



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO CARDINAL ANGELO SODANO
ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT
FROM THE OFFICE OF SECRETARY OF STATE***

*To my Venerable Brother Cardinal Angelo Sodano
Dean of the College of Cardinals*

In September 2002, as you were approaching your 75th birthday, venerable and dear Brother, my late Predecessor, the Servant of God John Paul II, requested that you continue in this office as his prime Collaborator.

He had first called you to this office on 1 December 1990 as Pro-Secretary of State, and subsequently, on 29 June 1991, as Secretary of State.

When the Lord desired it to be my turn to accept the mandate as supreme Pastor of the People of God, I deemed it appropriate to ask you, Your Eminence, to continue to offer me your assistance as my direct Collaborator, sharing with me in the daily concerns of governing the universal Church.

I therefore confirmed you in the office of Secretary of State, and to this day you have carried out this task with generous dedication.

As I announced last 24 June, today, 15 September, you are succeeded in the same office by Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, former Archbishop of Genoa.

On this important occasion, I feel the deep need to renew my most heartfelt thanks to you for the faithfulness, enlightened competence, dedication and love which you have devoted to your work for the good of the Church beside several Successors of the Apostle Peter.

I am thinking here of the various stages in the long and busy service you have rendered to the

Holy See since 1961. Under the Pontificate of Bl. John XXIII you first served in the Papal Representations in Ecuador, Uruguay and Chile, and later at the Council for the Public Affairs of the Church.

You were then appointed Apostolic Nuncio in Chile until, after years of diplomatic and pastoral activity that was not easy in that beloved Nation but in which you nevertheless showed prudence and courage, you were recalled to the Vatican as Secretary of the Council for the Public Affairs of the Church which had acquired in the meantime the name: "Section for Relations with States of the Secretariat of State".

At the end of 1990, having been promoted to the highest rank in the Secretariat of State, your collaboration beside my unforgettable Predecessor became closer and more demanding. It lasted for more than 15 years, until our beloved John Paul II departed from us on 2 April last year.

Subsequently, in these first months of my Pontificate, I have been able to appreciate personally the gifts of your soul as a Pastor, entirely dedicated to serving the Apostolic See. I am particularly grateful to you for the dedication with which you have followed the daily work of the Secretariat of State and of the Papal Representations in the various countries of the world, as well as for your concern for all their staff.

At the time when you are handing these responsibilities over to your successor, as well as expressing my own grateful sentiments to you, I also express the sentiments of all who have known you in the course of the years and who have admired your good sense, prudent wisdom and indefatigable zeal with which, sparing no effort, you have carried out your mission, taking into account the supreme good of the Church alone.

The Holy See will also continue to benefit from your contribution in the future and I am also grateful to you for this, because with equal enthusiasm and generosity you will remain in the important office of Dean of the College of Cardinals besides being a Member of various Dicasteries of the Roman Curia and of the Governorate of Vatican City State.

May the Lord, to whom I entrust every aspiration of your priestly soul, be a comfort and support to you in the years to come, endowing you with good health and imbuing your spirit with peace and joy.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church and Queen of the Angels, watch over you in a most special way.

May you also be accompanied by the constant assurance of my esteem and affection, while, with the hope of abundant divine rewards and as a pledge of my fraternal closeness, I warmly impart to you my Apostolic Blessing, which I gladly extend to all the personnel of the Secretariat of State

and to all the other people dear to you.

From Castel Gandolfo, 15 September 2006, the second year of my Pontificate.

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