



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO CARDINAL CAMILLO RUINI
ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT FROM THE OFFICE
OF PRESIDENT OF THE ITALIAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE***

*To my Venerable Brother
Cardinal Camillo Ruini
Vicar General for the Diocese of Rome*

Easter, now at hand, is a favourable opportunity for me to extend to you, Venerable Brother, with special affection, together with my most cordial good wishes, a particular expression of gratitude for the long and productive service you have carried out as President of the Italian Bishops' Conference.

Thus, I address my Message to you in the sign of the Risen Lord, since the journey of the Italian Church which you have wisely and courageously guided is directed precisely to Christ, Hope of the world. Her journey culminated in the recent Ecclesial Convention at Verona, in which I also had the joy of partaking.

The *ad limina Apostolorum* visits of the Bishops of Italy have been taking place in the past few months. In meeting the Bishops region by region, I have been able to perceive more clearly the great wealth of faith and pastoral action present in these communities, as well as the apostolic spirit that motivates the Pastors.

In thanking God for these gifts of his, how can I fail to give you the merit you deserve, Venerable Brother, for guiding the Italian Bishops as their President for more than three quinquenniums, not to mention your crucial contribution prior to that as General Secretary of the Bishops' Conference? The Venerable Servant of God John Paul II, who chose you to succeed the late Cardinal Poletti as his Vicar for the Diocese of Rome and then appointed you President of the Italian Bishops' Conference, always found you a faithful and wise collaborator, ready to convey the Successor of Peter's magisterial and pastoral instructions to the Episcopate and to help your Confreres -

through the action of the Permanent Council of the various Episcopal Commissions and Central Offices - to understand them and put them into practice.

In this way, you effectively contributed to ensuring that the various particular Churches, as well as the Ecclesial Associations, Movements and Communities, were able to continue united under the guidance of the Pope, so that the Gospel's communication in a changing world would be supported and reinforced by the witness of effective communion.

Since in recent years I have had the opportunity to share so many moments of life and ecclesial service with you, Venerable Brother, I am particularly eager to express to you my personal appreciation and sincere, profound gratitude.

Lastly, how could I fail to mention that you have led the Italian Bishops in a sensitive and crucial phase of the Italian People's history? In these years your courage and tenacity in sustaining the Church's commitment have certainly rendered a service not only to the People of God but the entire Italian Nation.

May it please God to bring to full fruition the many initiatives started by the Church in Italy. May this be obtained by the motherly intercession of Mary Most Holy, to whom I entrust your person and your ministry, as I affectionately renew to you my Apostolic Blessing, which I willingly extend to all your loved ones.

From the Vatican, 23 March 2007

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

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