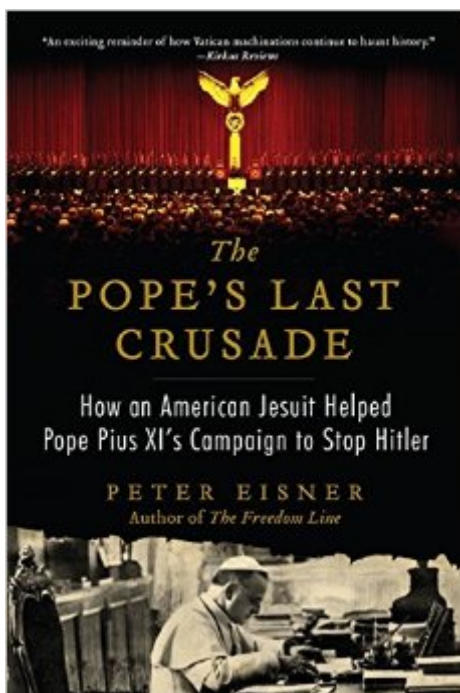


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The Pope's Last Crusade: How An American Jesuit Helped Pope Pius XI's Campaign To Stop Hitler



Synopsis

Drawing on untapped resources, exclusive interviews, and new archival research, *The Pope's Last Crusade* by Peter Eisner is a thrilling narrative that sheds new light on Pope Pius XI's valiant effort to condemn Nazism and the policies of the Third Reich—a crusade that might have changed the course of World War II. A shocking tale of intrigue and suspense, illustrated with sixteen pages of archival photos, *The Pope's Last Crusade: How an American Jesuit Helped Pope Pius XI's Campaign to Stop Hitler* illuminates this religious leader's daring yet little-known campaign, a spiritual and political battle that would be derailed by Pius XI's death just a few months later. Peter Eisner reveals how Pius XI intended to unequivocally reject Nazism in one of the most unprecedented and progressive pronouncements ever issued by the Vatican, and how a group of conservative churchmen plotted to prevent it. For years, only parts of this story have been known. Eisner offers a new interpretation of this historic event and the powerful figures at its center in an essential work that provides thoughtful insight and raises controversial questions impacting our own time.

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Customer Reviews

The year was 1938. Hitler was in complete power, leading Nazi Germany on a campaign through Europe, to spread his views. In the Vatican, Pope Pius XI, who was slowly declining into failing health, sought the assistance of an American Jesuit Priest, John LaFarge. LaFarge was a scholar, whose expertise on racial injustices perfectly fit into the Church's views on the situation. His goal was to publicly denounce the Nazism and anti-Semitism that he feared would destroy the teachings

of the church. Coming from the Pope, the highest leader of the Catholic Church, this condemnation of Hitler could potentially impact the views of other world leaders, and in turn, World War II itself. Of course, this process was easier said than done. Pius XI found himself in the midst of an Italian government that seemed to be, whether out of fear or agreement, embracing Hitler's Germany. They even invited the leader to visit their country. Pius XI would have nothing to do with the fanfare of Hitler's arrival. Instead, he retreated to a private Vatican estate, outside of the city, in a quiet protest. Met by resistance from even members of his own church who would rather keep peace with Hitler than provoke him with a damning proclamation, Pius XI stuck to his guns, to denounce what he knew was wrong. I've always been fascinated by the many pieces to the giant puzzle that is World War II. This time in our history seems to show the best and worst aspects of our world, and I think there are many things to be learned. I was unfamiliar with the story of Pope Pius XI, but with all of the recent actions taking place in the Vatican, it seemed like a good time to delve deeper into the church's history. I was immediately drawn to Pius's unassuming, humble ways. He really comes off as a kind of quiet force.

• The Pope's Last Crusade • by Peter Eisner. Subtitled: • How An American Jesuit Helped Pope Pius XI's Campaign to Stop Hitler •. HarperCollins, New York 2013. Peter Eisner has taken the known history of the • hidden encyclical • of Pope Pius XI (1857-1939) and produced a mystery book, which has the reader involved in the next step in publishing the encyclical even while knowing that history shows the encyclical was NOT published. The book is well written and captures the intrigue within the Vatican and the hierarchy of the time. The main characters are Pius XI (Achille Ratti 1857-1939), of course, and the Jesuit, John LaFarge, Jr., (1880-1963). In fact, this book is one of the more complete biography of John LaFarge, or, perhaps, an extensive biographical sketch. Since the book deals with the time period to 1938 to early 1939, the author, Peter Eisner, has been rather dismissive of the strong courage of Pius XI. On page 33, Eisner emphasizes the general opinion of Pius XI: that he was a conservative defending the Church, regardless. Pius XI took on Mussolini, Hitler, and Stalin when the Church was involved. This book, which addresses a limited time period, does not even mention the encyclical, • Non Abbiamo Bisogno • (We Do Not Need), the first modern encyclical written in a vernacular language and not in Latin. In this 1931 encyclical, Pius XI fundamentally called Mussolini's regime anti-Catholic, and the Pope condemned the pagan worship of the state. Remember that this was the time when Mussolini was at the peak of his power, with a Vietnam type war in Libya and a war in Ethiopia that included the use of poison gas against the Ethiopians. The League of Nations censored Italy, but did

nothing.Hitler came to power by popular vote in 1933.

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