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A letter from Edith Stein to Pope Pius XI urgently requesting him to intervene on behalf of persecuted Jews in Nazi Germany is among the first documents to come to public attention as a result of the Vatican's recent action opening further sections of its archives. The letter is dated April 12, 1933, shortly after Hitler came to power.

"For weeks," Stein writes, "we have seen deeds perpetrated in Germany which mock any sense of justice and humanity, not to mention love of neighbor." Deploring the fact that the Church had not yet spoken out, she adds: "We all, who are faithful children of the Church and who see the conditions in Germany with open eyes, fear the worst for the prestige of the Church if the silence continues any longer."

Edith Stein, an accomplished philosopher and a professor at the Institute of Scientific Pedagogy in Münster, had grown up in an Orthodox Jewish family but converted to Catholicism in 1922. Still considered Jewish by the Nazis, she was dismissed from her post, and entered the Carmelite convent in Cologne. Later she fled to the Netherlands, but was deported to Auschwitz and died there in 1942. She was canonized in 1998 under the name St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross.

The 1933 letter is referred to in Edith Stein's 1938 autobiography, but its text had not been known. It was released to the public on February 15, 2003, and translated from the original German jointly by Suzanne Batzdorff, a niece of Edith Stein; Sr. Josephine Koeppel, the translator of her autobiographical writings; and John Sullivan, editor of *The Collected Works of Edith Stein*.

[Text of the letter](#)