

## **CANONIZATION HEARING FOR POPE PIUS XII**

For some time now, the process to canonize Pope Pius XII has been underway in the Catholic Church. Yet in recent years, especially in the past decade, intense public controversy has arisen over Pius XII's response to the Holocaust. His harshest critics accuse him of being "Hitler's Pope," i.e., virtually complicit in the Holocaust. His strongest supporters see him almost diametrically opposite, i.e., as a heroic rescuer of hundreds of thousands of Jews. Others fall somewhere in between. Because of this controversy, Pius XII's canonization cause is highly controversial. Some worry that beatifying and then canonizing Pius XII would greatly harm the Church's relations with the Jews, which the Church has done so much to cultivate in the last quarter century. Others reply that postponing the process would only offer a tacit condoning of slanderous accusations against Pius XII, create the false impression that the Church acted poorly toward the Holocaust, and harm the Church's reputation in general. Much is at stake.

In order to decide how to proceed, Pope Francis is quite interested in knowing: Just how ought the world to regard Pius XII's behavior towards the Holocaust? Remember that the standard for canonizing someone is heroic love. Even if one did not think that Pius XII was Hitler's Pope, one might still argue that his behavior was not heroic love. He might still be judged a saint in the end but this episode of his life does not contribute to it, though it also may not detract from it. Or, one could argue that his behavior was indeed heroic or that it is at least consistent with a larger life of heroic love.

So Pope Francis has turned to none other than Professor Philpott and his *Catholicism and Politics* class, having heard of the brilliance, eloquence, and good looks of the students. Further, he regards Notre Dame as the greatest university in the world. He has called for a group of students to train themselves as experts in Pius XII's role in the Holocaust and to conduct a hearing on it to determine if it comports with a life of heroic love. Borrowing from a feature of canonization proceedings in previous times, he asks half of this group to serve as "Devil's Advocates" and to argue against Pius XII's canonization based on this historical episode and the other half of the group to serve as Promoters of the Cause of Pius XII. The hearing will take place on Thursday, September 19<sup>th</sup> in the venerable Hall of O'Shaughnessy, 9:30-10:45 am.

It is important to note what the burden of argument is for each side. How the question in front of the panel is phrased makes a great deal of difference. Put formally, the question for debate is: "Did Pius XII do everything that he reasonably and ethically could have done, given his position and his resources, to oppose the Holocaust and to save Jews from death?"

Devils Advocates are charged with the task of showing that Pius XII's behavior during the Holocaust did not meet the standards of having done everything that he reasonably and ethically could have done to stop the Holocaust

and to save Jews. It is optional how strongly the Devil's Advocates want to "set the dial." They could argue, for instance, that Pius XII was not ignominious but that he fell culpably short of doing all that he could have done. Or, they could go further and argue that he was something on the order of "Hitler's Pope." Either way, Pius XII's behavior not only does not add to the case for his heroic virtue but detracts from it and slows down if not puts the kibosh on his canonization.

Promoters of the Cause, on the other hand, are charged with the task of showing that he did everything he reasonably could have done. They, too, have options as to how to construe his actions. They could go so far as to say that he was heroic and that this episode evidences his heroism and thus contributes to his canonization cause. Or they could argue more modestly that he was perhaps not heroic but that he exercised good judgment all things considered and that he cannot be held morally responsible for any shortcomings and weaknesses in the Church's opposition to fascism during this most difficult of times. In this version, this episode of his life does not contribute to his life of heroic love yet also does not preclude that other aspects of his life demonstrated heroic love, thus allowing his canonization process to proceed forward.

Both Devil's Advocates and Promoters of the Cause ought not only to make their case on the historical merits but also, in some measure, to appeal to larger principles of politics derived from the previous part of the course. Promoters of the Cause, for instance, might say that the Church was acting as a proponent of peace and justice in a way that reflects the tradition of the prophets, that calls the state to account for not being an instrument of God's purposes as understood by Augustine, Aquinas, or St. Paul, or that defends the poor and human dignity in the way that the scriptures call for and that previous Church actors have done. They will appeal to the Bible, to history, and to great Catholic thinkers – the course up to this point is all fair game. Devil's Advocates might say that the pope was blind to the same sorts of principles of justice mentioned above and what is more, acted more like a diplomat than a prophet and was clouded by his anti-communism from seeing other sorts of injustice like fascism. In other words, in addition to presenting evidence from this historical episode, the experts on each team ought to use enduring principles and teachings to paint a general portrait and tell a larger story about Pius XII that supports that team's view. An analogy is the way that a trial lawyer seeks not only to establish what happened on the night of . . . but to tell a larger story about what kind of person the defendant is and what his or her general purposes were in the episode at hand.

Three primary "products" are expected from the team: 1) a written transcript of each student's remarks in the canonization hearing, due at the end of the hearing session; 2) your actual performance at the hearing; 3) a joint bibliography showing work that the team drew from directly in preparing its presentation. (This is in addition to the team's Plan of Action described below.)

The team will cooperate to produce a single common presentation of which each student's speech is a part. Remember that you have some leeway in

deciding exactly what that argument will be. Near the beginning of the presentation the team should state your thesis as rigorously as possible.

It is in the transcript that you turn in that you should show your citations – where did you get your information from? (You will not voice these, of course, in the speech, though you might occasionally say something like, “as Daniel Goldhagen argued,” if you want to.) You will want to use footnotes so as not to be distracted by the citations during your speech. You need not cite every detail or piece of information. A good way to do it is to place a footnote at the end of every paragraph or couple of paragraphs, saying that “the information presented in this section is drawn from . . .” Please use a major citation protocol such as the Chicago Manual of Style, Modern Language Association, Turabian, etc.

The performance at the hearing will be structured as follows:

Promoters of the Cause’s speech: 20 minutes

Devil’s Advocates’ speech: 20 minutes

Preparation for question period: 5 minutes

Promoters of the Cause’s questioning of Devil’s Advocates: 7 minutes

Devil’s Advocates’ questioning of Promoters of the Cause: 7 minutes

Vox Populi (Questions from the classroom): 10 minutes

In the speeches each team lays out its argument. Each speech should contain all the virtues of a paper, rigorous and careful in its argument, but also appealing to the heart. It should involve an attention-grabbing introduction and conclusion, superb rhetoric, metaphor, rhetorical questions, invocations of spiritual themes, voice projection and modulation, eye contact, colorful illustration, and emotion. You are to conduct the speech entirely orally, without use of videos, power point, other electronic aids, or a chalkboard, and with no handouts. You should divide up the period of the speech so that each person on the team speaks for roughly equal periods of time. Whether you each speak for one continuous block of time or speak in several alternating segments is up to you. See Professor Philpott’s “What Makes For An A Paper and Presentation” posted on Sakai for further criteria.

The 14-minute period of questioning of the other team is a debate in which the respective questioners get to pose the questions for the other side. For instance, when Promoters of the Cause are questioning the Devil’s Advocates, Promoters of the Cause pose a series of questions that are designed to challenge the arguments that they just heard in the Devil’s Advocates’ speech, to which Devil’s Advocates may respond. The Devil’s Advocates’ answers may contain implicit or explicit rebuttals but they may not depart from the general subject of

the Promoter of the Cause's question. Devil's Advocates will soon get the chance to reverse the tide and ask questions of Promoters of the Cause in the same manner under the same rules. It is recommended that both teams come to the hearing with a list of questions that they anticipate asking. But they will also have five minutes prior to the questioning to adjust their questions and strategy according to the arguments that they have just heard from the other side.

Team members should work together in developing a plan of research, finding and reading sources, and combining the findings into a common presentation at the canonization hearing. Teams are required to draw upon at least seven sources in their research, including at least three that are not exclusively internet sources. Member of teams may work together in planning each person's portion of the presentation and thus help one another with the written transcript that is turned in. In grading, I will look upon each transcript as the student's own.

Finally, teams are required to submit one week prior to the canonization hearing (Thursday, September 12<sup>th</sup>) a Plan of Action that sets forth an outline for how they will use their 20 minutes at the hearing— how they will structure their common speech, what their thesis will be, who will speak when and on what sub-themes, etc. This need not be more than a page and the style in which it is presented is not strictly prescribed. Professor Philpott is mainly looking to see that you have thought ahead about your strategy and that you are on track for your speech. This will be graded for completion and for basic competence but is not one of the two final products that will constitute the bulk of your grade. After receiving it Professor Philpott will review it and let you know if any major revisions are needed prior to the performance.

Below is a fairly comprehensive bibliography of sources which you can use for your research. To narrow things down, I would recommend that Devil's Advocates draw upon the Daniel Goldhagen essay in *The New Republic*, John Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope*, and the Istvan Deak piece in *The New York Review of Books*. The Goldhagen essay is probably the most succinct statement of the case against Pius XII. Look also at Susan Zuccotti's and Saul Friedländer's books. I would recommend that the Promoters of the Cause look at the Dalin and Bottum volume, particularly the introductory essay, the Ronald Rychlak *First Things* essay, Ralph McInerney's book, the Ventresca book, and the recent book, *Church of Spies*. The Deak *NYROB* piece is fairly balanced and so might also be a good source for you. For everyone, the Wikipedia piece at the bottom is a good place to start, though it is not free of bias.

Finally, everyone also might benefit from Kenneth Woodward's excellent book, *Making Saints*, on how the Church goes about canonizing people.

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- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope\\_Pius\\_XII](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Pius_XII)