



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO OFFICIALS OF THE VATICAN SECRET ARCHIVE

*Clementine Hall
Monday, 4 March 2019*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I welcome you; I am pleased to receive you. I thank Msgr José Tolentino de Mendonça for the courteous greeting he addressed to me on behalf of all of you. I greet Msgr Sergio Pagano, Prof. Paolo Vian, the new Vice-Prefect, and you archivists, writers, assistants and employees of the Vatican Secret Archive, as well as the professors of the Vatican School of Paleography, Diplomacy and Archives Administration.

The occasion of your visit — at such a short time since my meeting with you and with the Apostolic Library last 4 December — is part of the joyful occasion, which was precisely the day before yesterday, of the 80th anniversary of the election on 2 March 1939 as Supreme Pontiff the Servant of God [Pius XII](#), of venerable memory.

The figure of that Pontiff, who was at the helm of the Barque of Peter at one of the saddest and darkest moments of the 20th century, in turmoil and largely destroyed by the last world war, with the consequent period of the reorganization of nations and post-war reconstruction, this figure has already been examined and studied in many aspects, at times debated and even criticized (one might say with some prejudice or exaggeration). Today he is appropriately being reexamined and indeed placed in the proper light for his multifaceted qualities: pastoral, first and foremost, but also theological, ascetic, diplomatic.

At the behest of [Pope Benedict XVI](#), you Superiors and Officials of the Vatican Secret Archive, as well as of the Historical Archives of the Holy See and of Vatican City State, from 2006 to today

have been working on a joint project of cataloguing and preparing the voluminous documentation produced during the Pontificate of [Pius XII](#), a part of which has already been made available for consultation by my venerated Predecessors St. [Paul VI](#) and Saint [John Paul II](#)..

Therefore I thank you, and through you the other Vatican archivists as well, for the patient and scrupulous work you have done in these last 12 years, and which in part you are still carrying out, in order to complete the aforementioned preparation.

Yours is a work carried out in silence and far from clamour; it cultivates memory, and in a certain sense it seems to me that it may be compared to the cultivation of a majestic tree, whose branches stretch skyward, but whose roots are firmly anchored in the ground. If we compare this tree to the Church, we see that she stretches heavenward, where our homeland and our ultimate horizon lie; the roots, however, sink into the soil of the very Incarnation of the Word, into history, into time. With your patient efforts you archivists work on these roots and help to keep them alive, in such a way that even the greenest and youngest branches of the tree may draw good sap for their future growth.

This constant and by no means minor commitment of yours and of your colleagues, allows me today, in memory of that significant anniversary, *to announce my decision to open to the consultation of researchers the archival documentation pertaining to the Pontificate of [Pius XII](#)*, up to his death, which occurred at Castel Gandolfo on 9 October 1958.

I have decided that the opening of the Vatican Archives for the Pontificate of [Pius XII](#) will take place on 2 March 2020, exactly one year after the 80th anniversary of Eugenio Pacelli's election to the Chair of Peter.

I take this decision having heard the opinions of my closest Advisors, with a calm and trusting spirit, certain that serious and objective historical research will succeed in evaluating in its proper light, with appropriate criticism, the praiseworthy moments of that Pontiff and, no doubt also the moments of grave difficulty, of anguished decisions, of human and Christian prudence, which to some may appear reticent, and which were instead human and hard-fought attempts to keep alive, in periods of intense darkness and cruelty, the flame of humanitarian initiatives, of hidden but active diplomacy, of hope in the possible favourable opening of hearts.

The Church is not afraid of history but, rather, she loves it, and would like to love it more and better, as God loves it! Thus, with the same confidence of my Predecessors, I open and entrust this patrimony of documents to researchers.

As I thank you again for the work you have done, I hope you may continue in the task of providing assistance to researchers — scientific and material assistance — and also in the publication of sources pertaining to Pacelli which will be considered important, as in fact you have already been

doing for several years.

With these sentiments, I wholeheartedly impart the Apostolic Blessing to all of you, and I ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you.