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Vatican apologises over holocaust



Pius XII did not speak out against the Holocaust, say Jews

The Vatican has apologised to Jews on behalf of the entire Roman Catholic community, for failing to speak out against the Nazi holocaust during World War Two.

In his letter accompanying the apology, the Pope said the holocaust remained an indelible stain on the 20th century.

The Vatican's long-anticipated response to the killing of six million Jews was published in Rome on Monday.



[Cardinal Edward Cassidy, Head of the Vatican Commission, says it is an act of repentance. \(20"\)](#)

The Head of the Vatican Commission, Cardinal Edward Cassidy, said the Vatican's statement amounted to an act of repentance as well as an apology.

The document asks whether persecution was made easier because some Christians held anti-Jewish prejudices.

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But it also declares that many people were unaware of Hitler's so-called "final solution".

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Pope Jean Paul II hopes to visit Jerusalem

Pope John Paul has said he hopes the apology will help to heal the wounds of past injustices and misunderstandings between Christians and Jews.

But the document makes no criticism of the Pope of the time, Pius XII, who has been accused by the Jews of pro-German tendencies.

The Vatican mentions that Pius XII saved hundreds of thousands of Jewish lives himself or through his representatives.

But the document fails to explain why Pope Pius never took sides during World War Two by speaking out against the holocaust while it was actually taking place.

The Vatican has always maintained he did everything he could behind the scenes to stop the slaughter.

In the document, the Vatican asks all Christians to meditate upon the catastrophe.

The apology ends by warning that the seeds of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism must never again be allowed to take root.

American Jews not impressed

The US Jewish community voiced disappointment at the Vatican's statement .

"We are very sad, very disappointed," said Rabbi Leon Klenicki, director of the Department of Interfaith Affairs of the Anti Defamation League.

"The document falls short of the mark, it's taking a step backward," Rabbi Klenicki said.

The World Jewish Congress (WJC) issued a terse statement saying "those of us engaged in the dialogue

have not yet succeeded."

Its statement "does not compare favourably with the French Catholic Bishops' Conference or the German Catholic Bishops' Conference," WJC executive director Elan Steinberg said.

National churches have admitted error

Catholic Bishops in France, Germany and Poland admitted they were at fault for their failure to react to Jewish persecution half a century ago.

But it was not until 1965 that the Vatican eliminated the phrase "perfidious Jews" from the liturgy of a Holy Week service.

Since then, relations between the Holy See and the Jewish state have steadily improved.

Pope John Paul II has dedicated much of his near 20-year-old papacy to improving relations with Jews, whom he refers to as "older brothers," after centuries of animosity.