

**ROMAN QUESTION  
(1870-1929): LATERAN  
ACCORDS OF 1929**



# ROMAN QUESTION (1870-1929): LATERAN ACCORDS OF 1929

## Description

Through the investigation of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the details behind the Lateran Accords of 1929 and how both sides used the agreement to solve the “Roman Question” vexing the Italian peninsula since 1870.

## Subjects

World History  
European History

## Grade Level

11-12

## Duration

90 minutes

## Tour Links

- Vatican City
- Lateran Palace

## Essential Questions

- Who was Benito Mussolini? Who was Pope Pius XI?
- What was the “Roman Question”?
- How did the Lateran Accords solve the “Roman Question”?
- How did each side use propaganda in accordance with their own political benefit?

## Academic Summary

I believe in the high Duce, maker of the Black Shirts,  
And in Jesus Christ his only protector.  
Our Savior was conceived by a good teacher and an industrious  
blacksmith.  
He was a valiant soldier; he had some enemies.  
He came down to Rome. On the third day, he reestablished the state.  
He ascended into the high office.  
He is seated at the right hand of our Sovereign.  
From there, he has come to judge Bolshevism.  
I believe in the wise laws, the Communion of Citizens, the forgiveness of  
sins, the resurrection of Italy and the eternal force. Amen.  
*"Prayer for the Duce". published in La Tribuna on July 25, 1929.  
translated and reprinted in Simonetta Falasca - Zamponi. A Fascist  
Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy. Berkeley:  
University of California Press, 1997.*

On February 11, 1929, at the Lateran Palace in Rome, 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. In doing so, they solved a problem that had plagued the Italian peninsula for almost sixty years. Commonly known as the "Roman Question", it involved both internal and international considerations. The problem plagued popes and governmental officials alike. After Italian unification in 1870, the Kingdom of Italy, a country with one of the highest Catholic populations on the globe, had alienated herself from the center of the Church. Making the situation worse was the fact that the Church itself refused to recognize the new state. The Pope, a temporal ruler since the early medieval period, simply shut his doors and refused to come out until the situation was solved. It would be a while. Italian Catholics for the next six decades would be caught between intense nationalism for their new country and the health of their immortal soul. The Lateran Accords of 1929 solved both dilemmas. A complex set of documents, the accords were arranged into three separate agreements. A treaty between the Papacy and the State was signed first, whereby each side recognized the other's right to exist. A concordat was then signed. This laid out the working relationship between the Church and the kingdom. Finally, a financial convention was signed which compensated the Holy Father for the lands that had been confiscated during unification. The "Roman Question" was solved. Vatican City was born.

Through the investigation of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the details behind the Lateran Accords of 1929 and how both sides used the agreement to solve the "Roman Question" vexing the Italian peninsula since 1870.

## 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 – The Roman Question and the Lateran Accords (20 min)
- Video – The Relationship of Benito Mussolini and Pope Pius XI (5 min)
- Independent Activity – Students read the articles and sources about Mussolini, Pope Pius XI and the Lateran Accords, 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 Lateran Accords and how Mussolini and Pius XI solved the “Roman Question”? (15 min)

## III. Closure

- Exit Ticket / Assessment – Essay: Explain in detail the major points of the Lateran Accords of 1929 and how the treaty solved the “Roman Question” by acknowledging the independence of Vatican City. Why was this treaty important for both Mussolini and Pius XI?

# Extension

## On tour: Vatican City

While on tour, students visit Vatican City, created by the Lateran Accords in 1929. The smallest country in the world at 110 acres (less area than New York City’s Central Park). The Vatican has a post office and mints its own Euro coins (both strictly limited in use). While at the Vatican, students should notice the Swiss Guard, the official army protecting the Pope (only some of them wear the 16th century colored uniforms). In the Vatican, the Pope is an absolute monarch.

# Web Links

## Lesson Plan Websites

- [www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/secretariat\\_state/archivio/documents/rc\\_seg-st\\_19290211\\_patti-lateranensi\\_it.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/archivio/documents/rc_seg-st_19290211_patti-lateranensi_it.html)  
Treaty between the Holy See and Italy, 11 February 1929 – from the Vatican website
- [www.concordatwatch.eu/topic-841.843](http://www.concordatwatch.eu/topic-841.843)  
How the Lateran Treaty made the Catholic Church into a state (website)
- [www.concordatwatch.eu/showtopic.php?org\\_id=878&kb\\_header\\_id=842](http://www.concordatwatch.eu/showtopic.php?org_id=878&kb_header_id=842)  
The Vatican's grip on Italy (website)
- [www.concordatwatch.eu/showtopic.php?org\\_id=871&kb\\_header\\_id=823](http://www.concordatwatch.eu/showtopic.php?org_id=871&kb_header_id=823)  
The Vatican's triple crown – church government and state (website)
- [www.historyteacher.net/APEuroCourse/PowerpointPresent/ItalianFascism.ppt](http://www.historyteacher.net/APEuroCourse/PowerpointPresent/ItalianFascism.ppt)  
Italian Fascism PowerPoint from Susan Pojer, AP European history teacher at Horace Greeley High School in Chappaqua, NY on her website [www.historyteacher.net](http://www.historyteacher.net).
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Ofa9nhPjN8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Ofa9nhPjN8)  
“Benito Mussolini – History Documentary” (video). This video, although 45 minutes, covers Mussolini's life well. Recommended for both students and teachers.
- [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)
- [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.

## 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/Benito\\_Mussolini](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benito_Mussolini)  
“Benito Mussolini” – 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)

## Key Terms

- Concordat
- Fascism
- Lateran Accords
- Mussolini
- Papal States
- Pius IX
- Pius XI
- Propaganda
- Risorgimento
- Roman Question
- Vatican City

