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Righteous Gentiles: How Pius XII and the Catholic Church Saved Half a Million Jews From the Nazis

Ronald J. Rychlak, Michael Novak

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A relentless band of propagandists has convinced much of the world that Pope Pius XII and the Catholic Church, in the face of the great moral crisis of the twentieth century, were little more than Nazi lapdogs. The myth of "Hitler's pope," however, is grounded not in the facts of history but in the ideological agenda of Pius's detractors. Given unprecedented access to Church archives—including a confidential Vatican report on Pius XII—Ronald J. Rychlak documents the heroic response of the Holy Father and countless other Catholics to the plight of Jews under Nazi rule.

From the end of World War II until well after his death, Pius XII was universally respected for his leadership in the extraordinarily difficult years of the Third Reich. The first attack was Rolf Hochhuth's 1963 play The Deputy, accusing the pope of indifference to Jewish suffering in the Holocaust. John Cornwell revived the charge in Hitler's Pope (1999), and Gary Wills, James Carroll, and Daniel Goldhagen have made the revisionist attack on the wartime Church a popular genre.

Rychlak exposes the inconsistent charges, false allegations, and manufactured evidence against Pius XII and his predecessor, the German clergy, and the Catholic Church under Nazi occupation. His comprehensive and thoroughly documented account establishes once and for all that the Catholic Church under Pius XII, far from being indifferent to the Jews, was dedicated to saving them from the Nazis at all costs. The fruit of this concern was the rescue of over half a million Jews from the death camps. Rychlak lays to rest the "black legend" of the Church during World War II, showing that Pius XII and those he directed deserve the title "righteous gentiles."

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