

# **ROMAN QUESTION (1870-1929): PRISONER OF THE VATICAN: PIUS IX**

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**Lesson Plans**  
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# **ROMAN QUESTION (1870-1929): PRISONER OF THE VATICAN: PIUS IX**

## **Description**

Through the investigation of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the details of the "Roman Question", focusing on why the papacy insisted on its need for civil rule, how the Italian government saw the problem and what citizens in Italy did in response to the Pope's "capture."

## **Subjects**

World History  
European History

## **Grade Level**

11-12

## **Duration**

90 minutes

## **Tour Links**

- Vatican City
- Lateran Palace
- Piazza Venezia
- Vittorio Emanuele Monument
- Pantheon
- Aurelian Wall

## **Essential Questions**

- Who was Vittorio Emanuele II?
- Who was Pope Pius IX?
- Why did Italian troops attack the city of Rome in 1870?
- What was the "Roman Question"?
- How did each side use propaganda on the accords to their own political benefit?
- How was the "Roman Question" finally solved in 1929?

## Academic Summary

We can submit to no agreement which would in any way destroy or diminish Our rights, which are the rights of God and of the Apostolic See. If We did, We would be violating Our sworn trust, which We have often declared and professed. Similarly, We never can and never shall allow or accept those "guarantees" devised by the Piedmont Government, whatever their motive. Nor shall We ever accept other similar ones. These are often offered under the guise of defending Our holy power and liberty in compensation for the civil rule they stripped Us of. But divine providence has willed this civil rule to be protection and strength for the Apostolic See; furthermore, legitimate and indisputable titles, as well as Our having possessed it for more than eleven centuries, confirm Our right to it. For if the Roman Pontiff were subject to the sway of another ruler, but no longer possessed civil power, neither his position nor the acts of the Apostolic ministry would be exempt from the authority of the other ruler.

*"Necessity of Civil Rule" – from UBI NOS: On Pontifical States -- Encyclical of Pius IX, 15 May 1871*

But the greed of the neighboring ruler coveted the regions of Our temporal realm, and he obstinately preferred the advice of the sects of perdition to Our repeated warning and summonses. Most recently, he has far outdone the shamelessness even of the Prodigal Son. He has stormed Our city by force and now even controls it. We are, of course, greatly upset at this lawless usurpation of which We are the victim. We are utterly pained at the great wickedness of the plan to destroy Our civil rule, which at the same time would destroy Our spiritual power and the kingdom of Christ on earth. We are pained at the sight of so many serious evils, especially of those which jeopardize the eternal salvation of Our people. In this bitterness, nothing is more saddening for Us than to be prevented by the state of Our defeated liberty from applying the necessary remedies to so many evils.

*"Usurpation of the City" – from Beneficia Dei: Encyclical of Pope Pius IX on the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of His Pontificate, 04 Jun 1871*

On 20 September 1870, after almost ten years of waiting and negotiating with the Pope with no results, Italian troops breeched the Aurelian Walls at Porta Pia and entered the city of Rome. Pope Pius IX, Bishop of Rome, spiritual leader to millions of Catholics around the globe and Sovereign Ruler of the Papal States, locked himself behind the walls of the Vatican and dared the Italian army to attack the ancient religious citadel. Calling themselves "prisoners in the Vatican", Popes over the next 59 years refused to leave the basilica or to appear in St. Peter's square (occupied by Italian troops), and instead addressed the Catholic faithful from inside St. Peter's only. The Kingdom of Italy, first under Vittorio Emanuele II (the first king of a united Italy since the 6th century) and later under successive monarchs, took Rome as its new capital. The standoff over what became known as the "Roman Question" continued until a final solution was drawn up in 1929 when Pietro Gasparri, Cardinal Secretary of State to Pope Pius XI, and Benito Mussolini, Il Duce of the Italian State, signed a series of documents, known as the Lateran Accords, that acknowledged the sovereignty and independence of the world's smallest state, Vatican City.

Through the investigation of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the details of the "Roman Question", focusing on why the papacy insisted on its need for civil rule, how the Italian government saw the problem and what citizens in Italy did in response to the Pope's capture.

## Objectives

1. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain the Roman Question and how it tore Italians apart between 1870 and 1929.
2. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain how Mussolini and Pope Pius XI solved the Roman Question with the Lateran Accords of 1929.
3. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain the major points of the Lateran Accords of 1929.

## Procedures

### I. Anticipatory Set

- Writing / Question: Should religious leaders be involved in temporal matters? (5 min)
- Handouts – Copies of documents and readings from the websites listed (5 min)

### II. Body of Lesson

- Lecture / PPT – Italian Unification (20 min)
- Video – The Relationship of Benito Mussolini and Pope Pius XI (15 min)
- Independent Activity – Students read the articles and on the Roman Question, taking notes as appropriate. (30 min)
- Suggestion: Have the students read some of these articles and sources for homework before class.
- Group Activity – Socratic Seminar: Discussion on the "Roman Question" and the dilemma faced by Italian Catholics after unification. (10 min)

### III. Closure

- Exit Ticket / Assessment – Short Essay: Explain in detail the "Roman Question", how each side of the conflict saw the problem, and the dilemma faced by Italian Catholics in the wake of unification.

## Extension

### On tour: Vittorio Emanuele Tomb in the Pantheon

While on tour, you will visit the Pantheon in Rome, where students will have the opportunity to see for themselves tomb of Vittorio Emanuele II, first king of a united Italy. Why is he buried there? Why does his tomb say "Padre Della Partia"? What does that inscription mean?

## Web Links

### Lesson Plan Websites

- [www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9ubinos.htm](http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9ubinos.htm)  
UBI NOS: On Pontifical States – Encyclical of Pope Pius IX, 15 May 1871
- [www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9respic.htm](http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9respic.htm)  
RESPICENTES: Encyclical of Pope Pius IX Protesting the Taking of the Pontifical States, 01 Nov 1870
- [www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9benefi.htm](http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9benefi.htm)  
BENEFUCIA DEI: Encyclical of Pope Pius IX on the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of His Pontificate, 04 Jun 1871
- [www.fordham.edu/Halsall/mod/1861italianunif.asp](http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/mod/1861italianunif.asp)  
Documents of Italian Unification, 1846-61 (primary sources) at the Internet History Sourcebook at Fordham University
- [www.fordham.edu/Halsall/mod/1871victoremm.asp](http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/mod/1871victoremm.asp)  
King Victor Emmanuel: Address to Parliament, Rome, 1871
- [wadsworth.cengage.com/history\\_d/special\\_features/iirn\\_legacy/wawc2c01c/content/wciv2/readings/mazzini1.html#2](http://wadsworth.cengage.com/history_d/special_features/iirn_legacy/wawc2c01c/content/wciv2/readings/mazzini1.html#2)  
"Giuseppe Mazzini, the Duties of Man" – Primary source inspiring Italian nationalism.
- [openlibrary.org/books/OL23336272M/The\\_independence\\_of\\_the\\_holy\\_see](http://openlibrary.org/books/OL23336272M/The_independence_of_the_holy_see)  
The Independence of the Holy See (1877 book) by Cardinal Manning. E-book version on the Open Library website. This book is over 150 pages, but is considered the penultimate source on the Vatican's position as to why it needed temporal power. Highly recommended for teachers and advanced students.
- [www.vaticandiplomacy.org/lateran treaty1929.htm](http://www.vaticandiplomacy.org/lateran treaty1929.htm)  
The Lateran Treaty of 1929 Establishing the State of Vatican City
- [www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1](http://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1)  
Reading Like a Historian: Primary Source Documents (video) – great 2-minute video on how to incorporate primary sources into the Common Core and history classes. From Shilpa Duvoor of Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City, CA – highly recommended for teachers.
- [www.slideshare.net/kenanrajoub/unif-of-italy](http://www.slideshare.net/kenanrajoub/unif-of-italy)  
Italian Unification PowerPoint
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=U4FZu9HC\\_ak](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U4FZu9HC_ak)  
"Unifying Italy and Nationalism" (video)
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Fax6TRFh3w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Fax6TRFh3w)  
David Kertzer, professor of Italian Studies at Brown University (RI) – discusses his book, The Relationship of Benito Mussolini and Pope Pius XI, 1922-1939 (video)

## Background Information

- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lateran\\_Treaty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lateran_Treaty)  
"Lateran Treaty" – Wikipedia article
- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman\\_Question](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Question)  
"Roman Question" – Wikipedia article
- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope\\_Pius\\_IX](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Pius_IX)  
"Pope Pius IX" – Wikipedia article
- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aurelian\\_walls](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aurelian_walls)  
"Aurelian Walls" – Wikipedia article
- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prisoner\\_of\\_the\\_Vatican](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prisoner_of_the_Vatican)  
"Prisoner in the Vatican" – Wikipedia article
- [www.passports.com/group\\_leaders/on\\_the\\_road/italy/country\\_profile](http://www.passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/italy/country_profile)  
On the Road: Italy (country profile) – from Passports Educational Travel
- [www.passports.com/group\\_leaders/on\\_the\\_road/italy/rome](http://www.passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/italy/rome)  
On the Road: Rome – from Passports Educational Travel
- [www.passports.com/group\\_leaders/on\\_the\\_road/italy/the\\_vatican](http://www.passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/italy/the_vatican)  
On the Road: Vatican City – from Passports Educational Travel

## Other Relevant Passports Websites

- [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/italy/prisoner-of-the-vatican-pius-xi-and-the-roman-question](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/prisoner-of-the-vatican-pius-xi-and-the-roman-question)  
Prisoner of the Vatican: Pius IX and the Roman Question 1870
- [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/italy/solving-the-roman-question-lateran-accords-of-1929](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/solving-the-roman-question-lateran-accords-of-1929)  
Solving the Roman Question – Mussolini, Pius XI and the Lateran Accords 1929

## Key Terms

- Concordat
- Encyclical
- Holy See
- Italian Unification
- Lateran Accords
- Mazzini
- Mussolini
- Nationalism
- Papal States
- Pius IX
- Pius XI
- Propaganda
- Risorgimento
- Roman Question
- Temporal power
- Vatican City
- Vittorio Emanuele II

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