

## Benoit, Marie

(b. 1895), French Catholic Capuchin monk who rescued Jews during the Holocaust.

Benoit decided to rescue Jews after witnessing Vichy authorities arrest thousands of non-French Jewish refugees and surrender them to the Nazis. Benoit helped Jews reach Spain or Switzerland; working with various Christian and Jewish organizations, he developed a far-reaching rescue network.

Germany occupied Vichy France in November 1942, making the escape routes to Switzerland and Spain much less accessible. At that point, Benoit decided to focus his efforts on getting French Jews to the safe haven of Italian-occupied territories. He met with the Italian commissioner for Jewish affairs and persuaded him to permit the rescue of 30,000 Jews from Nice, France. In July 1943 Benoit managed to see Pope Pius XII and inform him of a plan to move the Jews of Nice to northern Italy. However, the plan subsequently failed.

Benoit then tried to help save the Jews of Rome, using the Vatican's Capuchin College as his headquarters. While avoiding arrest by the Gestapo, Benoit procured ration cards and documents from various consulates, which allowed Jews to move around Rome freely. After the war, Benoit was lauded by the Jewish community. In 1966, he was designated as Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem. (For more on Vichy, see also France.)