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In 1939, Pope Pius XI died and Pope Pius XII was elected by the cardinals to be the new pope. Archbishop Roncalli received a coded message from Rome telling him he was being reassigned to France. This proved to be one of his greatest challenges. France had been torn apart by World War II, and the French people were very bitter that the Catholic church had ministered to all soldiers – French and German invaders. The President of France, Charles de Gaulle had ordered that all 30 Catholic bishops there be deported for aiding and abetting the enemy.

As was his gentle style, Archbishop Roncalli listened carefully to the accusations by the government and then said,

“These are very serious charges. They should not be accepted without evidence. Please find the evidence against any of the bishops and present it to me.”

It took a year for the evidence to be collected, and by then tempers had cooled. There was only evidence against three of the bishops, and they were removed from their office.

Meanwhile, knowing how much the French valued good food, Archbishop Roncalli hired the best French chef he could find and invited diplomats and government officials to dine with him. He made friends with them and restored confidence that the Catholic church was indeed a friend to France.

In 1953, at the age of 71, Archbishop Roncalli was promoted to the high rank of Cardinal. Usually the president of the country places the Cardinal's red biretta on the new Cardinal's head, but France had a socialist government which did not favor religion. However, President de Gaulle so admired Archbishop Roncalli that he asked to do this honor to show his respect and friendship.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/France-Pope-John-XXIII-The-Man-Who-Loved-All-People>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/France-Pope-John-XXIII-The-Man-Who-Loved-All-People>

Media Stream



Cardinal Angelo Roncalli

Traditio,

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