

Non Possumus

By Rick Friend

Outline

"You are very dear to me my little son, for I acquired you for Jesus Christ at a high price...if you only knew how much you have cost me..."

Pope Pius IX

In 1858 an incredible incident happened in the Papal States in Italy. Edgardo Mortara, a child of a Jew, was abducted by order of Pope Pius IX, who claimed that the 6-year old was a Christian, having been secretly baptised when a baby, by a Roman Catholic servant girl.

In spite of the pleading of his father and the tears and screams of his mother, young Edgardo was torn from their arms and placed kicking and screaming, in a carriage bound for Rome, in what proved to be one of the most sensational scandals of the 19th Century.

NON POSSUMUS is the powerful and moving story of Edgardo's journey from the back streets of Bologna to the rose gardens of the Vatican; the story of a Pope willing to sacrifice the political power of the Papal States for the love of a 'son' he never had and the story of a father who spends the rest of his life desperately trying to get back the son he has so tragically lost.

The story is told in flashback, as a now 90-year old Father Mortara, living in 1940 as a Catholic priest in a Belgian monastery, tells the poignant tale of his life to Raoul, a young novice faced with an important decision of his own - to dedicate his life to the Church, or to follow his heart and start a family. As the Nazis prepare to invade Belgium,

Father Mortara prepares to die - not knowing if he will leave the world as a Christian or a Jew!

NON POSSUMUS is a tale of emotional upheaval set against the background of the pre-unified Italy of the 1850's; a country over-run with Austrian soldiers, colourful processions, religious fanaticism and fierce anti-semitism; a time when the Papal States was an independent country and the Pope was one of the wealthiest and most powerful princes in Europe.

As news of Edgardo's plight resonates throughout the world, Pope Pius IX is totally unprepared for the violent storm that follows. Mortara meetings are held as far away as San Francisco, as Christians and Jews unite, to petition the Pope to return the boy to his parents.

In Europe, Victor Emmanuel II and Napoleon III of France use the case to undermine the Pope in the unsettling days before the Wars of the Italian Unification.

In London, Jewish aristocrat, Sir Moses Montefiore prepares for a historic visit to Rome, in an attempt to secure the boy's release. The pressure is on, but to every protest the Pope and Cardinal Antonelli, his Secretary of State, give the same reply - We cannot - Non Possumus!

Adapted from **Rick Friend's** novel and following nearly 20 years of careful historical research, **NON POSSUMUS** is the true story of the Jewish boy Edgardo Mortara, whose destiny was shaped by a few drops of Holy Water in one of History's strangest accidents!

On September 3rd 2000, Pius IX was beatified by the Vatican!

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