

The Pope's Thundering Silence on the Ethiopian Cause

By Kidane Alemayehu

The repeated appeals to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to express the Vatican's apology to the Ethiopian people for its complicity with the Fascists in the perpetration of the crime of genocide in Ethiopia have so far gone completely unheeded. Letters of appeal written directly to His Holiness' office, the Vatican Embassy in Washington, DC as well as through the media including the internet have so far been ignored. As an example, I can mention my letter dated August 18, 2005 to His Holiness soon after his selection as a Pope and his visit to a synagogue in Cologne, Germany where he expressed his apology to the Jewish people for the "unimaginable crime" of holocaust committed against them by the Nazis. For more details, please check: www.globalallianceforethiopia.org.

While Pope Benedict XVI is recognized for his prompt response to issues such as his travel to Turkey following his controversial remarks regarding Islam, his apology to the Jews, and his reaction regarding the alleged crime committed by pedophile clergy, it is a matter of a great concern that His Holiness has chosen, so far, not to own up to the Vatican's complicity with the Fascist crime, during 1935-41, which resulted in the murder of one million Ethiopians as well as the destruction of 2000 churches, 525,000 homes, and 14 million animals. Could it be because Ethiopia is a poor African country?



A Vatican clergy blessing the Italian Fascist army.

It is a matter of a historic fact that the Fascist army had the Vatican's blessing when it proceeded on its murderous journey to Ethiopia where it committed the horrendous crime by using various weapons of mass destruction including poison gas which was made to rain in rural and urban areas throughout the country.

Pope Benedict XVI must be fully aware of the Vatican's complicity in the Fascist crime of genocide in Ethiopia. He must know that when the Fascist army managed to reach Addis Ababa, the then head of the Vatican, Pope Pius XI had expressed his joy, on May 12, 1936, by stating:

“The triumphant joy of an entire, great and good people over a place which, it is hoped and intended, will be an effective contribution and prelude to the true place in Europe and the World.”

According to Avro Manhattan, the Pope's joy was expressed in a more cogent and graphic declaration by the Archbishop of Torenno with the following words:

“The war against Ethiopia should be considered as a holy war, a crusade” (as Italian victory would) “open Ethiopia, a country of infidels and schismatics, to the expansion of the Catholic Faith.”

With the heroic struggle by Ethiopian patriots as well as the support of friendly countries such as the United Kingdom, Ethiopia was liberated from Fascist Italy's occupation in a short period of five years. However, to this day Ethiopians are still awaiting the required apology by the Vatican and an adequate compensation by the Italian government.

With regard to compensation, it should be recalled that recently the Italian government has consented to compensate Libya with \$5 billion for having used 30,000 of its citizens in the fascist invasion of Ethiopia. It is, therefore, obvious that the miniscule amount of 6 million sterling pounds that was alleged to have been a compensation for Ethiopia could not, by any wild imagination, be considered sufficient! After all, if \$5 billion dollars were paid for the military deployment of Libyan citizens in the unjust attack against Ethiopia, the murder of one million people should have more serious consequences.

As if to add insult to injury, the Vatican is in the process of beatifying Pope Pius XII, a person who is known to have masterminded the fullest support to Fascist Mussolini, to sainthood. The Vatican is also still proceeding with its age old policy of promoting Catholicism in Ethiopia, an attempt that was the cause of a devastating loss of life during the reign of Emperor Susneyos, as it is in the process of establishing a Catholic university in Addis Ababa.

The Vatican has apologized to the Jewish people repeatedly for having been silent during the Nazi holocaust. If silence were enough reason to apologize, would being complicit in the Fascist crime against Ethiopia not be a much stronger reason for a sincere apology to the Ethiopian people?

It is extremely important for the Vatican to take such an action as it would pave the way for other required measures that would be needed from the UN as well as the Italian government. Therefore, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI is called upon to do his

Christian duty by expressing the long awaited Vatican apology to the Ethiopian people thereby putting to rest the open wound that has festered for generations.