



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO CARD. CAMILLO RUINI
EXPRESSING GRATITUDE FOR HIS LONG SERVICE
AS VICAR GENERAL FOR THE DIOCESE OF ROME*Clementine Hall*
Friday, 27 June 2008

Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am very glad to greet you and to offer my cordial welcome to each one of you. I address it, first of all and especially to you, dear Cardinal Camillo Ruini, whom I wish to thank publicly today at the end of your long service as Vicar General for the Diocese of Rome. I have already had an opportunity to express my sentiments to you recently with a letter in which I was able to recall the many aspects of your daily and appreciated ministry, which began in January 1991 when the Servant of God John Paul II called on you to succeed Cardinal Ugo Poletti. I now have the opportunity to renew the expression of my gratitude to you in the presence of the Auxiliary Bishops, the Parish Priest Prefects, the other representatives of the Diocese and the working community of the Vicariate of Rome.

The final years of the past century and the first of the new one were a truly extraordinary period, especially for those, like us, who were destined to live beside an authentic giant of the Church's faith and mission, as was my Venerable Predecessor. He guided the People of God towards the historic goal of the Year 2000 and, through the Great Jubilee, ushered it into the third millennium of the Christian era. Working closely with him, we were "swept away" by his exceptional spiritual strength, rooted in prayer, in profound union with the Lord Jesus Christ and in filial intimacy with his Most Holy Mother. The missionary charism of Pope John Paul II rightly had a crucial influence on the period of his Pontificate, particularly during the preparation for the Jubilee of the Year 2000; and it was possible to see this directly in the Diocese of Rome, the Pope's Diocese, thanks to the constant commitment of the Cardinal Vicar and his collaborators. As an example of this I limit myself to recalling the City Mission of Rome and the so-called "Dialogues in the Cathedral", an

expression of a Church which, at the very moment in which it was becoming more aware of its diocesan identity and gradually acquiring its features, resolutely opened itself to a missionary mindset and a style coherent with it, a mindset and style that were destined to last not only for a season but rather, as has often been said, to become permanent. Venerable Brother, this is a particularly important aspect for which I wish to give you merit, especially since you not only promoted and nurtured it here in Rome but, in your capacity as President of the Bishops' Conference, also throughout the Italian Nation.

Your concern for the mission was always accompanied and sustained by an excellent capacity for theological and philosophical reflection, which you have expressed and exercised since the years of your youth. The apostolate, especially in our time, must be constantly nourished with thought if it is to motivate the meaning of gestures and actions; otherwise it is destined to be reduced to sterile activism. And you, Your Eminence, made an important contribution in this respect, placing your well known gifts of intelligence and wisdom at the service of the Holy Father, the Holy See and the entire Church. I myself witnessed this in my previous office and especially in these recent years in which I have been able to avail myself of your closeness in serving the Church in Italy and particularly in Rome. In this regard, I am pleased to recall our collaboration on the themes of the Diocesan Ecclesial Conventions, which aim at responding to the main pastoral needs, taking the social and cultural contexts of the City into account. We all know that the "cultural project" is a particular initiative of the Italian Church which is due to the zeal and farsightedness of Cardinal Ruini, but the expression, "cultural project", more generally and radically, recalls the Church's way of being present in society, that is, the desire of the Christian Community - in response to the mission of her Lord - to be present in the midst of humanity and history with a human, family, and social relations project inspired by the Word of God and declined in dialogue with the today's culture.

Dear Cardinal, in this you have set an example that continues beyond initiatives of the moment as an example of your commitment to "thinking faith" in absolute fidelity to the Church's Magisterium, with regular attention to the teachings of the Bishop of Rome and, at the same time, listening constantly to the questions that emerge from the contemporary culture and from the problems of society today.

As I express my gratitude to Cardinal Camillo Ruini, I am delighted to inform you that I have appointed Cardinal Agostino Vallini, until now Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura to replace him as Vicar General for the Diocese of Rome. I greet him with deep affection and I welcome him to his new office, which I entrust to him aware of his pastoral experience, which he first developed as Auxiliary of the great Diocese of Naples and later as Bishop of Albano; with this experience he combines tested gifts of wisdom and affability. In this context I have appointed him Archpriest of the Basilica of St John Lateran and Grand Chancellor of the Pontifical Lateran University. Your Eminence, from today my prayers for you will be particularly intense so that the Lord may grant you all the graces you need for this new task. I encourage you to express your pastoral zeal to the full and I wish you a serene and fruitful ministry in which - I am certain - you

will be able to avail yourself of the constant and generous collaboration of the Auxiliary Bishops and of all the priests, religious and lay people who work in the Vicariate of Rome. Indeed, I make the most of this happy occasion, dear brothers and sisters, to express to all of you who work in the central offices of the Diocese my deep gratitude and encouragement to do your best for the good of the Church in Rome.

Dear Cardinals, may God fill you with an abundance of his gifts. May he reward the one who is leaving and sustain the one who is replacing him. May he multiply in everyone thanksgiving for his infinite goodness and may he always grant to all the joy of serving Christ by working humbly for his Church. May the Virgin Mary, *Salus Populi Romani*, watch over us and guide us from Heaven. As I invoke her intercession, I cordially impart the Apostolic Blessing on all of you present here and on the entire City of Rome.

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