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THE WORLD MOURNS THE POPE:

Pius 12th, Supreme Pontiff, head on earth of the Roman Catholic Church, has ended his mortal life. Catholics throughout the world, a vast community of more than 400 million now mourn the passing of one of the greatest of the 261 successors of St. Peter. In the long line of past popes were numbered many saints, but historians may well declare that none served Almighty God more devoutly than Eugenio Pacelli, who 19 years ago ascended the Papal throne as Pope Pius 12th. His saintly life exemplified the Christian virtues. By summer custom His Holiness was at his residence at Castel Gandolfo. There, a few days ago, flocked a host of reporters, drawn by news that the Pontiff was dangerously ill. A previous illness he had survived, but he was now 82; and through the nights, the people prayed.

In Rome, too, the thousands begged God that he might live. They of this holy city knew him well by sight. To them his voice, so often raised in blessing, was well known and well loved. It added poignancy to their now mounting grief.

Reports and bulletins discouraged hope. Pius was old in years. He lay in coma, as the long hours dragged on, and then he died.

On his 80th birthday, two years ago, the Pope informally received some children. Born in the Catholic faith, children had always been his especial care. And like the blessed Saviour whom he served, he suffered the little children to come unto him. For they were made in the Creator's image, each little body housing an immortal soul.

The meeting illustrated, movingly, that His Holiness never shunned contact with his flock, nor sought aloofness, such as so often goes with high office. Nor did he stand apart from modern science. The new and powerful Vatican Radio he saw as a great instrument, divinely given, gratefully accepted, for wider propagation of the holy gospel.

-2-

For him, religion was alive and vital, always abreast of our day and age. When he inaugurated the station the Pope told his listeners that the Christian message, broadcast throughout the world, would in the long run check and subdue the godless creeds which have sprung up like choking weeds, in our disturbed and restless age. Pluck them forth, he urged, uproot them; why cumbereth they the earth?

Cardinal Pacelli was crowned Pope in 1939. On the last anniversary of that Coronation he had served 19 years as supreme head of the Catholic Church - through the World War, and when that had passed, through threats and rumours of more war to come. But though on all sides enemies assailed the Faith, the Christian citadel held fast. By his courageous guidance, at all times firm and unfaltering, Pius 12th steered the Church safely through dangers, where a less able Pope might have failed. By Divine blessing he was spared long enough to leave Catholicism sound in body, unassailable in faith.

His task is nobly done. Rome, perhaps the whole Christian world, stand in the debt of Eugenio Pacelli, Pope Pius 12th.

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