

RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY
Office of Communications and Public Affairs

Press Release

September 25, 2013

Contact: Anna Farneski

E-mail: afarnesk@ramapo.edu

Phone: 201.684.6844

**HOW A FRENCH CAPUCHIN PRIEST SAVED THOUSANDS DURING
HOLOCAUST TO BE DEPICTED AT RAMAPO COLLEGE**

(MAHWAH, NJ) – Noted historian Susan Zuccotti will examine the life and work of Père Marie-Benoît, a courageous French Capuchin priest who risked everything to hide Jews in France and Italy during the Holocaust. The program to be held at Ramapo College of New Jersey on October 23 at 7 p.m. in the Trustees Pavilion (PAV 1&2), is being co-sponsored Italian Club of Ramapo College and supported by the Morton and Clara Richmond Endowment. Zuccotti's talk will be based on her new book, "*Père Marie-Benoît and Jewish Rescue: How a French Priest Together with Jewish Friends Saved Thousands During the Holocaust,*" published in June by the Indiana University Press

Who was this extraordinary priest and how did he become adept at hiding Jews, providing them with false papers, and helping them to elude their persecutors? What was his motivation? What made him join an organization, dissolved by Pope Pius XI in 1928, that questioned the traditional anti-Semitic teachings of the Catholic Church? As Zuccotti will reveal, she found some of the answers to these questions in a collection of letters that the not-yet ordained Marie-Benoît written to his mentor and teacher, an older Capuchin priest, during his service at the front during the First World War. To tell this remarkable tale more fully, in addition to her research in French and Italian archives, Zuccotti personally interviewed Père Marie-Benoît, his family, Jewish rescuers with whom he worked, and survivors who owed their lives to his network.

Susan Sessions Zuccotti holds a Ph.D. in Modern European History from Columbia University. She has won a National Jewish Book Award for Holocaust Studies, and the Premio Acqui Storia – Primo Lavoro for "*Italians and the Holocaust*" (1987). She also received a National Jewish Book Award for Jewish-Christian Relations, and the Sybil Halpern Milton Memorial Prize of the German Studies Association in 2002 for "*Under His Very Windows*" (2000). She lives in Brooklyn and is married to John Zuccotti. This is her fourth visit to Ramapo College.

For a photo of Professor Zuccotti, please click here:

<http://www.ramapo.edu/news/files/2013/09/Zuccotti.jpg>

###

Ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* as sixth in the Best Regional Universities North category, Ramapo College of New Jersey is sometimes mistaken for a private college. This is, in part, due to its unique interdisciplinary academic structure, its size of approximately 6,008 students and its pastoral setting in the foothills of the Ramapo Mountains on the New Jersey/New York border.

Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include nursing and social work. In addition, Ramapo College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels. The College also offers six graduate programs as well as articulated programs with the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, New York Chiropractic College, New York University College of Dentistry, SUNY State College of Optometry and New York College of Podiatric Medicine.