

Hitler's Priest

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Former Catholic Priest Examines Vatican's Role in Holocaust

"I was a Roman Catholic priest for close to a decade, but in my heart I am an Italian Jew."

(New York, NY)—Author and former priest Salvatore Tagliareni offers a rare glimpse into the moral conflicts raised by Nazi Germany and the Roman Catholic Church's role in the Holocaust.

Hitler's Priest (Brown Books Publishing Group) gathers an astounding amount of historical research, highly-attuned cultural notes, and a varied cast of characters and compiles all this into a captivating work of historical fiction.

The research for this book began when the author met Dr. Viktor Emil Frankl forty years ago. "I was a Catholic priest and traveled to Rome to study," says Tagliareni. "While in Rome, my best friend was killed and I experienced a crisis of faith. Then I went to work under Dr. Frankl in Austria; this ushered in a monumental change in my life."

Frankl, an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist as well as a Holocaust survivor, wrote the best-selling book *Man's Search for Meaning*, chronicling his experiences as a concentration camp inmate.

"The impact Viktor had on me and millions of others cannot be exaggerated," says Tagliareni. "He was once asked, 'How can you not hate the Nazis?' His reply? 'They took my family, my homeland, my occupation, and my freedom. If I hated them I would have nothing left of my humanity. Love is more powerful than hate.'"

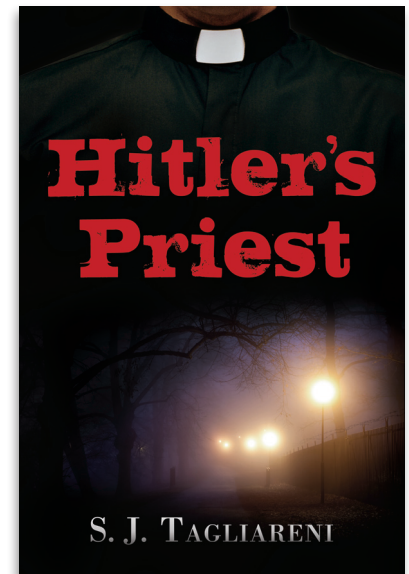
Tagliareni knew he had to tread lightly when it came to the Vatican's culpability in the Holocaust. "In my novel I address the fundamental question: Did the Church have a responsibility to openly speak out against the atrocities? I have attempted to be balanced and fair in answering that question."

At the heart of *Hitler's Priest* is Hans Keller, a highly intelligent architect and atheist. A chance meeting with the charismatic Josef Goebbels, a leading figure in the burgeoning Nazi Party, places Keller on a path that will lead him to a shadowy role of manipulation and deceit as he is offered a key role in shaping the future of the Nazis' new Germany: providing influence within the Catholic Church.

"My novel is meant to inspire self-exploration about responsibility," says Tagliareni. "The fact is that most of the world remained silent . . . begging the question, what would you have done?"

Tagliareni is in the process of writing his second novel. For more information about the author and *Hitler's Priest*, please go to www.HitlersPriest.com.

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TITLE: HITLER'S PRIEST | AUTHOR: S.J. TAGLIARENI
CATEGORY: FICTION / HISTORICAL
ISBN: 978-1-61254-055-9 | \$24.99 | WWW.HITLERSPRIEST.COM

Hitler's Priest

About the Author

S. J. Tagliareni

Salvatore Tagliareni is a story teller, writer, business consultant, art dealer, and former Catholic priest. For over twenty-five years he has successfully engaged private and public companies in their search for outstanding performance. A gifted speaker, he is blessed with a great sense of humor and can invigorate an audience with his insights on life and leadership. He was profoundly influenced by his relationship with Dr. Viktor Frankl, the author of *Man's Search for Meaning*. The desire to humanize the memory of those that perished in the Holocaust is imbedded in his spirit.

An accomplished strategic thinker, he is also captivated by the search for wonderful food and wine. His ultimate goal is to find the perfect cannoli.



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Excerpted from *Hitler's Priest*

Chapter Twenty

Rome, early 1937

There was a slight tap on the door. The pope said, "Come in."

Dressed similarly to the pope, in a black cassock, Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, the Vatican's secretary of state, entered. It was apparent that this meeting was in no way about pomp and circumstance.

"Good morning, Holy Father," Cardinal Pacelli said as he placed his hat on the coat rack.

"Good morning, Eugenio. I asked to meet you here so that we will be uninterrupted."

Pacelli nodded. "Holy Father, it was clear from your note that you have serious concerns about what is happening in Germany. I share your belief that the situation is worse than I initially thought."

The pope frowned. "There is no longer any doubt about what is transpiring in Germany. I seek your counsel as to how we should intervene. News about the treatment of our Jewish brethren is alarming. There is never any justification for the deprivation of personal or property rights, but daily acts of brutality are frightening."

"This is a most delicate situation because the German people are embracing this new political movement. The Jews have become a target and convenient scapegoat for all of Germany's past problems."

"What has happened to the civilized culture that produced such masterful literature and music?" the pope inquired.

Pacelli shook his head. "I fear that the Nazi Party has discredited the intelligentsia. The movement is largely led by men without intellectual skills who are so blinded by bigotry that their rationality has been suspended."

The pope rose from his chair and slowly paced the room. "Tell me about Adolf Hitler, Eugenio."

Pacelli opened his briefcase and took out a large folder. "I have been keeping a file on Chancellor Hitler. I have come to the conclusion that he soon will have complete control over the German people. His speeches are filled with anti-Semitic rhetoric, and it appears that his ultimate goal is to rid Europe of its Jewish population."

"I don't understand. What does this mean?"

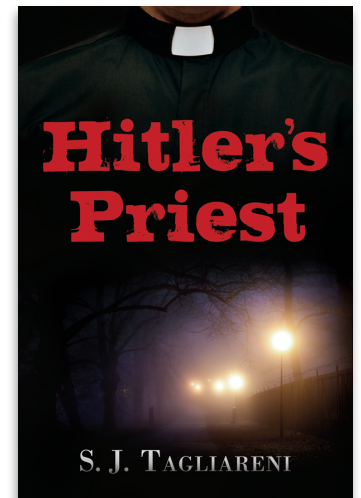
"I believe Hitler has decided to make life in Germany so difficult for the Jews that they will be forced to emigrate. He repeatedly links them with Bolshevism and blames them for the consequences of Germany's defeat in the Great War."

The pope began to scribble some notes on a pad, then looked up. "He is not the only one who fears Bolshevism, but coupling atheism from the east with European Jewry makes no sense."

Pacelli nodded. "True, your Holiness, but the entire Nazi movement is not based on rationality. It is rooted in fear, ignorance, and hate."

"Eugenio, no one here knows more about the German people than you. Do you believe they will follow Hitler's lead in all of these matters?"

"Your Holiness, they have depicted him as the Messiah come to lead his people out of the darkness. It has taken on the cloak of a demonic cult and demands blind obedience."



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The pope seemed completely baffled by this assessment. “I have heard that Hitler and many of his inner circle are actually Catholics. How can they reconcile their behavior with the tenets of the Church?”

“They were baptized, but they have nothing but hatred for the Church. They have no allegiance to Catholic doctrine. They are Catholic in name only. They will seek to neutralize you and every form of belief system that opposes their path to power.”

The pope tapped his fingers on the desk. “Where is the German Church with regard to the National Socialists?”

“Are you asking about our bishops or all of the Christian churches in Germany?”

“Let us begin with our bishops. What is their attitude and behavior toward Hitler?”

“I fear many of the bishops have publicly embraced Hitler. After living in Germany for many years, I can attest to the national loyalty many of them evidence. They differ from the Italian bishops. In Italy, there is no overall binding nationalism. Italy is still a group of city states. In Germany, those individual differences are blended into a homogenous love of country. Hitler has reawakened the past glory when the Church and the state were one. Also—and it pains me to say this—there is an aspect of anti-Semitism in the German Catholic hierarchy that appears in sermons and public pronouncements.”

The pope was incredulous. “How can they be anti-Semites? We are all spiritual Semites, and everything that is sacred and holy has its roots in Judaism! Hating Jews and loving Christ is totally incompatible. Loyalty to country over morality can never be viewed as the will of God.”

Pacelli nodded. “We must directly intervene with the German bishops and alter their current posture, but how will we do that, your Holiness?”

“I want you to write an encyclical that will decry the evils of racism, in particular, the Nazi philosophy that is the root of all the horrors occurring in Germany. You must do this in such a way that no one but you and I will know of it.”

“I accept, your Holiness, but what will we do when it is finished?”

“First it must be written in German. When it is completed and reviewed, it must be smuggled by couriers into the hands of the hierarchy and mandated that it be promulgated from every pulpit in Germany.”

Pacelli seemed troubled by this strategy. “Holy Father, there is great risk to the Church in Germany if we publicly create a confrontation. My assessment is that the Nazis will take direct actions that will be harmful to the Church.”

“Eugenio, I have no illusions about changing their beliefs, but we are commanded by God to not stand by and have the children of Abraham be pitched into this maelstrom of evil. It is our duty to confront these evil actions regardless of the consequences. We cannot guarantee outcome, but we can guarantee witness.”

“I agree, but I believe that a large segment of the Catholic population will not follow our lead on these issues. Even some bishops may resist.”

The pope shook his head. “He did not say, ‘I will build this Church upon a rock, but if things are difficult, avoid them.’ We are the shepherds. We cannot run from the wolf because we are afraid.” The pope paused, then asked, “What about the Protestant churches in Germany? Will they resist Hitler?”

“I think that, by and large, they are akin to German Catholics. Hitler has captured the imagination of a large segment of the population, but so far he has not tampered with religion directly. Also, the words of Martin Luther and his loathing of the Jews seem to be an integral piece of the Protestant fabric.” He paced the floor and then turned to the pope. “How will we balance this criticism of the National Socialist movement with our opposition to Bolshevism?”

“I will depend on your intellectual and writing skills to develop the encyclical so that in no way does it give support to Bolshevism.”

“Your Holiness, God has blessed us with your leadership, and I pray that you will be able to see us through this crisis.” He knelt and received the pope’s blessing.

“Go in peace, Eugenio, and may the spirit of the Lord fill your pen as it did with the four Evangelists.”



Hitler's Priest

What People Are Saying

"*Hitler's Priest*, a captivating novel, offers its readers more than an eye-opening and potent story: this book contains profound observations and unforgettable life lessons. Thank you, S. J. Tagliareni, for giving us this important novel."

—ARTHUR KURZWEIL

American author, educator, editor, writer, publisher, and illusionist

"*Hitler's Priest* is a stunning novel with many fascinating twists and turns."

—JOSEPH J. PITTELLI, MD

Former executive VP, Wyeth Pharmaceutical

"A gripping story of treachery, heroism, and life-altering choices."

—AARON T. BECK, MD

Institute for Cognitive Therapy

"A powerful read that will stay with you long after you finish it."

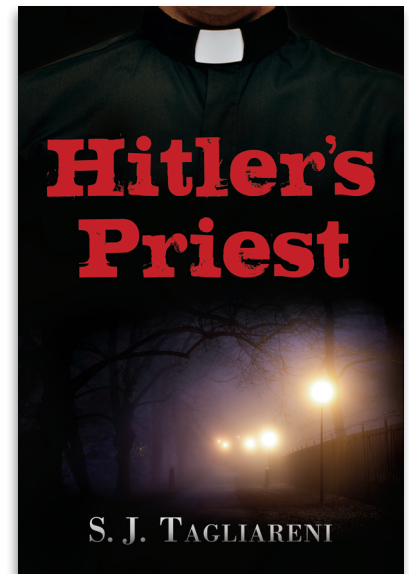
—SUSAN SHERMAN

President and CEO, Independence Foundation

"This is a real page-turner. From the gritty coal mines of Pennsylvania to the majestic fountains of Rome, Dr. Tagliareni weaves a story that combines his insider knowledge of the Vatican with his instinct for love, family, and morality to give us insight into the nightmare that was the Holocaust. Through the misery of some comes redemption for many. You won't forget this story."

—GEORGIA MURRAY

CEO, MMI Investments



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“Tagliareni has given life to the monsters and the heroes in this astounding story.”

—**ROBERT AND PATRICIA GUSSIN**

Author of *Trash Talk*

Author of *And Then There Was One*

“Extraordinary and powerful. A must-read.”

—**RABBI CHARLES A. KROLOFF**

VP for special projects, Hebrew Union College

“A brilliant portrayal of the Catholic Church’s struggles during World War II.”

—**LINDA HAHN**

Executive director, Metropolitan Career Center

“There’s forty years of friendship between us. This novel is so worth the wait! *Fantastico!*”

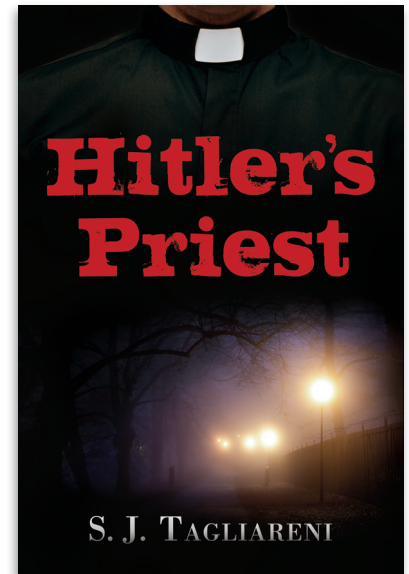
—**BO GLOSTER, MD**

Swedish Hospital Medical Center, Seattle

“From his priesthood and academic experiences, to his personal relationship with Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl, Sal’s writing of *Hitler’s Priest* calls forth a strong emotional response that continues throughout a very powerful read.”

—**DENNIS K. MCCORMACK, PhD**

Former US Navy SEAL, expert in leadership training with the US Army, and studied with Viktor Frankl



Hitler's Priest

Q & A

with S. J. Tagliareni

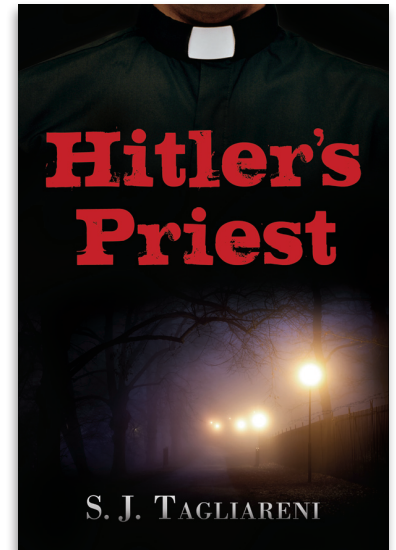
What inspired you to write *Hitler's Priest*?

I studied with Dr. Viktor Frankl, who was a victim of the Holocaust and wrote the profound best seller, *Man's Search for Meaning*. After that experience I interviewed others who had survived the horrors of the Nazi regime, and the Holocaust became more to me than historical facts and statistics. I personalized it, rather than seeing it as a horrible period that affected others a long time ago. I began to imagine the pain of standing naked with my children in a gas chamber, or watching my parents be herded into a suffocating cattle car. I realized that these were innocent people, caused to suffer through no fault of their own. Hearing stories like this from survivors left me with a sense of responsibility. I knew I had to write about their experiences. I wanted to memorialize Dr. Frankl, my friend and mentor, and all those who had suffered.

Is there a personal story behind the book?

The impact that Viktor Frankl had on me cannot be exaggerated. His teaching and friendship have had a profound influence on my life since the first moment I met him. I felt his presence over my shoulder as I wrote this book.

The other personal part of the journey is my relationship with the Pittelli family, who feature prominently in the book. They struggled mightily and forged an outstanding and inspiring family history. Stefano, by his courage and strength, enabled his family to survive. Severio, through hard work and dedication and in spite of his handicapping condition, went on to become the mayor of a town and one of the most significant jurists in Calabria.



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The subject matter of your book is quite controversial. What kind of reader reaction are you looking for and why?

There are many controversies that have never been resolved regarding the relationship between the Church and the German government during the World War II. I would expect a range of reactions from readers. Some may be surprised to know that there were actually high-level clerics who were supportive of Hitler and wished the Roman Catholic Church and the government to form an alliance benefitting both. There were also countless heroic priests and nuns, who, at great personal peril, did all they could to alleviate the persecution of the Jews. In the book, I address the fundamental question of whether the church had a responsibility to openly speak out against the Nazi atrocities. There were and are strong arguments on both sides. I have attempted to be balanced and fair in my exploration of this question.

Is the information in your book based on fact?

Much of the story is based on actual historical events, but some of the characters and their interactions are fictional.

Have you discussed this topic with priests and rabbis? If so, what has their initial reaction been?

I am a former Roman Catholic priest, and have maintained strong bonds of friendship with many of my brother priests. They were a great source of dialogue as I progressed through the writing of the book. Many of their suggestions made their way into the final version. It was important for me to open myself to diverse opinions within the Catholic community. The questions the book asks are complex, and at times caused strong reactions both for and against the work.

I am also blessed with deep friendships in the Jewish community, and openly sought their guidance and assistance as I wrote. Two of the people to whom I dedicated the book are Rabbi Sandy Hahn and Rabbi Charles Kroloff, who have been my moral mentors for years.

What is something new that readers will learn about World War II?

As I did the research for the book I realized how little I previously knew about so many aspects of this war. For example, I had only passing knowledge about the encyclical that Pius XI had commissioned—which never saw the light of day after his death. The main thrust of the encyclical condemned the behavior of the Nazis toward the Jews, and I hope readers recognize the significance of this. I also hope they realize that not every German subscribed to the hatred spawned by Hitler and Goebbels. Some actually paid the ultimate price for their heroic resistance.





Hitler's Priest

Where and how did you conduct your research for the book?

The research for this book actually began forty years ago when I met Viktor Frankl, and through him other survivors of the Holocaust. Their stories remained present in my mind and soul, but over the last three years I conducted exhaustive research in order to understand the historical timeline and the incidents that occurred during the Nazi regime. I literally read hundreds of books on the period and also mined the endless material available on the Internet.

How do you hope readers will embrace this story?

I hope that readers will identify with the characters and see the human choices they were called upon to make. This is a story about good and evil on a scale that is overwhelming. If the work is successful the reader will see beyond stereotypes to perceive the struggles of conscience that confront everyone in the novel. Some choose to be swallowed by evil for personal gain, while others were willing to sacrifice everything—even life itself—for others. Some ignore the choice completely and remain silent on the sidelines. Though the question is impossible to answer, I believe that readers may ask themselves, “How would I have behaved in those circumstances?”

What is the most important take away message of *Hitler's Priest*?

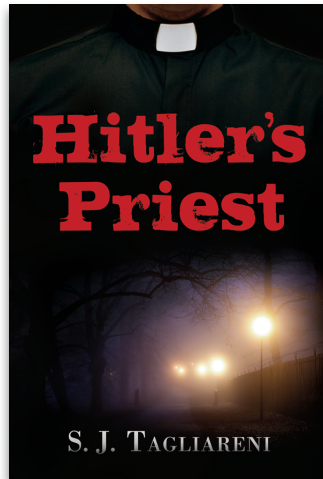
My goal is that the reader will be confronted with the evils of bigotry and come to the deeper realization that this kind of horror could happen again and again. I hope that the book will cause readers to sympathize with those who are penalized beyond imagination because of gender, race, or any other arbitrary statistic, and that in turn they will be more aware and want to protect those marginalized by hatred and ignorance today. I want the reader to appreciate the implications of a virus like anti-Semitism.

Do you have plans for a second book?

I am working on a second novel that takes place during the same time period. I have given myself permission to alter significant historical facts in this new book.



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Synopsis

Hans Keller is highly intelligent - so much so that he places little value in his studies or in religion. But after a chance meeting with the charismatic Josef Goebbels, a leader of the burgeoning Nazi Party, atheistic Hans is offered a key role in shaping the future of the Nazis' new Germany: providing influence within the Catholic Church. As his thoughts become more clouded and his morals crumble, Hans finds himself immersed in a shadowy role of manipulation and deceit; he is becoming Hitler's priest. Author and former priest S. J. Tagliareni offers an astounding amount of historical research, highly attuned cultural notes, and a varied and fascinating cast of characters in his new thriller. In addition, *Hitler's Priest* offers a rare window into the psychological and moral conflicts raised by Nazi Germany and the Holocaust.

