

**A COMMEMORATION OF THE  
70TH ANNIVERSARY OF PIUS XII'S CORONATION  
ON MARCH 12, 2009.**

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The world at large will note the 70th Anniversary of Pius XII's Coronation on March 12, 2009, and commemorate the day Eugenio Pacelli, known as Pope Pius XII, received the papal tiara. His coat-of-arms showed the symbol of peace: a dove with an olive branch. His motto indicated peace to be a fruit of justice: *Opus justitiae pax* (Is. 34, 17).

The bells of St. Peter's pealed. There was a blaze of light at the foot of Bernini's four bronze columns and beneath the baldacchino prepared for the Coronation ceremony in St. Peter's Basilica. The bronze image of St. Peter was adorned in pontifical vestments, a tiara on the head, an ancient emerald on the finger, clasping the keys of the kingdom.

The procession moved down the Scala Regia with Pius XII dressed in white wearing his jewelled pectoral cross and mitre. This was the most solemn and elaborate liturgical rite of the Catholic Church. It was a display of a brilliant past: sixteenth-century helmets, high-collared breastplates, halberds and pikes; black jackets trimmed with purple; peaked caps, gold-braided and crested; deep blue uniforms; high scarlet collars; golden epaulettes and cordelettes, cuffs and facings.

Silver trumpets sounded and acclamations rose as Pius XII, carried in the *sedia gestatoria*, approached the main door of the basilica. Kings, queens, and princes followed the patriarchs, archbishops, and bishops, the abbots and superiors general of religious orders who were in the procession. They were followed by more than a hundred representatives of many nations. The Pope took his seat on the throne. Cardinal Canali removed the silver, gem-studded mitre on his head. Cardinal Caccia-Dominioni replaced it with the papal tiara and prayed: "Receive the tiara adorned with the three crowns and know that you are the Father of princes and kings, the Sovereign of the world, and the Vicar on earth of our Savior Jesus Christ, to Whom is honor and glory, now and forever. Amen."

The multitude cheered as everyone bent the knee in homage to the Sovereign Pontiff. The Pope blessed the crowd: "May Almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, bless you all." The strains of *Tu es Petrus* (You are Peter) proclaimed the Catholic Faith. There was an explosion of applause. The crowd estimated to be a million strong swirled like a human sea in the piazza and all the way down to the Castel Sant'Angelo and the Tiber. The ceremony was indeed impressive.

Immediately after his election, Pius XII issued a call for a peace conference of European leaders. His peace plan was based on five points: the defense of small nations, the right to life, disarmament, some new kind of League of Nations and a plea for the moral principles of justice and love. Pius XII's first radio message to the world was, "Peace, gift of God, desired by all upright men, the fruit of love and justice." In his first address to the cardinals, Pius XII spoke about peace: "We invite all men to have peace in their consciences; calm in the friendship of God; to have peace in their families, united and brought into harmony by the sacred love of Christ; and, lastly, to have peace between nations by the interchange of fraternal assistance."

On August 24, 1939, in a last minute appeal to head off the outbreak of World War II, Pope Pius XII, stated: "I appeal again to governments and their peoples; to governments that they lay aside threats and accusations and try to settle their differences by agreement; to their peoples, that they may be calm and encourage the efforts of their government for peace. It is by force of reason and not by force of arms that justice makes progress. Empires not founded on justice are not blessed by God. Immoral policy is not successful policy. Nothing is lost by peace. Everything may be lost by war. Let men start to negotiate again."

Sadly, the pope's appeal was not heeded. Soon after, World War II was fully in progress.