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Faculty of Theology

VATICAN DIPLOMACY AND THE SHAPING OF THE WEST (1939-1958)

International Conference
Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome
18-19 April 2024

Call for papers

The opening of the Vatican archives from the period of Pius XII offers a precious opportunity to examine in greater detail various aspects of the diplomatic action of the Holy See on the international plane during this long pontificate, a multifaceted action that adapted to fluid political conditions, from the tragedy of a Second World War, to a new world order animated by a desire for peace, yet one indelibly marked by the divisions fostered by the Cold War.

It was the firm belief of Pius XII, nurtured since the last years of the pontificate of his predecessor Achille Ratti (Pius XI), that only in a return to a truly Christian civilization, and a world view inspired by Christian principles, could a strong enough antidote to the evils of war, atheism and materialism be found, providing a solid foundation for a new international order assuring a lasting world peace.

This inner conviction had to come to terms, especially after the end of the Second World War, with the emergence of an idea of Western civilization – conveyed by the growing processes of economic, political, cultural, and social globalization – as an organic entity, animated by the same basic democratic values and a capitalist model of development, with the United States setting the agenda, in contrast to an Eastern bloc, under the grips of Communist ideology.

Against this background, how and to what extent the action of papal diplomacy, from the outbreak of the Second World War to the end of Pius XII's pontificate, was inspired by or conveyed peculiar visions of the West is the theme that the proposed conference – jointly promoted by Pontifical Gregorian University, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Universidad de Navarra, Universidade Católica Portuguesa and University of Malta within the framework of the OCCIDENTES research project – intends to develop, through a wide range of thematic proposals:

- The fostering of Euro-Atlantic relations;
- Relations with States and Christian communities in the Eastern bloc;
- The facilitation of the development of a unified European bloc;
- The role of the Holy See in multilateral diplomacy;
- The Holy See's policy towards Latin American countries, between the pushes for continental integration and the dynamics of the Cold War;
- The Holy See's relations with Francoist Spain and the Portuguese Estado Novo;
- The role played by Vatican diplomacy in facilitating the processes of decolonization, particularly in the African continent;
- Its presence in the tensions that characterized the Middle East and the emergence of the State of Israel;



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- The role envisaged for the Mediterranean Sea as a fundamental crossroads for the political-religious dynamics and international tensions that characterize the global context in this period;
- Papal diplomacy and missions: priorities, directives for action, bilateral agreements.

The presentations can address both unexplored and already studied themes, based upon an innovative approach and/or unpublished documentation, as well as proposing a broader interpretative frameworks. Please submit an abstract (max. 2000 characters) with a short CV and a list of publications to occidentespiusxii@gmail.com by not later than 31 July 2023.

Successful proposers will be informed by 15 October 2023. The conference will take place at the Pontifical Gregorian University (Rome) on 18 and 19 April 2024. Travel and accommodation expenses will be borne by the participants. The presentations may be either in English, Italian, French or Spanish. More articulated articles based upon the presentations will be published at a later date.

Coordinating Committee: Nicholas Doublet, Roberto Regoli, Paolo Valvo

Scientific Committee: Mireno Berrettini, Philippe Chenaux, Andrea Ciampani, Massimo de Leonardis, Nicholas Doublet, Andras Fejerdy, Paulo Fontes, Andreas Gottsmann, Mario L. Grignani, Emilia Hrabovec, Pablo Pérez Lopez, Laura Pettinaroli, Roberto Regoli, Kathleen Sprow-Cummings, Massimiliano Valente, Paolo Valvo