



The Holy See

VISIT TO THE ITALIAN EMBASSY TO THE HOLY SEE

**MEETING WITH THE UNDERSECRETARY OF THE PRIME MINISTER
AND THE EMBASSY STAFF**

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Chapel of Palazzo Borromeo
Saturday, 13 December 2008

*Mr Undersecretary of the
Prime Minister's Office,
Dear Friends,*

On my brief visit to the Embassy of Italy, the first meeting is taking place in this beautiful chapel which has just been restored and renovated. And I am happy to meet, precisely here, you who constitute the vital working community of this Embassy. I greet you all with affection, together with your relatives. I address a special greeting to the Undersecretary of the Prime Minister's Office who has conveyed the Prime Minister's greeting to me and a warm welcome, expressing your sentiments. He recalled that this chapel, blessed a few days ago by the Cardinal Secretary of State, is dedicated to a Saint whose name is indissolubly linked to this building: St Charles Borromeo. He and his brother Federico received this dwelling as a gift from their uncle, the Pontiff Pius IV, with whom Charles, created a Cardinal at a very young age, collaborated in the government of the universal Church. It was immediately after the death of his elder brother that the Pontiff's young nephew began a process of spiritual development which led him to a profound conversion, marked by a decisive choice of evangelical life. Having become a Bishop, he devoted all his care to the Archdiocese of Milan. His biography clearly reveals the zeal with which he carried out his episcopal ministry, promoting the reform of the Church in accordance with the spirit of the Council of Trent, whose directives he employed in an exemplary manner, showing a constant closeness to the population, especially during the years of the plague, so that he became

known as "the angel of the plague victims" precisely for his generous dedication. The human and spiritual experience of St Charles Borromeo shows how divine grace may transform the human heart and render it capable of love for the brethren, even to the point of sacrifice of self.

Dear brothers and sisters, I entrust each one of you present here with your relatives to the protection of St Charles, so that you too may advance the mission God entrusts to you at the service of your neighbour in accordance with your various offices. Lastly, I take this opportunity to wish you a happy and holy Christmas, while I warmly bless you all.

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