



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CAMILLO RUINI
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 25th ANNIVERSARY
OF HIS EPISCOPAL ORDINATION***

*Venerable Brother
Cardinal Camillo Ruini
Vicar General for the Diocese of Rome*

Twenty-five years have passed since that 29 June 1983, the Solemnity of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, on which, through the hands of the late Bishop Gilberto Baroni, you received Episcopal Ordination in the Cathedral at Reggio Emilia. You have made the praiseworthy choice of celebrating this Jubilee together with priests of the Diocese of Rome who are also celebrating important anniversaries this year. Therefore, on this happy occasion, I desire to be spiritually united with you, dear and Venerable Brother, in thanksgiving to God, recalling the stages of your fruitful episcopal ministry.

First of all, you spent the first three years in your Diocese of Reggio Emilia-Guastalla as Auxiliary Bishop, with the title of the ancient Church of Nepte. Since you were already a well known and highly esteemed priest, the faithful of Reggio and Guastalla were delighted to see you as the principal collaborator of Bishop Baroni in the pastoral guidance of that Church with the specific task of seeing to the formation and promotion of the laity and the celebration of the Diocesan Synod whose theme was "Gospel proclamation today in the regions of Reggio and Guastalla". In those years, you were also deeply committed, as Vice-President of the Committee, to promoting the National Convention of the Italian Church in Loreto. Recognizing that you were a faithful, wise, intelligent and farsighted Bishop, my Venerable Predecessor John Paul II, appointed you General Secretary of the Italian Bishops' Conference in June 1986. From that time until 7 March last year, you served the Italian Bishops' Conference without interruption and especially since 1991 when you became President of the Italian Bishops' Conference. As I had the opportunity to note in my Letter addressed to you on 23 March 2007, you courageously and tenaciously transmitted the magisterial and pastoral instructions of the Successor of Peter, showing great solicitude in helping

your Confreres to accept them and put them into practice.

However, what especially prompts me to thank you now, Your Eminence, is your commitment to serving the Church of Rome. The Servant of God John Paul II called you to succeed the late Cardinal Ugo Poletti on 17 January 1991. On that occasion the beloved Pontiff entrusted to you, as he wrote, "what is most my own and what I hold dearest: apostolic Rome with its incomparable treasures of Christian spirituality and of the Catholic Tradition; with its vital forces of priests, Religious communities and committed lay people; but also its countless human experiences, its thousand initiatives and its problems, its certainties and its anxieties, its achievements and its expectations". He knew he would find in you "an expert, trustworthy and generous collaborator" (*ibid.*), able to put the assiduous and affectionate care of the Diocese before any other interests. And you also offered this same collaboration to me in recent years.

Everyone in the Church of Rome has seen your great capacity for work, your simple, straightforward faith, your intelligent pastoral creativity, your faithfulness to the living identity of the Institution through union with the Pope even in the midst of difficulties, your trusting and smiling optimism. Thus I offer you my fervent thanks, venerable Brother, for all you have done until today in this beloved Diocese. I thank you first of all for having brought to completion in 1993, the Diocesan Synod. After its first phase, under the guidance of your Predecessor, you lead it in the second phase, promoting the broadest involvement of the parishes and of all the other ecclesial realities present in the City, especially through the Pre-Synodal Assemblies of the Prefecture and interweaving, with the initiative called "Exchange with the City", an open dialogue with the entire population of the City on Rome's most important and complex problems today. Lastly, you directed the above-mentioned Synod until the publication of the Book of the Synod. This Book, which owed so much to you, is still timely today for identifying the best ways to encourage a real encounter with Christ in the context of pastoral action, to which the Church of Rome was giving priority at that time: the family, youth, social, economic and political responsibility, and culture. To implement these instructions, many moments of reflection and dialogue on the most important themes of faith and pastoral planning still take place in the Basilica of St John Lateran. I am thinking of the "Dialogues in the Cathedral" and of the annual Ecclesial Conventions at which I have personally chosen to speak ever since my election to the Chair of Peter.

Among the commitments of these years of episcopate at the direct service of the Bishop of Rome, how can I fail to mention the preparation and celebration of the City Mission in preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000? This Mission saw the People of God, not only on the receiving end but also as active protagonists. Then there was the Jubilee itself, which culminated in the 20th World Youth Day, an unforgettable experience of Church which owed much to the Diocese of Rome. However, your ordinary episcopal ministry deserves a special word of appreciation. In the course of the years you guided 484 diocesan priests to their Ordination and with various initiatives encouraged the construction of at least 57 new parish churches, two additional places of worship, and the Church in the College of the Holy Korean Martyrs. Moreover, Your Eminence, you were

also responsible for making a church in Rome available to numerous Catholic Communities from other nations of the world for their celebrations, and for keeping alive relations with their compatriots and lands of origin. I would like to thank you further for all you have done for priests, deacons, men and women religious, seminarians, lay groups and all the People of God of the Diocese of Rome: in these years they have increased in communion and in their awareness of the urgent need for the mission. In this regard, I must express to you my personal gratitude for the dedication with which, in these years, you introduced me into the complex reality of this beloved Church, accompanying me on my Visits to parishes, at the Meetings with the clergy, the poor, the sick and with youth. Thank you for supporting my invitation for a serious commitment to education and for convoking, on several occasions, so many of the faithful to St Peter's Square to listen, sustain and encourage the ministry of the Roman Pontiff.

In all these circumstances your faithfulness to your episcopal motto: "*Veritas liberabit nos*" has been exemplary. In the name of this Truth, which is Christ himself, you have constantly expended yourself for the People of God resident in Rome. It would also be necessary to thank you, venerable Brother, for the many other services you have rendered to the Church and to society in your 25 years as a Bishop. May the Lord, who knows human hearts, and in particular the joys and sufferings of Pastors, reward you as he alone can, and continue to shower his gifts upon you. I entrust you, beloved Cardinal, to the Virgin Mary, *Salus Populi Romani*, to St Joseph, to the holy Apostles Peter and Paul and to the Virgin and Martyr Agnes, who watched over the years of your formation at the "Almo Collegio Capranica" and whose Basilica on the Via Nomentana is your titular church, as with great affection, invoking a renewed outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon you, I impart to you a special Apostolic Blessing which I gladly extend to your relatives, your collaborators and all your loved ones.

From the Vatican, 19 June 2008

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

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