero Piperno found shelter in the Monastery of Santa Brigida in Rome. The Mother Superior, Mary Elizabeth Hesselblad, respected his Jewish religion. Today the monastery is a “House of Life”.

If Piero Piperno is alive today it is thanks to a little sister who welcomed him into the convent in Rome. But the gratitude of this Jewish Holocaust survivor to that woman, sanctified today, is even more profound for another reason: at all times she respected his conscience and his religion.

Piperno offered his testimony on January 15 during the “House of Life” award ceremony to the Monastery of the Order of the Most Holy Savior of St. Bridget (Santissimo Salvatore di Santa Brigida), Piazza Farnese, Rome, sponsored by the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation.

“This is your house,” said Mother Tekla Famiglietti, the current abbess of the order during the ceremony, to make people and the elderly guest feel at ease. “This was my house,” replied Mr. Piperno opening a window on the past, on the war, the darkness of evil and of good courage.

### **THE COURAGE OF A NUN**

In December 1943, in Rome, as well as in the rest of Europe, the Jews were being hunted by the Nazis. Two months earlier, on October 16, the SS had flooded the streets of the Portico d’Ottavia, in the ghetto, and raked 1024 people, including over 200 children.



## Houses of Life by The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation

After the war, only fifteen men and a woman returned from Auschwitz concentration camp where they were taken to, and no one of the two hundred children. Roman Jews survivors hid where they could and as they could.

For the twelve members of the Piperno and Sed families, the fragile shield against the black hole of deportation were a little wooden door on the rear of the Church of Santa Brigida in Piazza Farnese, and the courage of a little nun, Mother Mary Elizabeth Hesselblad.

The Mother Superior of the order of the Most Holy Savior of Saint Bridget, canonized in 2000 and acknowledged as a "Righteous Among the Nations" in 2004, opened the doors of the monastery to the fugitives and sheltered them, together with her sisters, until June 4, 1944, when Rome was liberated.

She saved their lives. Even more. "When she received us in this house – Piero Piperno, 15 years old at the time, said during the ceremony, - the blessed Mother Elizabeth told us that we should follow our religious traditions. It was difficult those days that a Church representative would convey such a message. "

It took, in fact, until the Second Vatican Council to overcome the barrier between Catholics and Jews.

"But there are always – Piperno continues without hiding the emotion – some prophets and Mother Elizabeth was one, anticipating what was to come. She saved our lives, but above all, in those dark times, she has restored the dignity of our religion."

## THE DARKNESS OF THE HOLOCAUST



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“This place has been a guiding light in the darkness of the Shoah” said Silvia Costantini, Vice President of the Wallenberg Foundation for Italy and Director of Communications and Institutional Relations of Aleteia.

The ceremony was attended by the Ambassador of Sweden in Italy, Ruth Jacoby, Israeli diplomatic representatives, members of Jewish institutions, and Mr. Leo Paserman President of the Museum of the Shoah Foundation, and former President of Rome Jewish Community.

“It is our moral duty – continued Costantini – to distinguish and remember these great heroes, so that the new generations can learn about them and appreciate them.”

“Research and education are the two poles of activity of the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, trying to uncover untold stories of rescuers and striving to instill in the hearts and minds of the younger generation the spirit of civic solidarity”, Vice President Costantini said.

It is significant that the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, founded by Baruch Tenenbaum and directed by Eduardo Eurnekian, counts among its first members former Archbishop of Buenos Aires Jorge Mario Bergoglio, now Pope Francis.

“Unfortunately, Raoul Wallenberg – added Jesus Colina, Vice President of the Foundation for Italy and General Manager of Aleteia – was not only a hero, but he himself was a victim. On January 17, we remember the 70th anniversary of the disappearance of Raoul Wallenberg as he was abducted by the Soviets forces stationed in Budapest. Since then his fate remained a mystery. We are honored to take the

project 'Houses of Life' forward, in Rome, and in Italy, taking into account the extraordinary courage of so many Italians who, like Casa Santa Brigida, helped the victims of persecution. "

### TODAY LIKE YESTERDAY?



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Casa Santa Brigida overlooks Piazza Farnese, in silent dialogue with the Renaissance Palazzo Farnese, the site of the French Embassy in Italy since 1936. A few days ago many Romans came here to show their solidarity after the massacre at the headquarters of the satirical magazine "Charlie Hebdo" and kosher supermarket in Paris.

Piperno reads the simple plaque designed by the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation defining from now on Casa Santa Brigida as a "House of Life" and reflects: "In those days there was a lot of solidarity among people. After Rome was liberated and we were able to return to business, our women went back for grocery shopping at Campo dei Fiori market place. People greeted them and said "We knew that you were hidden by the nuns ".

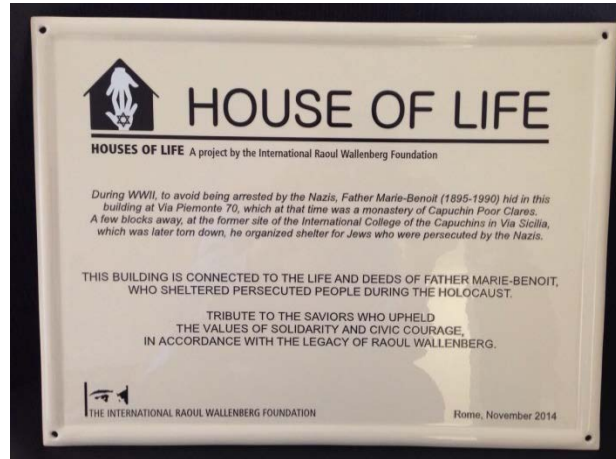
They knew, but they had not denounced; in those days it was the difference between life and death. This is why, at some point, Piperno and his wife has decided to reverse the order of their memories. "We always spoke of those who were gone, those who had not returned because of those who had denounced. And then we decided to change and to remember the good people, those who have helped us, those who risked their lives to save us".

"Today, like yesterday – he concludes – we must rally around the good to prevent the evil to overwhelm us." And even a plaque can serve this purpose.



## The Capuchin priest Marie Benoît saved the lives of 4,000 Jews

*The General Curia of the religious order in Rome (Italy) is declared "House of life"*

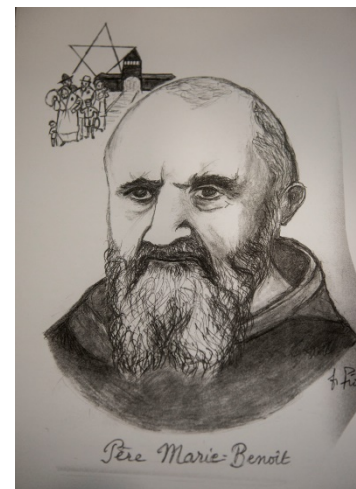


The Roman monastery that houses the General Curia of the more than ten thousand Franciscan capuchin friars of the world has been for a few days "House of Life", in recognition of the help offered by religious of that religious order to Jews during the persecutions of the Second World War.

The recognition has been attributed by the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, chaired by Eduardo Eurnekian, and founded by Baruch Tenenbaum, in an official ceremony in which Father Mauro Johri, general teacher of the Capuchins, participated.

In the General Curia of the Capuchins lived the French priest Marie-Benoît (1895-1990), who helped four thousand Jews escape during the Nazi occupation in France and Italy, largely by obtaining false documents for them to take refuge in Switzerland or Spain.

The priest had begun his aid work in the south of France, in Nice, but when discovered by the Gestapo he had to flee to Rome, where he continued his efforts on behalf of the Jews with the help of Vatican authorities.



Father Marie-Benoît was part of the Council of the organization DELASEM (Delegation for the Assistance of Jewish Emigrants), organizing meetings in the Convent of the Capuchins in Rome, where he gave refuge to many persecuted.

His relationship with the Jewish community was so profound that during the raids of the Nazis in Rome I entrust him with the keys of the synagogue in Rome. As soon as the occupation ended, in June 1944, he himself was able to open the synagogue.

For this reason, shortly after the Jewish community, led by Rabbi Israel Zoller, held an official ceremony in that same synagogue in honor of Father Marie-Benoît.

Years later, the president of the United States Lyndon Johnson delivered a speech in which he affirmed that the “wonderful actions” of Father Marie-Benoît should “inspire the American people in the protection and preservation of citizens’ rights, regardless of race, color or religion”.

On December 1, 1966, Yad Vashem officially recognized Father Marie-Benoît as “just among the nations.”



The Wallenberg Foundation has placed the commemorative plaque outside the General Curia of the Capuchins, “in recognition of the heroic deeds of Father Marie-Benoît and of all those who collaborated in that mission of salvation.”

“The plaque will remind all visitors and the people who pass by there that, when the Holocaust was one of the darkest periods of humanity, many people opposed this terrible evil. This rowing against evil made the difference. These ‘house of life’ is the testimony of the courage of those silent heroes. An acknowledgment of the value of the good, not forgetting, to express gratitude, the memory of the good”, explained the representatives of the Foundation at the ceremony.

For his part, the superior of the Capuchins, Father Johri, confessed during the ceremony his excitement when remembering a brother who risked his life, and who

involved in his work of help and salvation other brothers of the Order and the Capuchin nuns. .

“His example is particularly significant when you know the history of the Jews of Rome,” added Father Johri-. While some capuchin friar gave them preaching to convert, this friar respected them to the end, inviting everyone to be a true Jew, a true Christian, without pretending to change their religion. ”



In this context, Father Johri considered that the example of Father Marie-Benoît is very important also today.

The Capuchins have followed suit in the Central African Republic, where the last two years of civil war have provoked thousands of refugees and displaced people. When the violence has been unleashed against the Muslims, the Capuchins have opened the doors of their missions and monasteries.

Father Johri recalled, finally, that this is the same spirit that Pope Francis has lived, who when he was a Jesuit priest, during the repression in Argentina, helped many people to save their lives, whether Catholics or non-Catholics.

## **“Casa di vita” (House of Life) in the monastery of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Piazza del Carmine (Florence)**

*“Casa di vita” (House of Life). This recognition reads on a plaque displayed a few days in the monastery of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Piazza del Carmine (Florence).*



“House of Life”. This is the recognition that can be read on a memorial plaque installed a few days ago in the convent of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in the Plaza del Carmen in Florence.

The award was conferred by the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation for the help offered by the sisters of this community to many women and children, during the Nazi roundups that took place exactly 71 years ago.

After the roundup and deportation of 1,022 Roman Jews to Auschwitz, the Nazis quickly went up north in the Italian peninsula to make similar surprise raids in major cities.

Florence was immediately targeted and the city paid a very high price, with two roundups on November 6 and November 26, 1943.

With the pressure of persecution, and knowing that the Germans had requested the lists of all Florentine Jews, the Jewish Assistance Committee, set up by the young Chief Rabbi of Florence Nathan Cassuto, in agreement with Matilde Cassin, decided to turn to the Archdiocese of Florence. The first contacts occurred through Giorgio La Pira.

The Archbishop of Florence, Cardinal Elia Dalla Costa, immediately instructed Don Leto Casini, Pastor of Varlungo and Dominican Father Cyprian Ricotti to assist the Jewish

Assistance Committee and help shelter Jewish refugees in a number of monasteries and religious institutions of the diocese .

Following the directives of the Cardinal, over twenty convents and religious institutions -not counting the parishes- opened their doors offering shelter to more than 110 Italian and 220 foreign Jews.

The Missionary Sisters of Mary in Piazza del Carmine answered the call. Eighty mothers with their children were hosted and hid among the rooms of the convent, in silence. With mutual respect of religious customs, they lived together and shared the same spaces.

One of the women was the Chief Rabbi of Genova's wife, Wanda Abenaim Pacifici. All this could happen thanks to the courage of the mother superior, Sister Ester Busnelli, who was recognized Righteous among the Nations by Yad Vashem in 1995.

His two sons were hosted one night; the next day they were hidden in another monastery in Tuscany because there were only women at the Franciscan Sisters' place.

The sisters of Piazza del Carmine risked their lives at all times. They knew that the Germans did not tolerate those who helped the Jews, whose destiny was the gas chambers. These were two months of living on tiptoes: sometimes hidden in cellars, fearing of a raid or a betrayal, or of being taken by the Nazi fury.

Then the night of the raid came. The night of November 27, at about 3 a.m., a patrol of about thirty SS, assisted by the fascist militia, inspected the convent.



Plaque for the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary.

Room by room, they shouted in German: "Get up!". Most of those women and their children were found and taken into the big theater auditorium.

A girl by the name Lea Lowenwirth – Reuveni volunteered as an interpreter in German and French and was able to release many women making believe the Nazis that they were undocumented Hungarian. In total, thirty women and girls were saved.

In the general confusion, a woman was captured by a SS agent. She was with her son Isaac. In an extreme gesture, she dropped her baby at a nun's foot, and the Germans did not realize it. The nun promptly hid the child under her skirts, saving his life. That child is today a father and lives in Israel with his family.

The women were first deported to prisons in Florence and then were transferred to Verona. They were finally moved to the Auschwitz- Birkenau camps from where they never returned. In that place of extermination Wanda reached somehow her husband, Rabbi Riccardo and then both were killed. Their grandson, named Riccardo, son of the baby saved by the nun, is now the President of the Jewish Community of Rome.

On November 19, 2014 the ceremony of the 'Casa di Vita' commemorated the work of the Franciscan Sisters of Florence and was attended by the religious who succeeded Mother Esther: Sister Vera Pandolfi, the Chief Rabbi of Florence, Joseph Levi, and Ms. Sara Cividalli, President of the Jewish Community of Florence whose loved ones were hidden a few meters from the establishment

"This event is an eye-opener warning that we need for the present times – explained Rabbi Levi – . We must continue to reflect and disseminate a culture that educates and manages to create another kind of humanity. There may be conflicts, disagreements, but they cannot take us beyond the limit of human, which is what happened during the Shoah. The violence has been legitimized with a thousand reasons. This must never happen again. And we are here to send this message to all humanity, to all, to the believers of all religions."