

FOUNDED UPON ROCK: PART XII
THE HURRICAN OF HISTORY AND THE NEW PENTECOST:
THE TWENTIETH CENTURY UP TO THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

I. World War I (then known as the Great War) brought the powers of Europe into utterly destructive conflict that led to a dramatically transformed world, presenting the Church with the challenges of new dictatorships and an increasingly skeptical world, but also the opportunities of new nations and the ability to be seen as a defender of human rights.

A. The scene for World War I was set with the Triple Entente of Britain, France and Russia opposing the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria and the Ottoman Empire. Japan had an alliance with Britain, and hoped (accurately) to get more territories in Asia in the event of a war. The United States had sympathies to Britain, but was in 1914 opposed to entering into a European War. Italy had a defensive alliance with the Triple Alliance, but its reliability was uncertain. Catholic Spain and Portugal were outside the system of alliances.

1. These alliances were not particularly based upon religious, for they joined nations of different religions. The only government that was sympathetic to the Church was the Austrian Empire.

2. Religion did play a role in southeastern Europe as Russia wanted to defend the Orthodox nations of that region, particularly Serbia against the influence of both mostly Catholic Austria and the Muslim Ottoman Empire.

B. The conflict began with the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand, the heir to the Austrian throne, and his wife during what was supposed to be a diplomatic mission to Serbia. Quickly, Austria's demands on Serbia were rejected as excessive. And so, with Russia backing Serbia and Germany backing Austria, the conflict began. Germany launched a preemptive attack on France, and Britain came to the defense of France and Russia. After waiting for a few months, the Ottoman Empire then sided with Germany, mostly against Russia. At first Italy waited on the sidelines, arguing that its treaty with the Triple Alliance was only defensive. It would eventually join the Triple Entente.

C. At the beginning of the war in August of 1914, the vast majority of people involved thought that it would be over quickly. A popular phrase was, "They will be home by Christmas."

D. The two Popes, however, warned that it would be a horrific conflict.

1. St. Pope Pius X (Giuseppe Sarto) warned against the war and refused to bless troops. He said famously, "I bless peace and not war." However, he had become too ill to engage in much diplomacy. He died on August 20, just six weeks after giving the American bishops permission to consecrate the United States to the

Immaculate Conception and begin building the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington. (St. Pius X had established 15 American dioceses during his 10 years as Pope and was optimistic about the Church in America.

2. Pope Benedict X (Giacomo della Chiesa) was elected on September 3, 1903. He warned all parties that the war would be much worse than they expected. On November 1, he issued his first encyclical *Ad beatissimi Apostolorum*, which was a condemnation of the war and of racial, national and class divisions. He noted that the great wealth and technology of Europe was being turned to destruction and violence and that "Race hatred has reached its climax; peoples are more divided by jealousies than by frontiers; within one and the same nation, within the same city there rages the burning envy of class against class; and amongst individuals it is self-love which is the supreme law over-ruling everything." He again tried to arrange a Christmas truce and negotiation to the end of the war, but the powers ignored him. However, on many places on the Western Front (between Germany and France) and the Eastern Front (between Russia and Germany) the soldiers defied commands and engaged in a truce all the same. His appeals to care for prisoners of war, to allow people to move to non-combat areas, and to arrange for famine relief, especially in Belgium, were also more successful.

E. With trench warfare and such weapons as mustard gas, along with the famines exacerbated by the war, the conflict became much more brutal than people expected. One particularly horrific example was the removal of Armenian Christians in what is now eastern Turkey on suspicion that they would side with Russia in case of an invasion. This removal became ever more brutal, resulting in the deaths of an estimated 1.5 million people among those who could not get out of the country.

F. On Easter Monday, April 24, 1916, Irish nationalists staged an uprising in Dublin and captured City Hall and many government posts. The uprising did not gain much support and the British military quickly put it down. However, the summary justice and executions that the British government meted out, starting with an execution on May 3 and including the quick imprisonment of over 1800 people, provoked a great deal of criticism. As with John Brown in the United States, the nationalists in the uprising, who had not initially received much support, began being seen as martyrs for the cause of Irish independence.

G. In November 1916, Archduke Charles Franz Otto succeeded to the throne of Austria as Emperor Charles I, now known as Blessed Karl of Austria. The devoutly Catholic Karl desperately tried to negotiate a truce with the Entente powers. However, they rejected his offers, which would have been difficult to present in Austria in any case.

H. In early 1917, the Russian government collapsed as its soldiers refused to fight against people who were protesting the government in Moscow. The German

government shipped the communist Vladimir Lenin to Russia in the hope that he would take over the government and negotiate a surrender to the Allied Powers. This strategy was initially a success, as Lenin led the Bolsheviks to a takeover and signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which gave Germany and the Ottoman Empire a great deal of territory and took Russia out of the war.

I. But when German overreach led America into the war, and German attempts to isolate Britain and conquer France failed, the now combined forces of the three nations, along with Italy who eventually joined to Entente powers, forced Germany, Austria and the Ottoman Empire into a surrender.

J. Starting in 1917, Pope Benedict XV tried to outline the contours of a just peace, but the other nations (except Austria) ignored him. His terms were similar to what Woodrow Wilson would propose in the 17 Points. However, President Wilson perceived little need for the Pope's help, and the other powers ignored him as well. The result was the Treaty of Versailles, which was basically hammered out by the Britain, France and the United States, although American interests did not much prevail. The Germans and Austrians considered the resulting terms humiliating, and the reparations were ruinous, leading to much resentment in those countries.

II. In the aftermath of the war, and for the next 20 years, there were dramatic changes in the world that would lead to many political challenges for the Church, but also many opportunities for missions and growth.

A. The settlement and later development led to many new nations, some more favorable to the Church and some very unfavorable.

B. Ireland gained her independence in 1921, although the majority Protestant counties in the north remained a part of the British Empire, leading to decades of strife and a dispute that continues to this day.

C. In eastern Europe, many nations also became free again, including the mostly Catholic Poland and Lithuania, along with the other Baltic States of Estonia and Latvia. The multiethnic Yugoslavia, which joined Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim areas, was established in 1918 and (except during World War II) continued until its breakup and civil war in the early 1990s. Likewise, the multiethnic and mostly Catholic and Orthodox Czechoslovakia came into being at the same time, although it later came to be dominated by Germany then the Soviet Empire until its peaceful separation in 1993.

D. The Ottoman Empire lost its territories outside of modern day Turkey and, under Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk), became the secular country Turkey, although its popular was heavily Muslim. There was a "population exchange" agreement with Greece, which forced many historic Christian communities in Turkey to move to Greece and

many historic Muslim communities in Greece to move to Turkey. While papering over the religious divisions for a time, this superficial solution led to a diminished exchange and relations between Christians and Muslims.

- E. Britain and France took most of North Africa and the Middle East as a sort of protectorate, debating about what to do with the lands in the future. The administrative districts largely set up the national boundaries that exist today, and the British alliance with the House of Saud helped to power the strict Wahhabi ruling family that reigns in Saudi Arabia to this day. For the time being, Christians were given a great deal of freedom in these lands. However, most of those lands would impose differing degrees of limits or even oppression on Christians when they became independent after World War II.

- F. Lenin led the Soviet Union to be a force of Communism. When he died, Joseph Stalin became even more dictatorial and presided over horrific slaughters and the oppression of all religion.
 - 1. Lenin and the Bolsheviks fully expected Communist revolutions throughout Europe, a development that did not happen, although Communist parties were established in most of the European nations. Socialism had been somewhat discredited by the fact that socialists in the different countries supported their different nations, rather than the common efforts of socialism.

 - 2. The Soviet Union did gain control over many areas beyond the Russian Empire (e.g., Armenia) and regained control over lands it had conquered in the 19th century (e.g., Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan), a control that would continue until 1989. After a border dispute, it attempted to conquer Poland, but the effort was stymied with Poland's dramatic victory at the battle of Warsaw in 1920.

 - 3. After Lenin's death in 1924, Joseph Stalin used his position as General Secretary of the Communist Party to consolidate his power. Then, in the 1930s he launched multiple purges that sent millions of Soviets to their deaths, alongside collectivization and deliberate starvation policies directed against the rebellious Ukraine, which resulted in the deaths of about 4 million there.

 - 4. Believing religion to be an enemy of socialism, the Soviet Union closed churches, persecuted clergy and the faithful, and taught official atheism.

 - 5. Despite the dictatorial policies, many people in the West saw the Soviet Union as a model of an advancing society, especially when the Great Depression began. For example, the leading reporter Lincoln Steffans said of the Soviet Union in 1933, "I have seen the future and it works."

G. In Italy, frustration over the minimal territorial gains given to that country at the Versailles Conference led to the rise of Benito Mussolini and his ability to force the resignation of the Prime Minister and receive appointment by King Victor Immanuel III in 1922.

1. Although Mussolini's Fascists were at first a minority in the government, their role gradually expanded and led to a more dictatorial state.
2. At first, Mussolini was able to gain popularity by public works projects, an aggressive foreign policy, and a personality cult.
3. In 1929, he signed a concordat with the Vatican that led to Vatican recognition of the Italian government, recognition of the Vatican City state as a country, some compensation for the Vatican, and a role of Catholicism in education and public life.
4. However, relations quickly deteriorated as the Italian government became more and more domineering. In 1931, Pope Pius XI published Non Abbiamo Bisogno, which condemned the closing of Catholic groups, anti-Catholicism in the state controlled press and "the pagan worship of the state."
5. When Adolf Hitler rose to power in Germany in 1933, Mussolini formed a pact with him.

H. In Germany, the Weimar Republic was replaced by the National Socialist (Nazi) regime in 1933. That regime then developed into the worst oppression of modern times.

1. After World War I a more moderate republic took over, which was called the Weimar Republic after the city in which its constitution was drafted. However, the ruinous reparation payments required by the Treaty of Versailles, followed by hyperinflation, caused problems from the beginning. There was a brief recovery in the late 1920s, but the Great Depression led to the rise of both the Communist and the Nazi parties. Believing the Nazis to be the lesser threat, the President Paul von Hindenberg favored its leader Adolf Hitler's bid to become Prime Minister. They quickly pushed through the Enabling Act, which allowed them to use their narrow Parliamentary majority to push other parties aside.
2. At first, Hitler spoke in more conciliatory tones and most of the world believed that he would be more reasonable as Prime Minister than his earlier rhetoric had implied.

3. The Vatican signed a Concordat with the German government in 1933. That Concordat largely guaranteed religious freedom, although the government received some veto power over publications. The Church agreed to withdraw support from political parties include prayers for the government at Mass.
 4. Once he had secured international approval for his regime, including celebrations at the 1936 Olympics, Hitler became much more repressive and openly racist and anti-Semitic.
 5. In 1937, Pope Pius XI published a condemnation of the Nazi regime entitled Mit Brennender Sorge, which spoke of racism and the religious oppression that was increasing in Germany. Smuggled into Germany and read from the pulpits on Good Friday, the encyclical infuriated Hitler and put the Church in opposition to him. Unfortunately, it did not produce much reaction from the international powers.
- I. In Spain, the monarchy fell in 1931 and the new Communist government became very oppressive towards the Church after it secured more power in 1934 and 1936. In response to the Communist ideology, the Nationalists, led by Francisco Franco, led a revolt. They were supported by the Nazi party in Germany, although they did not share in its ideology or support it during World War II. Eventually, the Nationalists took over Spain, and Franco ruled until his death in 1975. He was favorable towards the Church, but often wanted to control Church affairs.
- J. In Mexico, the Constitution of 1917 gave a great deal of powers to the government, including the ability to suppress the expression of religion. When Plutarcho Calles became President in 1924, he began an outright suppression of the Church. That oppression led to a boycott of the government by the Church and an eventual Catholic uprising. In the resulting Cisero war (named for the motto Christo Rey used by supporters of the Church), the government killed or exiled over 4000 clerics, desecrated churches and oppressed the faithful in general. This oppression continued even after a treaty theoretically ended the war in 1929. Official restrictions and discrimination against the Church continued until the 1990s.
- K. In some other Latin American countries such as Argentina and Columbia, the government likewise attempted to suppress the faith. As with Mexico, however, the population remained heavily Catholic.
- L. In America, the Church expanded despite immigration limits imposed in 1921 and anti-Catholic prejudice.
1. On the one hand, Catholics were playing an increasing role in public life as exemplified by the New York governor and then Presidential candidate Al

Smith, such writers as Flannery O'Connor, and social activists such as the convert Dorothy Day.

2. On the other hand, racial and anti-immigrant prejudice increased during the 1920s. In 1915, the Ku Klux Klan was re-founded and grew to over 4 million members by 1925.
 3. Some places such as Oregon also sought to forbid private schools, a policy the Supreme Court struck down in Pierce v. Society of Sisters (1925.)
 4. During the Great Depression, Catholic social action became much more prominent and gave the Church more prestige. (Unfortunately, one very prominent social activist and radio personality Fr. Charles Coughlin went astray with anti-Semitism, leading his bishop to move out of the public sphere in 1942.) With that prestige, the United States bishops were able to join with other faiths and pressure the movie industry into adopting standards called the Hayes Code, which largely prevailed until the late 1960s.
- M. With regard to theology and devotions, both the veneration of Mary and devotion to St. Joseph increased, along with the Church's role in navigating a path of faith in an increasingly secular world.
1. In western Europe, and to some degree in the United States, cynicism produced by World War I, and the nationalist support most clergy gave to it, led to a rise of atheism, or at least skepticism in the general public. Such was not as much the case in Eastern Europe, where new nations were being formed. And the missions to Africa and the far East continued apace.
 2. The Marian apparitions in Portugal and Belgium led to a continual increase in Marian devotions and in particular to prayers with the rosary.
 - a. From May to October, 1917, Mary appeared to three children in Fatima, Portugal and called for them to promote a message of repentance, reverence for the Eucharist and the Church and consecration of Russia. The warning that, if not consecrated, Russia would spread her errors throughout the world would have seemed puzzling because Russia looked like a defeated power. The evidence of the apparition, including the miracle of the sun, has made Fatima a central Marian site ever since.
 - b. Along similar lines, Mary appeared to five children in Beauraing, Belgium, between November 1932 and January 1933. The message was one of sacrifice and prayer for the conversion of sinners.

- c. Building upon the apparition in Lourdes, Mary also appeared to a girl in Banneux, Belgium in 1933. She identified herself as the Virgin of the Poor and revealed a spring with healing powers that continues being the source of miracles to this day. This apparition, along with the one at Beauraing, received Vatican approval in 1949.

- 3. With pressures on workers and families, along with skepticism about secular rulers, devotion to Saint Joseph became more prominent in the late 19th and early 20th century. Thus, Pope Pius IX declared St. Joseph as the patron of the church and elevated his day (March 19) to a first class feast in 1870. (Now it is a solemnity.) In 1889, Pope Leo XIII added a votive office of St. Joseph to the Liturgy of the Hours and, with the encyclical Quamquam pluries, encouraged Catholics to pray for his intercession. Pope Pius X approved of the litany of St. Joseph in 1909. And, in 1955, Pope Pius XII approved of the Memorial of St. Joseph the Worker on May 1, the day that the communists celebrate as May Day.

- 4. The Church also became seen as more of a defender of human rights and natural law in the midst of a world of increasing secular powers. In 1931, Pope Pius XI published wrote Quadragesimo Anno (On the Fortieth Year of Rerum Novarum) in which he noted positively that the principles of Rerum Novarum had begun to be put into effect, with increasing protections of workers, the establishment of voluntary associations for mutual assistance, and the denunciation of the violence of class conflict that had marked much of earlier relations. However, he also noted that widespread economic distrust, selfishness and alienation had led to great distress. In that context, he especially called for cooperation between the owners of capital and workers, seeing them as partners, rather than opponents. Overall, he warned that the ship of society would navigate between the rocky shoals of collectivism and individualism only by recognizing that all earthly goods are meant to serve faith, family and man's final goal, the cultivation of talents that he might have "not only temporal but eternal happiness."

III. World War II then brought the powers into a climatic struggle that would lead to a dramatically altered world in which the Church faced both new persecutions and challenges and also laid the foundation for a new Pentecost.

- A. After much preparation, Hitler and Stalin effectively began the war by agreeing to a mutual nonaggression pact and a mutual invasion of Poland. That invasion brought France and the British Empire into the war. However, the former country was quickly overrun and the latter was under grave threat both in the homeland and the colonies of north Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Meanwhile, Japan launched an

- invasion of China and East Asia and prepared for domination of the lands and sea around them.
- B. Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, who had been the Vatican nuncio to Germany in the 1920s and then Secretary of State since 1930 was elected as Pope Pius XII in March, 1939, just as tensions were rising. He faced a very difficult situation as Mussolini still controlled Italy and wanted him out. However, he remained and organized underground attempts to hide Jews, escaped prisoners and others who would be persecuted by Mussolini. The situation became particularly dangerous in 1943, when Mussolini was driven from Rome and the Nazis took direct control.
 - C. In the areas controlled by the Nazis, the Church was under differing levels of persecution. With some unfortunate exceptions, such as Slovenia and some places in France, the bishops and other clergy opposed the Nazis and were under severe disabilities, with many priests and religious being sent to concentration camps. In Poland, St. Maximilian Kolbe ran an anti-Nazi newspaper until it was shut down and he was arrested. In Belgium, the bishops refused an offer to accept Nazi rule in exchange for allowing formerly Jewish Christians to remain in their communities. As a result, many people including the great philosopher St. Edith Stein were sent to concentration camps.
 - D. In his sermons, and particularly Christmas messages, Pope Pius XII condemned racist and anti-Semitic ideology, along with the worship of the state. He did not directly take sides in the war, knowing that doing so would lead to a more severe persecution and limit the Church's ability to hide people who would be persecuted. It has recently been revealed, particularly in the book Church of Spies (2015) that Pius XII was involved in several unsuccessful efforts to assassinate Hitler.
 - E. After Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in June of 1941, and then Japan drew America into the war in December, the Allies gradually started making progress. Hitler launched his Final Solution in 1942, attempting to kill all of the Jews in the realms he ruled over. The Vatican gradually learned of this plan and increasingly called upon the Allies to bomb the concentration camps in a direct attempt to end the Holocaust. However, the Allies focused more on a gradual strategy to end the war.
 - F. After the war, the Church tried to provide for many refugees who had been displaced, along with providing asylum to people, such as former prisoners of war, who would be persecuted. There was also the need for rebuilding church (e.g., the monastery at Monte Cassino) after the destruction of the war.
 - G. In the aftermath of the war, the Soviet Union took control of eastern Europe and vied for control of the newly liberated nations in Africa and Asia, as well as the relatively new countries of Latin America.

1. Most prominently, Mao Zedung and the Communist Party took control of China and began a severe persecution of Christianity and most religions there. Communism also gained sway in North Korea, North Vietnam (and eventually the entire country), and later such countries as Angola, Ethiopia, Cambodia, Cuba, and Nicaragua (until the Catholic led transitions in many of the countries.) Pope Pius XII's last encyclical *Meminisse Iuvat* described the persecution of the Church in China.
 2. Communism also posed a serious threat in Italy, as well as other European countries; and Pope Pius XII made strenuous efforts, including encouraging American investment, to oppose the further expansion of Communism, which would threaten the freedom of Christians.
 3. In most Latin American countries, along with the Philippines, there was a struggle between more military dictatorships and Communist rebels. The Church tried to defend human rights against government oppression, while at the same time opposing the Communists. These efforts were at times very difficult and led to the suffering of many and the martyrdom of the likes of St. Oscar Romero in El Salvador and Bl. Stanley Rother in Guatemala. In many countries, however, there was a gradual transition to democracy and less oppression of the Church
- H. The missions in Africa and South Korea began bearing greater fruit as most countries in sub-Saharan Africa became primary Christian, or (as with Nigeria) about half Christian. About a third of South Koreans converted to Christianity, with about a third of that number being Catholic. Pope Pius XII published the 1951 encyclical *Evangelii Praeconesi* on missions in general and the 1957 encyclical *Donum Fidei* specifically on the missions in Africa
- I. In North Africa and the Middle East, the new nations became independent, which led to new opportunities, but also the potential for war and difficult times for many Christians.
1. The situations of Christians varied quite substantially, with the situation in North Africa generally better than that in many countries of the Middle East.
 2. The United Nations created the country of Israel in 1947, reflecting the desire for the long persecuted Jews to have a homeland. The situation between the new settlers and the local native population (some of whom were Christian) unfortunately led to a conflict that continues to this day. The new country of Israel did allow, and in fact, encourage, pilgrimages to the Holy Land, with the Franciscans in charge of most of the Catholic sites.

3. At the time, Lebanon was majority Christian and was seen as both a Christian homeland and a gateway to the West. However, the wars of the late 1970s and onward have severely damaged that status.
- J. In the United States, Catholicism, and in many ways Christianity in general, enjoyed what is in some ways her heyday in the late 1940s and 1950s. Although about 17 percent of Americans were Catholic during World War II, almost 25 percent of the military was Catholic, which led to an increased prestige for the Church. The bishops and the Church supported patriotism. And the likes of Archbishop Fulton Sheen, the movies Going My Way (1944), The Bells of St. Mary (1945) and I Confess (1953), and the book The Cardinal (1950) gave very favorable impressions of the Church to the country. Seminaries and religious houses were at their heights and had to turn away some recruits because they could not educate them all. However, even in the midst of such success, a certain laxity and desire for popularity was setting the seeds for a later crisis. Furthermore, as Fr. John Cortney Murray noted in his book We Hold These Truths (1960) universities were moving away from the notions of virtue and natural law that had been the baseline for American ideals of a free society.
- K. The common sufferings of the Christians during the early 20th century and the opposition of communism and materialism that continued drew the branches of Christianity more together.
1. Even in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Pope's condemnations were focused on such things as modernism, materialism and communism, not on other faiths.
 2. In 1943, Pope Pius XII published *Mystici Corporis*, which described the Church as the mystical body of Christ. However, that encyclical also set forth a teaching that people other than Catholics could be joined to this mystical body by desire, even if the full unity is not yet present. Similarly, in a 1949 letter to the Archbishop of Boston, Pope Pius XII supported a more expansive interpretation to the principle that there is no salvation outside of the Church, presenting more in line of the idea that the Church is necessary for everyone's salvation, whether they know it or not.
 3. The Church also began looking more favorably at ecumenical efforts with other Churches. In many places, there were common prayer meetings between different groups of Christians, including Catholics. In 1949, the Holy Office promulgated a call for careful discernment to adopt what is good from such efforts, but to be sure that they do not slide into indifferentism.
 4. The Popes were also increasingly seen in a positive light as one who could unify people and stand for eternal truths. This respect, along with over 12 million requests over the course of a century, led Pope Pius XII to define the

Assumption of Mary as an infallible dogma of the faith in his 1950 Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*. In 1953, he also published the encyclical *Ad Caeli Reginam* on the Queenship of Mary.

- L. The Church also engage in liturgical reform and more dialogue with the world.
 - 1 . In *Mediator Dei* (1947), Pope Pius XII focused on liturgical renewal and the active participation of the faithful. In that encyclical, he also insisted on a more reverent form of the Mass, avoiding either an aura of routineness or experimentation not specifically authorized by the Church. In the 1950s, he restored the Easter Vigil to her previous prominence and reduced the Eucharistic fast to three hours to allow more frequent reception of Communion, as well as lessen the burdens on priests.
 - 2. In the encyclical *Humanae Generis* (1950), Pope Pius XII likewise engaged science pointing out what could and could not be accepted from the theory of evolution.
 - 3. The Church also tried to establish embassies in all of the newly created countries and defend the Church's independence throughout the world.
- M. Such efforts to dialogue with other faiths and with the world, to increase missionary efforts and evangelization, and to see a renewal within set the stage for the Vatican II Council.