



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS
TO THE SUPERIORS AND OFFICIALS OF THE SECRETARIAT OF STATE
ON THE OCCASION OF CARDINAL TARCISIO BERTONE'S RETIREMENT**

*Library of the Secretariat of State
Tuesday, 15 October 2013*

Dear Friends, Good morning!

We are gathered here to thank Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, who today is retiring from the office of Secretary of State, and to extend our welcome to Archbishop Parolin, though it will be a welcome “in absentia” as he will take possession of his new office a few weeks time due to a minor surgical procedure which he has had to undergo.

1. At this moment what I would like to share with you all is a feeling of gratitude. Dear Cardinal Tarcisio, I think I can also speak on behalf of my beloved Predecessor [Benedict XVI](#) in expressing to you deep thanksgiving for the work you have carried out in these years. I see in you especially a son of Don Bosco. We are all marked by our history. Thinking about your long service to the Church, whether teaching or in the ministry of a diocesan bishop, working in the Curia, and finally in the office of Secretary of State, it seems to me that every aspect is linked by your priestly Salesian vocation. It has marked you from boyhood, and you have carried it into every responsibility entrusted to you, without exception, with profound love for the Church, great generosity, and with that typical Salesian blend that brings together a sincere spirit of obedience and a great personal freedom for initiative and invention.

2. For every Salesian, love for the Church is expressed in a special way as love for the Successor of Peter. The Salesian feels himself at the heart of the Church, precisely because he is with the Pope. And precisely because he is with the Pope, he shares in the vastness of the mission of the whole Church and in the fullness of her evangelical dynamism. And here I come to the second

aspect that I would like to underline: the attitude of unconditional fidelity and of absolute loyalty to Peter, the distinct characteristic of your mandate as Secretary of State, which you showed to Benedict XVI and in these months to me. I felt it on many occasions and I am profoundly grateful to you for this.

3. Lastly, I wish to thank you also for the courage and patience with which you have endured the forms of opposition you were forced to face. There were many! Among the dreams recounted by Don Bosco to his young students there is that of the roses: do you remember it? The Saint sees an arbour full of roses and begins walking within it, followed by his many disciples. As they go, however, with the roses that cover the trellis, sharp thorns emerge that wound them and cause great pain. Whoever looks in from without sees only roses, while Don Bosco and his followers walking within feel the thorns: many become discouraged, but the Virgin Mary exhorts them all to persevere, and in the end the Saint finds himself with his disciples in the most beautiful garden. The dream was meant to represent the labour of the educator, but I think it could also be applied to any ministry of responsibility in the Church. Dear Cardinal Bertone, at this moment I like to think that, even if there were thorns for you, the Virgin Help of Christians certainly did not leave you without her help, and she will not deprive you of it in the future: Be assured! The best wishes that we all express to you is that you may continue to enjoy the treasures that have marked your vocation: the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, the help of Our Lady, the friendship of the Pope. The three great loves of Don Bosco: these three.

And with these thoughts we also give — “in absentia” — a very warm welcome to the new Secretary. He knows very well the family of the Secretariat of State, having worked with you for many years, enthusiastically and competently and with a capacity for dialogue and humanity which are characteristics of him. In a certain sense it is like he is returning “home”.

I would like to conclude by thanking each of you for the daily service you carry out, often in a hidden and anonymous way; it is precious for my Ministry. I invite you all to pray for me — I need it very much — and I want you to be assured of my prayer and my friendship, of my closeness and my gratitude for the work you do. On each of you and on your loved ones I invoke the Blessing of the Lord. Thank you.