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VATICAN - "On the Sidelines of the War (1938-1947)": presentation of a critical edition of the unabridged diary of Cardinal Celso Costantini

Rome (Agenzia Fides) – Cardinal Celso Costantini (1876-1958) was "a true hero in the church and the world of the twentieth century," said Cardinal Ivan Dias, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, in his speech at the presentation of the work written by Bruno Fabio Pighin "Ai margini della guerra (1938-1947)," a critical edition of the unpublished diary of Cardinal Celso Costantini (Marcianum Press.) The publication was authorized and sponsored by the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples of which Constantine was Secretary 1935-1953 and was presented on the afternoon of May 28th in the conference room of the "Camera dei Deputati" (House of Representatives) in Rome.
"The studies made so far on the Cardinal show that he was deeply involved in the Universal Church," Cardinal Dias said in his speech. He built a spiritual bridge between West and East when he was first Apostolic Delegate to China and as Secretary of Propaganda Fide, he gave a highly innovative missionary push in the activity. Thanks to his work, the first six Chinese bishops were consecrated by Pope Pius XI in St Peter's Basilica (October 28, 1926), thus fulfilling the essential step towards the culmination of his missionary work in China. After 1939, he had the courage of proposing the convening of an Ecumenical Council to reform the Church, and finally, he undertook with vision the creation of a united, cohesive community of nations."
Other important aspects of the figure and work of Cardinal Costantini, particularly regarding his role during World War II, came to light hour in reading his diary, written while he was Secretary of the Missionary Congregation. "He was able to maintain close working relations with people in government - Cardinal Dias demonstrated - with politicians, with bishops around the world, with intellectuals and artists, but also with humble people, especially those overwhelmed with misery and despair. For the latter, Jews included, Cardinal Celso became an important reference point, sometimes essential in coming to their aid... "
Calling for further publications on the figure of the Cardinal, Cardinal Dias concluded his speech by stressing the special relationship that linked Cardinal Costantini and Pope Pius XII: "born in the same year, they were ordained the same year, both served in the diplomacy of the Holy See, lived side by side in the Roman Curia, and worked closely together in perfect harmony and synergy. They even died the same year and same month. All this may seem a mere coincidence, but I think it is rather a design of Providence, which saw them so committed to peace, to helping the dispossessed of any faith or ethnic group, to building a new world upon the ruins caused by World War II."
In a Message sent on behalf of His Holiness Benedict XVI, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Secretary of State, said: "During the period narrated in the diary of Cardinal Celso Costantini, we should note the constant, unselfish, and determined efforts of Pope Pius XII, the Roman Curia, and every priest, bishop, priest or religious, for the purposes of charity and certainly not for propaganda. Promoting peace, promoting respect for universal rights, supporting equity, avoiding evil, offering shelter, meeting the needs of others, excluding participation in violent political passions: such are the demands that Cardinal Costantini, a partner and true friend of Pope Pius XII, daily recorded in his memoirs with great accuracy and great detail." (SL) (Agenzia Fides 05/29/2010)

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