

## Chapter Six

Wednesday, May 13, 2015.

Apostolic Palace, Vatican City.

Pope Nicholas VI was the first German pope, and only the third non-Italian pope, in several hundred years. In his youth he had been a respected theologian and had been an active *peritus* (expert) during the Second Vatican Council in the 1960's. Prior to his election as Pope, he had served in the Vatican Curia for decades, and had become increasingly tagged as an "ultra conservative." In actuality, he had simply stayed put where he had been in his youth, while the Church and the world had moved continually further away from Tradition. The same man who had seemed to be an avant-garde liberal in his youth was now accused of being almost reactionary, and yet he could not see that he had changed his positions much at all. Upon his election, he had chosen the name of Nicholas VI. The previous Pope of that name, Nicholas V, who reigned from 1447-1455, had not only brought the Western Schism involving an antipope to an end, but had promoted high culture and arts in the Church and in the world. Likewise, Nicholas VI had a personal dream, beginning early in his career, to bring an end to the Great Schism of 1054 between the Eastern and Western Churches. He had pushed for compromises in the documents at Vatican II, believing that if Rome showed increased respect for the Eastern churches, they would reciprocate. He had devoted much of his career to Ostpolitik – a policy of the Vatican which was popularly understood to be an attempt to foster reconciliation between Eastern and Western Europe, and by extension between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, through human politics.

Pope Nicholas was a slight man, standing five feet eight inches tall, with pure white hair covering most of his head, and a round, clean-shaven face that was still remarkably handsome despite his advanced age. His teeth were naturally straight and in good repair, and his warm smile was universally engaging. His eyes were dark brown, and his complexion was almost pale. His baritone voice still retained its power. He was trim and still quite active physically, and enjoyed stable health for his age. Like many octogenarians he had hypertension, hypothyroidism, and some mild arthritis.

Jacob Ritter, the future Pope Nicholas VI, had grown up in Bavaria, where he and his identical twin brother Frederick had been talented pianists and composers. They had both studied on talent-based scholarships at an elite music conservatory throughout their undergraduate years, and Jacob's professors judged that he could easily have had a career as an international concert pianist and composer. But Jacob and Frederick had both gone to seminary and had become Catholic priests. Jacob's outstanding academic achievements won him a series of professorships in German universities, until ultimately he was made a German bishop, then an Archbishop, and finally a Cardinal called to serve in the Vatican Curia.

Throughout much of his life Cardinal Ritter had believed all the

doctrines of the Church with his intellect, but had tended to operate strictly in the natural world. He applied human wisdom to problem solving, and did not ever really expect miraculous results in response to fervent prayer. Even as Pope Nicholas VI, he had initially depended upon ecumenism and Ostpolitik to try to reconcile the “separated brethren” with the Catholic Church. On May 1, 2011 he had succumbed to immense pressure exerted by the cult of personal popularity surrounding his predecessor, and, based on reports of a subjective medical miracle not susceptible to truly objective scientific verification, had beatified Pope Leo Alexander II before an adoring world. This had been the most rapid beatification process in the entire history of the Church, and produced a groundswell of renewed public adulation for the late Pope. Many began calling for a celebration to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of Pope Leo Alexander II’s first pan-religious prayer meeting in Assisi back in October 1986.

So, in October 2011, Pope Nicholas VI hosted yet another pan-religious gathering at Assisi, arguing that it would be just a friendly meeting and not really an ecumenical prayer service. As Cardinal Ritter, he had refused to attend that first 1986 Assisi prayer meeting. He had argued that it could cause confusion in the minds of the faithful, since it could seem to imply that followers of non-Christian religions believe in and pray to the same Triune God, when in fact they do not.<sup>43</sup> Cardinal Ritter had courageously spoken out, noting that very great caution must be exercised, lest such meetings should undermine the Church’s missionary mandate to proclaim Christ unreservedly to all men and nations.<sup>44</sup>

As if to confirm Cardinal Ritter’s point, in September 1997, an earthquake had caused the roof of the Eleventh-Century Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi to collapse, and many traditional Catholics felt this was a sign of God’s displeasure with the whole idea of pan-religious prayer meetings. But Pope Leo Alexander II issued a public statement, formally denying that this natural disaster could be interpreted as a sign of divine judgment. As if to emphasize this position, in 2002 Pope Leo Alexander II repeated the pan-religious prayer meeting, and forced Cardinal Ritter, under obedience, to attend.

In October 2011, Pope Nicholas VI’s tragic third papal promotion of religious indifferentism in the re-roofed basilica at Assisi proceeded unremarkably as far as the world press could discern. But in private it proved to be a crisis that profoundly changed Pope Nicholas’ perspective forever. Since there were to be no public prayers offered by non-Catholics during this ceremonial meeting, the Pope decided the Blessed Sacrament did not have to be removed from the tabernacle. During the previous pan-religious gatherings, which were formal ecumenical prayer meetings, the Blessed Sacrament had been removed from the tabernacle, which was left open and obviously empty. Even Pope Leo Alexander II had feared that, otherwise, the spectacle of so many non-Catholic and non-Christian religious leaders praying in the Catholic sanctuary might appear

<sup>43</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:20; Psalm 96:5.

<sup>44</sup> Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15.

to the devout Catholic faithful as a form of casual disrespect for the Real Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When the 2011 pan-religious meeting ceremony had ended, Pope Nicholas remained to privately greet the various world religious leaders as they milled about, just inside the altar rail. During this time, the basilica's young parochial vicar came out from the sacristy, and opened the tabernacle, where the consecrated Hosts were reposed. Intending to take Holy Communion to a parishioner in the local hospital, the young priest opened the tabernacle, and took out the ciborium to obtain a consecrated Host to place in his pyx. Immediately upon removing the cover, the young priest found that all the Hosts in the ciborium appeared to be bleeding.

In disbelief, he quickly replaced the ciborium, locked the tabernacle, and immediately but quietly informed the Holy Father that it was urgent to speak with him in private in the sacristy. Soon, the priest brought the ciborium to Pope Nicholas in the locked sacristy. Upon beholding these bleeding Hosts, Nicholas fell on his knees and wept. He understood at once what the Lord Jesus was telling him: by holding yet another pan-religious meeting in the Catholic sanctuary, he had publicly crucified Jesus Christ all over again. By acting as if Jesus is not necessarily King of Kings and Lord of Lords for all men and nations, but rather only one among many possible gods, Pope Nicholas had allowed Him to be publicly mocked in the Catholic sanctuary the same as He had been mocked by his Roman executioners. Pope Nicholas realized at once that he was privately witnessing a Eucharistic miracle,<sup>45</sup> an act of Divine Mercy warning him to turn himself and the Church back from the path of spiritual self-destruction, and this miracle profoundly changed his mind – and his heart.

Nicholas ordered that this miraculous event be kept secret, lest the miracle should come to be misinterpreted by some as a confirmation of the pan-religious meeting. He had the Hosts taken back to Rome by the young priest, who was sworn to secrecy. The Hosts were analyzed in the medical laboratory at the Agostino Gemelli Medical School, by Catholic scientists who knew how to properly respect Consecrated Hosts. The scientists were not informed of the specific place where the Hosts had been consecrated. The “red substance” was confirmed as “fresh human blood,” and DNA analysis indicated that it belonged to “a healthy adult Jewish male with ancestry in the Middle East.”

Thereafter, Nicholas had understood that the real power to change the world resided not in human politics and negotiation, but in the supernatural realm. Prayer was not intended to serve as a pleasant public ceremony to gloss over error, or to make excuses for spiritual blindness. True prayer invoked the Hosts of Heaven to do battle against the powers of darkness, against spiritual wickedness in high places. True prayer did not hesitate to call for the triumph of Truth over falsehood, and dared to desire the unhesitating proclamation of the one Religion which is true over all false creeds. True prayer reflected the very supplication of the Lord Jesus Christ:

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<sup>45</sup> For a review of this subject, the author recommends Cruz, Joan Carroll, *Eucharistic Miracles and Eucharistic Phenomena in the Lives of Saints*, (TAN Books; Rockford, Illinois: 2009) 305 pages.

“*Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.*”

Prior to his election as Pope, His Eminence Jacob Cardinal Ritter had ultimately served as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, where he had tried to place limits on the most radical theologians and liturgical reformers in the post-conciliar Church. His predecessor in the Chair of Peter, Pope Leo Alexander II, had been a man who desired to lead by example, and who was unusually reluctant to enforce any sort of formal discipline against dissenters. It seemed to Cardinal Ritter that the only discipline meted out by Leo Alexander was against those who resisted the undermining of Tradition. But, being wise as a serpent and innocent as a dove, he had bided his time.

Now, as the Pope, he had begun to shock the entrenched liberals and chronic miscreants in high places in the Church by forcing confrontation with truth. The prominent leader of a worldwide Catholic movement had finally been exposed, under Pope Nicholas, as an incorrigible sexual predator of both sexes and all ages, who had fathered illegitimate children, kept secret wives, sexually abused various seminarians he met, and forced his followers to vow not only the usual promises of poverty, chastity, and obedience, but also a fourth vow to never criticize their leader.

Similarly, Cardinal Ritter had struggled for years to try to uncover the infestation of the Church by rings of homosexual predators in high places, who enabled similar misbehavior in their subordinate clergy in exchange for cover. As Pope, Nicholas had allowed a wide and open discussion of this problem, but had been horrified as the extent of the corruption became evident. He recalled that one English churchman,<sup>46</sup> a convert to the Catholic Faith, had written about the plague of locusts arising from the bottomless pit in the Apocalypse, and had ventured that these might represent swarms of priests possessed of an unnatural lust. The cloud of locusts caused the sun to be darkened, and the churchman had noted that this might represent the resultant obscuring of the Pope’s visibility and credibility as the world’s moral leader. There had been frenzied efforts by the anti-Catholic mainstream world press to link Nicholas himself to the scandals, but he had led an exemplary moral life and had managed to link the scandals with the general lack of enforced discipline characteristic of his predecessor’s pontificate.

Of particular interest to Nicholas the theologian had been the process of formal theological discussions with the Society of Saint Pius X, a Catholic Priestly Fraternity that preserved Catholic Tradition in doctrine, liturgy, and priesthood. They had challenged him to re-think the liberal ideas of his youth, so that he was tending to doubt the wisdom of human politics as a solution to religious schism. Truth was truth, they argued, and you can’t negotiate it. Dialog accomplishes nothing but compromise on the part of those who already have the truth. The Deposit of Faith was complete with the death of the last apostle, Saint John, and the Great Commission given to the Church at Christ’s Ascension was to go into all the world and teach all things which He had commanded. It was not to continue seeking the

<sup>46</sup> Abraham Woodhead, *Apocalyps Paraphras 'd*; cited in *New Oxford Review*, June 2010.

truth, but rather to proclaim to all the ends of the earth the truth which had already been delivered to the Church through the apostles.

This morning in May was the monthly meeting of the Pope's security council, a group comprised of Cardinals, priests, and lay political experts. Like any independent nation, the State of Vatican City had formal political relations with most nations in the world, and the Pope found it necessary to keep himself current on religious, political, military, financial, and social developments throughout the world. The meeting began promptly at ten o'clock, with an opening prayer offered by the Holy Father.

The first item on the agenda was the growing instability in central Asia. The Vatican's political expert stated that the past decade had seen a pattern of intentional destabilizations in small central Asian nations sandwiched between Iran, Russia, and China. Hostilities between rival groups seemed to be fomented by special agents from the United States. Typically, both sides in a potential conflict would be supplied with weapons and tactical assistance, one side by the United States and the other side by United States subordinates. The civilian populations would be caught in the middle of the exaggerated conflict, and innocent men, women, and children routinely suffered terribly, while armed guerillas engaged in a limited civil war. This emergency would then justify a United States "peace-keeping mission," which amounted to an American military incursion and *de facto* occupation in order to "save" the poor civilian victims of the whole nefarious process. Military occupation was typically followed by the installation of a puppet regime, which would be permitted a liberal amount of personal corruption provided that they publicly supported the installation of United States military bases on their soil.

The expert concluded by observing that this pattern of empire building was hardly new, having been employed successfully by the British Empire in the previous century. Both China and the Russian Federation were showing increasing displeasure with the military presence of the United States in a part of the world that was their natural sphere of influence. The expert questioned how long the United States would remain silent if Russia or China were creating minor skirmishes and installing military bases in Mexico or Canada. The relentless pursuit of hegemony in central Asia by the United States was placing the world at risk for a major war. There was a growing likelihood that China and Russia, in league together, would consider a sudden and preemptive strike against the mainland United States, if diplomatic efforts to limit United States incursions into central Asia continued to fail.

Pope Nicholas lamented the utter lack of moral restraint which had characterized the secularized governments in the Twentieth Century. The complete secularization of once-Catholic European governments, which resulted from the two World Wars, had unleashed upon the world a spirit of "might makes right." The Darwinian theory of "survival of the fittest" had been hijacked to justify this idea, most horrifically in Nazi Germany where social and genetic engineering were openly employed to try to create a superior race designed to rule the world.

World War I had brought an end to a number of great Christian monarchies which for centuries had kept warfare limited and bound by rules to protect civilians. World War II had ended with a mandate to set up secular democracies designed to keep religion out of the sphere of public debate, and subjected Eastern Europe, the heart of the former Hapsburg Catholic empire, to enslavement under the brutal atheistic tyranny of Joseph Stalin. Despite extensive infiltration by Freemasons and modernists, the Catholic Hapsburgs had emphasized the right to local rule for more than one hundred ethnic groups comprising their empire, and had sought to keep peace and ensure local freedom among them all. But the monstrous Soviet Union imposed a rigid uniformity of thought and behavior. The Communists pretended to grant freedom of religion but punished most of those who practiced the Faith.

In the West, the remaining moral capital, inherited by Protestants from former Catholic Christendom, preserved a modicum of moral order and restraint until the cultural revolution of the 1970's. The United States saw itself as the policeman of the world, and continually increased its broad military commitments until it was financially stretched far beyond the ability of any empire to survive. As a result, it faced bankruptcy by 1971, when President Nixon had no choice but to renege on the promise which undergirded and stabilized the entire world financial system: that the dollar, the reserve currency behind every other currency, would be convertible into gold at a fixed ratio. It had seemed to the Holy Father that this historically unprecedented fundamental dishonesty – imposing upon the whole world a system of currencies that had no intrinsic value at all – in turn had unleashed a mushrooming plague of other dishonesties in public policy. It was almost as if, once money became truly worthless, it was coveted and worshipped as an end in itself like never before. Mammon became the new god of the West. Former Christendom suffered a loss of any eternal perspective. No longer was there a sense of shock and shame if the ratio in wages between the highest paid and lowest paid persons in a society exceeded a ratio of about ten or twelve to one. Recent statistics from the United States had shown a ratio of more than five thousand to one, and the ratio in Western Europe was more than four thousand to one.

Fundamental dishonesties now pervaded the culture of the modern world, until it was even pretended that creation – obviously designed and very finely engineered – had resulted from random processes, contrary to the very laws of science and statistics. It was pretended that human personhood did not begin at conception, but only at birth, or even later in the case of birth defects. It was pretended that man could with impunity choose the hour and method of his own death. It was pretended that nature herself did not proclaim the perversity of the practice of unnatural lust. And it was pretended that the sexes were the same, rather than complementary but different. Equality now meant enforced sameness, and a profound impoverishment of the culture through the rejection of most natural hierarchies. The Holy Father speculated that the world dominance of the English language, with its lack of gender for most inanimate objects, had added fuel to the radical feminist movement, causing them to demand

gender-neutral terminologies that would simply seem bizarre in most other languages.

“If even one Catholic Confessional State should appear again on the world stage,” Nicholas ventured, “I suppose it would have far-reaching effects on many nations. There was a time when many Christian kings feared lest their actions appear unjust before the judgment seat of Christ, the King of Kings. Now, politicians seem to be motivated primarily by what shortsighted program may help purchase sufficient votes to survive the next media-managed democratic election.”

“Plato predicted back in the days of ancient Greece that democracy would never work,” said another expert. “He foresaw that as soon as a small majority discovered that they could plunder their neighbor’s wealth by majority vote, they would not hesitate to do so.”

“Heaven is a monarchy,” continued Nicholas, “the only perfectly benevolent monarchy. All human rulers are subject to imperfection and error, and yet they are called to look to Christ the King as their model and guide. In the history of the West there have been not a few monarchs who proved to be saints. The real tyrants, by and large, either pre-dated Catholic Christendom or arose after the Protestant revolt. But in the contemporary world no one wants to see that. They all believe in democracy as the new state religion, replacing the one Religion which is true.”

Yet another expert pointed out that there had been noble attempts at reestablishing Christian states. Garcia Moreno had succeeded admirably for a while in Ecuador, in the mid-Nineteenth Century.<sup>47</sup> Salazar had made a serious effort in Portugal in the mid-Twentieth Century.<sup>48</sup> Some Vatican political observers felt that the action of Portugal’s bishops, consecrating Portugal to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the spirit of Our Lady of Fatima’s request for the consecration of Russia, had brought great blessings upon the nation. It was spared from World War II, and enjoyed great peace and prosperity.

“We must never cease to proclaim the Gospel of Christ,” said Nicholas, “and pray that world leaders will hear His voice and consider the eternal consequences of the actions they take.”

The second item on the agenda was the mounting Global Financial Crisis. A Vatican financial adviser noted that a fundamentally unjust world financial system, set up by the United States after World War II, gave the American empire an unfair advantage over all other nations through its special status as the issuer of the world’s reserve currency. The world’s financial corruption really began to snowball after 1971 when the United States reneged on its pledge to redeem dollars, the world reserve currency, for gold. That marked the end of any genuine honesty in financial transactions, and set the world adrift at the mercy of monetary lies and obfuscations. The past fifty years had marked the only time in world history when money was not representative of a commodity of intrinsic worth, such as gold or silver. The financial greed which engendered the

<sup>47</sup> Berthe, Augustine, *Garcia Moreno*, (BookSurge Publishing: 2006) 412 pages.

<sup>48</sup> De Meneses, Filipe, *Salazar: A Political Biography*, (Enigma Books: 2009) 544 pages.

Global Financial Crisis was made possible only when there were no longer any natural constraints on the quantities of money that could be issued. And this process of continual inflation of the money supply, causing continual devaluation of its purchasing power, had tended to progressively impoverish the poor and enrich the rich.

“The naiveté of most Americans is lamentable,” suggested Nicholas. “Because they have never had an open revolution since their founding, they tend to confuse unquestioning support for one’s current ruling regime with patriotism. They do not like to hear some of the hard realities we have been discussing today. Now, love of one’s fatherland is a great virtue. But unquestioning love of one’s ruling regime, and refusal to recognize its moral corruption, is potentially a form of idolatry. That is why the Church down through history has stood above and separate from all secular governments. America was founded by men suspicious of the Catholic Church, and possessed of the illusion that they could craft an ideal state while excluding the Social Kingship of Christ. Until recent decades, America was carried along by the unusual moral goodness of her people, but now she is ruled by a secular socialist elite who intend to give no place at all to Christ and His Church.”

“We Europeans live in ancient nations that have seen governments come and go,” said an expert. “It is the nation, which is the people and not the government, that endures. We Europeans understand better that honor is due to the office of the ruler, whereas the current holder of the office may or may not be worthy of the office. The European Union seems to have been devised by socialists precisely to ensure that Europe’s true heritage as a Christian continent remains buried in the past.”

“Again I say,” said Pope Nicholas, “if even one major Catholic Confessional State were to reemerge on the world scene in these tumultuous times, what a profound effect it might have on the course of world events. Sometimes I think that is what Our Lady of Fatima was foreseeing back in 1917. She warned of the annihilation of nations, and we always assumed that meant a nuclear war. But something very terrible has already occurred: the almost complete spiritual annihilation of the nations comprising former Christendom, in both East and West. Only a tiny percentage of people still attend church, and of those who do, most have lost their faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, the need for regular sacramental confession, and the real possibility of eternal damnation. Most no longer consider the Faith the most important part of their lives.”

“But Your Holiness,” interjected the Vatican Secretary of State, “you know as well as I do that Fatima is now part of the past, as was made clear fifteen years ago in the document issued by the Vatican back in 2000. After all, the apparitions occurred in 1917, and it was in 1929 that Sister Lucy felt the Blessed Virgin returned to her to ask for the consecration of Russia. It has been eighty-six years since then, and surely the time is far past when such a public spectacle could ever hope to change the course of world politics.”

“Yes, yes, I know,” scowled the Holy Father. “But still I wonder ...



what if?”

The Secretary of State, an Italian man of ample girth and a round, pock-marked face framing flushed cheeks and a red nose, was widely reputed to be a high-functioning alcoholic. His hair was dark and often appeared to be greasy, while his face was clean-shaven. His dark pupils darted about constantly, especially when young men were present, causing some to wonder if he had ever been taught to practice “the custody of the eyes.” Some said that the Swiss guards protected him in two ways – they kept the Secretary of State safe from potential harm by others, and they also kept the Vatican’s adolescent altar boys and young adult seminarians “out of the Secretary’s way.” He was an aficionado of the best restaurants in Rome, and most evenings had no difficulty finding some well-placed personages to buy him the best entrée and wine on the menu.

“We have followed the wise policy of Ostpolitik with the Eastern nations,” continued the Secretary, “pursuing dialog with the Orthodox Churches and fostering the understanding that we will not offend them by implying they must convert. We are far past the time when the Church can engage in triumphalism, claiming to be the one true Church founded by Christ, outside of which there is no salvation!”

“Your Eminence!” shouted the Holy Father. “What you have just said would be condemned as heresy according to many sainted Fathers of the Church! Have we gone so far astray that we now talk this way without hesitation?”

“But Your Holiness, at Vatican II things changed ...”

“Let me be blunt: increasingly I wonder whether my predecessors decades ago, back when most bishops were actually obedient to the Pope, should not have obeyed Heaven’s request and performed the consecration of Russia exactly as requested by Our Lady of Fatima. Some Popes consecrated Russia. Some Popes consecrated the world. Some Popes included many bishops, but not all of them. But no Pope obeyed Our Lady’s specific request: for the Holy Father, together with all the Catholic bishops in the world, to consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. That was never done. And the promise was that, if it were done, Russia would be converted, and a period of peace would be granted to the world.”

“Holy Father,” the Secretary of State anxiously interjected, “this can never be done now. The bishops would not obey. The Russians would be deeply offended, and move further away from us. The world would mock us for being so naïve and superstitious. We could lose face before the world.”

“Assuming we have any face left to lose, after the scandals of the sexual abuse of youth by clergy, and of widespread liturgical and catechetical abuses.”

“Well, it’s simply not an option anymore. Dark and very powerful forces would be enraged. The consecration of Russia is not going to happen.”

“That will be for Heaven, and not for you, to decide,” retorted the Pope.