



The Holy See

**LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO CARDINAL EGIDIO VAGNOZZI
ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS PRIESTLY ORDINATION**

To Our Esteemed Brother Cardinal Egidio Vagnozzi

President of the Prefecture of the Economic Affairs of the Holy See On the twenty-second day of this month of December, just as we are about to honour the birth of Christ, you will be fifty years a priest. You will be able to combine both the joy of Christmas and of this happy event. On this day, adorned with such a splendid jewel, you, our esteemed Brother, will go back in your thoughts and your memories to the first days of your priesthood, nay you will remind yourself of the initial call of God when, while still a boy, the supreme will of the Most High both planted in you the seed of so holy a calling and filled you with a love for the priesthood. By the help of God's grace you responded most eagerly and willingly, and like Abraham and Paul you said: "Here I am!" (Gen 22:1), and: "What do you want me to do?" (Acts 9:6.) And so the sacred priesthood you received on that day so long ago, transformed you into another Christ. Then as a herald of divine things and a faithful mediator between God and men, you constantly preached the word of God which does not return to heaven empty (Is 55:11), and, bringing peace of soul to men, you forgave sins in the name of Christ. You consecrated the Eucharist for the glory of God and the salvation of the Christian people. But you did much more as a priest which redounds to your praise. The Episcopate given you in the year 1949 completed to the full your priesthood as if you had come to maturity and put you among the successors of the Apostles. It also gave you new and special powers, among them the power to ordain other priests and bishops. This you often did, our esteemed brother, for the good of the Church and with great joy. Although the office of bishop did not require you to govern a diocese or to guide a flock, nevertheless, the grace of the Holy Spirit given to you made you well qualified to carry out extensive tasks in various fields. For since the Church lives in this world and has to deal both with men and nations, it also needs those men whom it can use for this work. You, our esteemed Brother, were one of these at Manila, Washington and elsewhere. And since "he whose heart is full of love always has something to give" (St. Augustine, In Ps 33, *Enarr.* II, 13), you gave much both to the Church and to the people with whom you came into contact as Nuncio or Apostolic Delegate; namely, your untiring efforts to foster mutual friendship between the Catholic Church and those nations; love for the Holy See and for the Vicar of Christ which would be lasting and loyal; your concern that the decrees of the Second Vatican Council and other decisions of the Pontiffs should be held in honour and put into practice. You gave examples of outstanding piety, the full flowering of your priesthood. Finally, you displayed a prudence which was out of the ordinary and which, as Cicero says, "is seen in the ability to distinguish between good and evil" (Off. I, 43, 153). Rightly, therefore, you were appointed to the College of Cardinals by Paul VI, our predecessor of happy memory, that is, to the Senate and to the most distinguished Council of the Church. Moreover, as President of the Prefecture of the Economic Affairs of the Holy See you still render great

service by your diligence. This, then, is the reason why, seizing this opportunity, we rejoice with you and congratulate you and ask God to give you what we ourselves wish, everything that is good and holy to make you happy. Finally, our esteemed Brother, keep well, and may our Apostolic Blessing, which we impart to you and to those dear to you, be of great assistance to you. *Given at the Vatican, on the seventh day of the month of December in the year 1978, the first of our Pontificate.* **IOANNES PAULUS PP. II** © Copyright 1978 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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