



# The Holy See

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*LETTER OF THE HOLY FATHER  
JOHN PAUL II  
TO CARDINAL ANGELO SODANO  
ON THE 50th ANNIVERSARY  
OF HIS ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD*

As we live the intense days of the Great Jubilee, I join you with particular delight, Venerable Brother, who are about to celebrate the 50th anniversary of your ordination to the priesthood. This happy commemoration prompts me to congratulate you warmly for so long a time spent in the service of God and of the Church, and to express my appreciation of your caring and proven wisdom in evaluating human matters and also of your deep sensitivity in promoting pastoral projects and initiatives concerning the Church's work in the world.

I am very pleased to express my affection to the Cardinals and Bishops who are commemorating the anniversary of their ordination, but I do so with greater joy for you, my first collaborator in the Secretariat of State, who help the Pope so closely in his concern for the universal Church and in his relations with State authorities.

This is a favourable opportunity for expressing my deep gratitude to you for the help you have given to me and to the Church in these years.

Looking at the time that has passed, I see how full of commitments it has been. Having earned a doctorate in sacred theology and in canon law, the sacred Order of priesthood was conferred upon you 50 years ago in the splendid Cathedral of Asti. At first you worked teaching students at the seminary and in the pastoral care of young people. In 1959, called to the service of the Apostolic See, after completing your studies at the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy, you served as Secretary of the Apostolic Nunciatures of Ecuador, Uruguay and Chile.

On your return to Rome, you worked at the Council for the Public Affairs of the Church. Meanwhile, well aware of your gifts of mind and heart, on 30 November 1977, Paul VI, my

Predecessor of blessed memory, elected you titular Archbishop of Nova di Cesare and appointed you Apostolic Nuncio in Chile where you built up relations with that nation for more than 10 years.

At last, in 1988, I myself entrusted you with the office of Secretary of the Council for Public Affairs of the Church which, the following year, changed its name to the Second Section of the Secretariat of State for Relations with States.

In 1990, familiar with your gifts and merits, I appointed you Pro-Secretary of State and then, at the Consistory of 1991, I made you a member of the College of Cardinal Fathers, entrusting you with the office of Secretary of State.

On this occasion, I express my appreciation of the effective work you have done and are doing for the good of my ministry, and of your wise advice and constant devotion to the Pope and to the Apostolic See.

Therefore, as I congratulate you on the anniversary of your priestly ordination and on the diligent and caring work with which you have dedicated your whole self to the Apostolic See, I cordially thank you and the supreme God, asking him to preserve you for many years and to enrich you with an abundance of his heavenly gifts. May the love of the Most Blessed Mother of God always support you, give you strength and comfort you in life's different circumstances.

Lastly, as a sign of my exceptional esteem and affection, I impart my Apostolic Blessing to you, Venerable Brother, which I extend to all your loved ones and to all who will take part in any way in your priestly Jubilee, whether in Rome, or in the suburbicarian Diocese of Albano, or in the beloved Diocese of Asti.

*From the Vatican, 14 September, on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, in the year 2,000, the twenty-second of my Pontificate.*

IOANNES PAULUS PP. II

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