



The Holy See

**LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO CARDINAL SERGIO GUERRI
ON THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY
OF HIS PRIESTLY ORDINATION**

To Our Esteemed Brother Sergio Cardinal Guerri,

The joyful event soon to take place concerning you, our esteemed brother, in no way escapes us. At the end of the month of March you will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of your priestly ordination. Looking ahead to that day, we cannot but write this public letter to you intending also to be a sharer in your joy with those who are dear to you, even being present with you in spirit and with much prayer praising God who gave you the heavenly gift of a vocation.

We are delighted to recall with you that event in the past when in the year 1929 you received the priestly ordination. From that time you began with eagerness to spend your youthful energy in the service of the Church. We know that for a long time you played your part diligently and competently in the administration of this Apostolic See. Because of this, in the year 1969, you were appointed to the Sacred College of Cardinals by Paul VI, our predecessor of recent memory.

In such a long period of time how many benefits have been given you by God, how many works have been begun and been completed by you with God's help. Because of the esteem in which we hold you, we heartily congratulate you and express our good wishes to you on this joyful event of your life. For the vocation, to which you generously responded fifty years ago, has been strengthened throughout these years and has received an honourable increase since, marked with the fullness of the sacrament of Orders, you became "the steward of the grace of the supreme priesthood" (*Lumen Gentium*, 26).

Among other things, your chief distinction is that as Pro-President of the Pontifical Commission for the Vatican City State you carefully gave your complete attention to the business in hand so as to perform your duty effectively.

Therefore we ask the merciful Redeemer and his holy mother to make this priestly anniversary of yours, which we are pleased to make known by means of this letter, a very happy one. At the same time we gladly exhort you, our esteemed brother, to consider the following exhortation of Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo: "Let your works be characterized by a spontaneous love of God and a generous love of your neighbour" (St. Augustine, *Serm.* 91, 9), and may you reproduce by imitation the image of Christ the Good Shepherd which is described by the same Saint Augustine in these words: "We have been put in charge, yet we are servants; we are in command only if we are being useful." (*Sermones post Maurinos reperti*, Rome 1930, p. 565).

Our esteemed brother, we have thought fit to write this letter to you as coming from the heart. Rest assured that we will remember you on your anniversary day. Through our Apostolic Blessing, given affectionately to you and to all those sharing in your celebration, we wish you at this very time every success in the future and an abundant harvest from your sacred ministry.

From the Vatican on the eleventh day of March in the year 1979, the first of our Pontificate.

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