



# The Holy See

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## Introduction

1. The Good Shepherd, the Lord Christ Jesus (cf. *Jn* 10: 11, 14), conferred on the bishops, the successors of the Apostles, and in a singular way on the bishop of Rome, the successor of Peter, the mission of making disciples in all nations and of preaching the Gospel to every creature. And so the Church was established, the people of God, and the task of its shepherds or pastors was indeed to be that service "which is called very expressively in Sacred Scripture a *diaconia* or ministry." The main thrust of this service or *diaconia* is for *more and more communion or fellowship to be generated* in the whole body of the Church, and for this communion to thrive and produce good results. As the insight of the Second Vatican Council has taught us, we come, with the gentle prompting of the Holy Spirit, to see the meaning of the mystery of the Church in the manifold patterns within this communion: for the Spirit will guide "the Church in the way of all truth (cf. *Jn* 16:13) and [unify] her in communion and in the work of ministry, he bestows upon her varied hierarchic and charismatic gifts [...]. Constantly he renews her and leads her to perfect union with her Spouse." Wherefore, as the same Council affirms, "fully incorporated into the Church are those who, possessing the Spirit of Christ, accept all the means of salvation given to the Church together with her entire organization, and who — by the bonds constituted by the profession of faith, the sacraments, ecclesiastical government, and communion — are joined in the visible structure of the Church of Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops." Not only has this notion of communion been explained in the documents of the Second Vatican Council in general, especially in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, but it also received attention from the Fathers attending the 1985 and 1987 General Assemblies of the Synod of Bishops. Into this definition of the Church comes a convergence of the actual mystery of the Church, the orders or constituent elements of the messianic people of God, and the hierarchical constitution of the Church itself. To describe it all in one broad expression, we take the words of the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium* just mentioned and say that "the Church, in Christ, is in the nature of sacrament — a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among the whole of humankind." That is why this sacred communion thrives in the whole Church of Christ, as our predecessor Paul VI so well described it, "which lives and acts in the various Christian communities, namely, in the particular Churches dispersed throughout the whole world." 2. When one thinks about this communion, which is the force, as it were, that glues the whole Church together, then the hierarchical constitution of the Church unfolds and comes into effect. It was endowed by the Lord himself with *a primatial and collegial nature at the same time* when he constituted the apostles "in the form of a college or permanent assembly, at the head of which he placed Peter, chosen from amongst them." Here we are looking at that special concept whereby the pastors of the Church share in the threefold task of Christ — to teach, to sanctify, and to govern: and just as the apostles acted with Peter, so do the bishops together with the bishop of Rome. To use the words of the Second Vatican Council once more: "In that way, then, with priests and deacons as helpers, the bishops received the charge of the community, presiding in God's stead over the flock of which

they are the shepherds in that they are teachers of doctrine, ministers of sacred worship and holders of office in government. Moreover, just as the office which the Lord confided to Peter alone, as first of the apostles, destined to be transmitted to his successors, is a permanent one, so also endures the office, which the apostles received, of shepherding the Church, a charge destined to be exercised without interruption by the sacred order of bishops." And so it comes about that "this college" — the college of bishops joined together with the bishop of Rome — "in so far as it is composed of many members, is the expression of the multifariousness and universality of the people of God; and of the unity of the flock of Christ, in so far as it is assembled under one head." The power and authority of the bishops bears the mark of *diaconia* or *stewardship*, fitting the example of Jesus Christ himself who "came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (*Mk* 10:45). Therefore the power that is found in the Church is to be understood as the power of being a servant and is to be exercised in that way; before anything else it is the authority of a shepherd. This applies to each and every bishop in his own particular Church; but all the more does it apply to the bishop of Rome, whose Petrine ministry works for the good and benefit of the universal Church. The Roman Church has charge over the "whole body of charity" and so it is the servant of love. It is largely from this principle that those great words of old have come — "The servant of the servants of God" —, by which Peter's successor is known and defined. That is why the Roman Pontiff has also taken pains to deal carefully with the business of particular Churches, referred to him by the bishops or in some other way come to his attention, in order to encourage his brothers in the faith (cf. *Lk* 22:32), by means of this wider experience and by virtue of his office as Vicar of Christ and pastor of the whole Church. For he was convinced that the reciprocal communion between the bishop of Rome and the bishops throughout the world, bonded in unity, charity, and peace, brought the greatest advantage in promoting and defending the unity of faith and discipline in the whole Church.<sup>3</sup> In the light of the foregoing, it is understood that the *diaconia* peculiar to Peter and his successors is necessarily related to the *diaconia* of the other apostles and their successors, whose sole purpose is to build up the Church in this world. From ancient times, this essential and interdependent relation of the Petrine ministry with the task and ministry of the other apostles has demanded something of a visible sign, not just by way of a symbol but something existing in reality, and it must still demand it. Deeply conscious of the burden of apostolic toil, our predecessors have given clear and thoughtful expression to this need, as we see, for example, in the words of Innocent III who wrote to the bishops and prelates of France in 1198 when he was sending a legate to them: "Although the Lord has given us the fullness of power in the Church, a power that makes us owe something to all Christians, still we cannot stretch the limits of human nature. Since we cannot deal personally with every single concern — the law of human condition does not suffer it — we are sometimes constrained to use certain brothers of ours as extensions of our own body, to take care of things we would rather deal with in person if the convenience of the Church allowed it." This gives some insight into the nature of that institution that Peter's successor has used in exercising his mission for the good of the universal Church, and some understanding of the procedures by which the institution itself has had to carry out its task: we mean the Roman Curia, which has worked in the service of the Petrine ministry from ancient times. For the Roman Curia came into existence for this purpose, that the fruitful communion we mentioned might be strengthened and make ever more bountiful progress, rendering more effective the task of pastor of the Church which Christ entrusted to Peter and his successors, a task that has been growing and expanding from day to day. Our predecessor Sixtus V, in the Apostolic Constitution *Immensa æterni Dei*, admitted as much: "The Roman Pontiff, whom Christ the Lord constituted as visible head of his body, the Church, and appointed for the care of all the Churches, calls and rallies unto himself many collaborators for this immense responsibility [...]; so that he, the holder of the key of all this power, may share the huge mass of business and responsibilities among them — i.e., the cardinals — and the other authorities of the Roman Curia, and by God's helping grace avoid breaking under the strain."<sup>4</sup> Right from the most ancient times, as a matter of fact, if

we may sketch out a few lines of history, the Roman Pontiffs, in the course of their service directed to the welfare of the whole Church, have engaged the help of institutions or individual men selected from that *Church of Rome* which our predecessor Gregory the Great has called the *Church of the Blessed Apostle Peter*. At first they used the services of priests or deacons belonging to the Church of Rome to function as legates, to be sent on various missions, or to represent the bishops of Rome at ecumenical councils. When matters of particular importance were to be dealt with, the bishops of Rome called on the help of Roman synods or councils to which they summoned bishops working in the ecclesiastical province of Rome. These councils not only dealt with questions pertaining to doctrine and the magisterium, but also functioned like tribunals, judging cases of bishops referred to the Roman Pontiff. From the time when the cardinals began to take on a special importance in the Roman Church, especially in the election of the Pope — a function reserved to them from 1059 —, the Roman Pontiffs made more and more use of their services, with the result that the Roman synods and councils gradually lost their importance until they ceased entirely. So it came about that, especially after the thirteenth century, the Supreme Pontiff carried out all the business of the Church together with the cardinals gathered in consistory. Thus temporary instruments, the councils or synods of Rome, were replaced by another instrument, a permanent one, always available to the Pope. It was our predecessor Sixtus V who gave the Roman Curia its formal organization through the above-quoted Apostolic Constitution *Immensa æterni Dei*, on 22 January 1588, the 1587th year from the Incarnation of Our Lord Jesus Christ. He set up fifteen dicasteries, so that the single College of Cardinals would be replaced by several colleges consisting of certain cardinals whose authority would be confined to a clearly defined field and to a definite subject matter. In this way, the Supreme Pontiffs could enjoy maximum benefit from these collegial counsels. Consequently, the consistory's own original role and importance were greatly diminished. As the centuries passed and historical outlooks and world conditions were transformed, certain changes and refinements were brought in, especially when the commissions of cardinals were set up in the nineteenth century to give the Pope assistance beyond that of the other dicasteries of the Roman Curia. Then on 29 June 1908, our predecessor Saint Pius X promulgated the Apostolic Constitution *Sapienti consilio*, in which, referring to the plan of collecting the laws of the Church into a *Code of Canon Law*, he wrote: "It has seemed most fitting to start from the Roman Curia so that, structured in a suitable way that everyone can understand, the Curia may more easily and effectively lend its help to the Roman Pontiff and the Church." Here are the principal effects of that reform: the Sacred Roman Rota, which had ceased to function in 1870, was reestablished to deal with judicial cases, while the Congregations lost their judicial competence and became purely administrative organs. The principle was also established whereby the Congregations would enjoy their own rights, deferring to nobody else, so that each individual matter was to be dealt with by its own dicastery, and not by several at the same time. This reform by Pius X, later confirmed and completed in the *Code of Canon Law* promulgated in 1917 by our predecessor Benedict XV, remained practically unchanged until 1967, not long after the Second Vatican Council in which the Church delved more deeply into the mystery of its own being and gained a more lively vision of its mission.<sup>5</sup> This growing self-awareness of the Church was bound of itself, and in keeping with our times, to produce a certain updating of the Roman Curia. While the Fathers of the Council acknowledged that the Curia had hitherto rendered outstanding assistance to the Roman Pontiff and the pastors of the Church, at the same time they expressed the desire that the dicasteries of the Curia should undergo a reorganization better suited to the needs of the times and of different regions and rites. Our predecessor Paul VI quickly complied with the wishes of the Council and put into effect the reorganization of the Curia with the promulgation of the Apostolic Constitution *Regimini Ecclesiæ universæ* on 15 August 1967. Through this Constitution, Paul VI laid down more detailed specifications for the structure, competence, and procedures of the already existing dicasteries, and established new ones to support specific pastoral initiatives, while the other dicasteries would carry on their work of jurisdiction or governance. The composition of the Curia came to reflect

more clearly the multiform image of the universal Church. Among other things, the Curia coopted diocesan bishops as members and at the same time saw to the internal coordination of the dicasteries by periodic meetings of the cardinals who presided over them, to pool ideas and consider common problems. To provide better protection of the principal rights of the faithful, the Second Section was created in the Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura. Fully aware that the reform of such ancient institutions needed more careful study, Paul VI ordered the new system to be reexamined more deeply five years after the promulgation of the Constitution, and for a new look to be taken at the question whether it really conformed to the demands of the Second Vatican Council and answered the needs of the Christian people and civil society. As far as necessary, it should be recast in an even more suitable form. To carry out this task, a special group of prelates was set up, chaired by a cardinal, and this Commission worked hard at the project, up to the death of that Pontiff.<sup>6</sup> When by the inscrutable design of Providence we were called to the task of being the shepherd of the universal Church, from the very beginning of our pontificate we took steps not only to seek advice from the dicasteries on this grave matter, but also to ask the opinion of the whole College of Cardinals. These cardinals, twice gathered in general consistory, addressed the question and gave their advice on the ways and means to be followed in the organization of the Roman Curia. It was necessary to consult the cardinals first in this important matter, for they are joined to the ministry of the bishop of Rome by a close and most special bond and they "are also available to [him], either acting collegially, when they are summoned together to deal with questions of major importance, or acting individually, that is, in the offices which they hold in assisting [him] especially in the daily care of the universal Church." A very broad consultation, as we mentioned above, was again carried out, as was only fitting, among the dicasteries of the Roman Curia. The result of this general consultation was the "Draft of a special law concerning the Roman Curia," worked out over close to two years by a commission of prelates under the chairmanship of a cardinal. This draft was examined by the individual cardinals, the patriarchs of the Oriental Churches, the conferences of bishops through their presidents, the dicasteries of the Roman Curia, and was discussed at the plenary meeting of cardinals in 1985. As to the conferences of bishops, it was essential that we be thoroughly briefed about their true general feeling on the needs of the particular Churches and what they wanted and expected in this regard from the Roman Curia. In gaining a clear awareness of all this, we had strong and most timely help from the 1985 extraordinary Synod of Bishops, as we have mentioned above. Then, taking into account the observations and suggestions that had been gathered in the course of these extensive consultations, and bearing in mind the considered judgement of certain private individuals, a commission of cardinals, which had been set up for this express purpose, prepared a particular law for the Roman Curia in harmony with the new *Code of Canon Law*. It is this particular law that we wish to promulgate by means of this Apostolic Constitution, at the end of the fourth centenary of the afore-mentioned Apostolic Constitution *Immensa æterni Dei* of Sixtus V, eighty years after the Apostolic Constitution *Sapienti consilio* of Saint Pius X, and scarcely twenty years after the coming into force of the Apostolic Constitution of Paul VI *Regimini Ecclesiæ universæ*, with which our own is closely linked, since both in some way derive from the Second Vatican Council and both originate from the same inspiration and intent.<sup>7</sup> In harmony with the Second Vatican Council, this inspiration and intent establish and express the steadfast activity of the renewed Curia, as in these words of the Council: "In exercising his supreme, full and immediate authority over the universal Church, the Roman Pontiff employs the various departments of the Roman Curia, which act in his name and by his authority for the good of the Churches and in service of the sacred pastors." Consequently, it is evident that the function of the Roman Curia, though not belonging to the essential constitution of the Church willed by God, has nevertheless *a truly ecclesial character* because it draws its existence and competence from the pastor of the universal Church. For the Curia exists and operates only insofar as it has a relation to the Petrine ministry and is based on it. But just as the ministry of Peter as the "servant of the servants of God" is exercised in relationship with both the whole Church and the bishops of the entire

Church, similarly the Roman Curia, as the servant of Peter's successor, looks only to help the whole Church and its bishops. This clearly shows that the principal *characteristic* of each and every dicastery of the Roman Curia is that of being *ministerial*, as the already-quoted words of the Decree *Christus Dominus* declare and especially these: "The Roman Pontiff *employs the various departments of the Roman Curia*." These words clearly show the Curia's instrumental nature, described as a kind of agent in the hands of the Pontiff, with the result that it is endowed with no force and no power apart from what it receives from the same Supreme Pastor. Paul VI himself, in 1963, two years before he promulgated the Decree *Christus Dominus*, defined the Roman Curia "as an instrument of immediate adhesion and perfect obedience," an instrument the Pope uses to fulfill his universal mission. This notion is taken up throughout the Apostolic Constitution *Regimini Ecclesiae universae*. This instrumental and ministerial characteristic seems indeed to define most appropriately the nature and role of this worthy and venerable institution. Its nature and role consist entirely in that the more exactly and loyally the institution strives to dedicate itself to the will of the Supreme Pontiff, the more valuable and effective is the help it gives him.<sup>8</sup> Beyond this ministerial character, the Second Vatican Council further highlighted what we may call the *vicarious character* of the Roman Curia, because, as we have already said, it does not operate by its own right or on its own initiative. It receives its power from the Roman Pontiff and exercises it within its own essential and innate dependence on the Pontiff. It is of the nature of this power that it always joins its own action to the will of the one from whom the power springs. It must display a faithful and harmonious interpretation of his will and manifest, as it were, an identity with that will, for the good of the Churches and service to the bishops. From this character the Roman Curia draws its energy and strength, and in it too finds the boundaries of its duties and its code of behaviour. The fullness of this power resides in the head, in the very person of the Vicar of Christ, who imparts it to the dicasteries of the Curia according to the competence and scope of each one. Since, as we said earlier, the Petrine function of the Roman Pontiff by its very nature relates to the office of the college of his brother bishops and aims at building up and making firm and expanding the whole Church as well as each and every particular Church, this same *diaconia* of the Curia, which he uses in carrying out his own personal office, necessarily relates in the same way to the personal office of the bishops, whether as members of the college of bishops or as pastors of the particular Churches. For this reason, not only is the Roman Curia far from being a *barrier or screen* blocking personal communications and dealings between bishops and the Roman Pontiff, or restricting them with conditions, but, on the contrary, it is itself the facilitator for communion and the sharing of concerns, and must be ever more so.<sup>9</sup> By reason of its *diaconia* connected with the Petrine ministry, one concludes, on the one hand, that the Roman Curia is closely bound to the bishops of the whole world, and, on the other, that those pastors and their Churches are the first and principal beneficiaries of the work of the dicasteries. This is proved even by the composition of the Curia. For the Roman Curia is composed of nearly all the cardinals who, by definition, belong to the Roman Church, and they closely assist the Supreme Pontiff in governing the universal Church. When important matters are to be dealt with, they are all called together into regular or special consistories. So they come to have a strong awareness of the needs of all of God's people, and they labour for the good of the whole Church. In addition to this, most of the heads of the individual dicasteries have the character and grace of the episcopate, pertaining to the one College of Bishops, and so are inspired by the same solicitude for the whole Church as are all bishops in hierarchical communion with their head, the bishop of Rome. Furthermore, as some diocesan bishops are coopted onto the dicasteries as members and are "better able to inform the Supreme Pontiff on the thinking, the hopes and the needs of all the Churches," so the collegial spirit between the bishops and their head works through the Roman Curia and finds *concrete* application, and this is extended to the whole Mystical Body which "is a corporate body of Churches." This collegial spirit is also fostered between the various dicasteries. All the cardinals in charge of dicasteries, or their representatives, when specific questions are to be addressed, meet periodically in order to brief one

another on the more important matters and provide mutual assistance in finding solutions, thus providing unity of thought and action in the Roman Curia. Apart from these bishops, the business of the dicasteries employs a number of collaborators who are of value and service to the Petrine ministry by work that is neither light nor easy and is often obscure. The Roman Curia calls into its service diocesan priests from all over the world, who by their sharing in the ministerial priesthood are closely united with the bishops, male religious, most of whom are priests, and female religious, all of whom in their various ways lead their lives according to the evangelical counsels, furthering the good of the Church, and bearing special witness for Christ before the world, and lay men and women who by virtue of baptism and confirmation are fulfilling their own apostolic role. By this coalition of many forces, all ranks within the Church join in the ministry of the Supreme Pontiff and more effectively help him by carrying out the pastoral work of the Roman Curia. This kind of service by all ranks in the Church clearly has no equal in civil society and their labour is given with the intent of truly serving and of following and imitating the *diaconia* of Christ himself.<sup>10</sup> From this comes to light that the ministry of the Roman Curia is strongly imbued with a certain note of *collegiality*, even if the Curia itself is not to be compared to any kind of college. This is true whether the Curia be considered in itself or in its relations with the bishops of the whole Church, or because of its purposes and the corresponding spirit of charity in which that ministry has to be conducted. This collegiality enables it to work for the college of bishops and equips it with suitable means for doing so. Even more, it expresses the solicitude that the bishops have for the whole Church, inasmuch as bishops share this kind of care and zeal "with Peter and under Peter." This comes out most strikingly and takes on a symbolic force when, as we have already said above, the bishops are called to collaborate in the individual dicasteries. Moreover, each and every bishop still has the inviolable right and duty to approach the successor of Saint Peter, especially by means of the visits *ad limina Apostolorum*. These visits have a special meaning all of their own, in keeping with the ecclesiological and pastoral principles explained above. Indeed, they are first of all an opportunity of the greatest importance, and they constitute, as it were, the centre of the highest ministry committed to the Supreme Pontiff. For then the pastor of the universal Church talks and communicates with the pastors of the particular Churches, who have come to him in order to see Cephas (cf. *Gal* 1:18), to discuss with him the problems of their dioceses, face to face and in private, and so to share with him the solicitude for all the Churches (cf. *2 Cor* 11:28). For these reasons, communion and unity in the innermost life of the Church is fostered to the highest degree through the *ad limina* visits. These visits also allow the bishops a frequent and convenient way to contact the appropriate dicasteries of the Roman Curia, pondering and exploring plans concerning doctrine and pastoral action, apostolic initiatives, and any difficulties obstructing their mission to work for the eternal salvation of the people committed to them.<sup>11</sup> Thus since the zealous activity of the Roman Curia, united to the Petrine ministry and based on it, is dedicated to the good both of the whole Church and the particular Churches, the Curia is in the first place being called on to fulfill that *ministry of unity* which has been entrusted in a singular way to the Roman Pontiff insofar as he has been set up by God's will as the permanent and visible foundation of the Church. Hence unity in the Church is a precious treasure to be preserved, defended, protected, and promoted, to be for ever exalted with the devoted cooperation of all, and most indeed by those who each in their turn *are the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular Churches*. Therefore the cooperation which the Roman Curia brings to the Supreme Pontiff is rooted in this ministry of unity. This unity is in the first place the *unity of faith*, governed and constituted by the sacred deposit of which Peter's successor is the chief guardian and protector and through which indeed he receives his highest responsibility, that of strengthening his brothers. The unity is likewise the *unity of discipline*, the general discipline of the Church, which constitutes a system of norms and patterns of behaviour, gives shapes to the fundamental structure of the Church, safeguards the means of salvation and their correct administration, together with the ordered structure of the people of God. Church government safeguards this unity and cares for it at all times. So far from suffering harm from the

differences of life and behaviour among various persons and cultures, what with the immense variety of gifts poured out by the Holy Spirit, this same unity actually grows richer year by year, so long as there are no isolationist or centripetal attempts and so long as everything is brought together into the higher structure of the one Church. Our predecessor John Paul I brought this principle to mind quite admirably when he addressed the cardinals about the agencies of the Roman Curia: "[They] provide the Vicar of Christ with the concrete means of giving the apostolic service that he owes the entire Church. Consequently, they guarantee an organic articulation of legitimate autonomies, while maintaining an indispensable respect for that unity of discipline and faith for which Christ prayed on the very eve of his passion." And so it is that the highest ministry of unity in the universal Church has much respect for lawful customs, for the mores of peoples and for that authority which belongs by divine right to the pastors of the particular Churches. Clearly however, whenever serious reasons demand it, the Roman Pontiff cannot fail to intervene in order to protect unity in faith, in charity, or in discipline.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, since the mission of the Roman Curia is ecclesial, it claims the cooperation of the whole Church to which it is directed. For no one in the Church is cut off from others and each one indeed makes up the one and the same body with all others. This kind of cooperation is carried out through that communion we spoke of at the beginning, namely of life, charity, and truth, for which the messianic people is set up by Christ Our Lord, taken up by Christ as an instrument of redemption, and sent out to the whole world as the light of the world and the salt of the earth. Therefore, just as it is the duty of the Roman Curia to communicate with all the Churches, so the pastors of the particular Churches, governing these Churches "as vicars and legates of Christ," must take steps to communicate with the Roman Curia, so that, dealing thus with each other in all trust, they and the successor of Peter may come to be bound together ever so strongly. This mutual communication between the centre of the Church and the periphery does not enlarge the scope of anyone's authority but promotes *communion* in the highest degree, in the manner of a living body that is constituted and activated precisely by the interplay of all its members. This was well expressed by our predecessor Paul VI: "It is obvious, in fact, that along with the movement toward the centre and heart of the Church, there must be another corresponding movement, spreading from the centre to the periphery and carrying, so to speak, to each and all of the local Churches, to each and all of the pastors and the faithful, the presence and testimony of that treasure of truth and grace of which Christ has made Us the partaker, depository and dispenser." All of this means that the ministry of salvation offers more effectively to this one and same people of God, a ministry, we repeat, which before anything else demands mutual help between the pastors of the particular Churches and the pastor of the whole Church, so that all may bring their efforts together and strive to fulfill that supreme law which is the salvation of souls. History shows that when the Roman Pontiffs established the Roman Curia and adapted it to new conditions in the Church and in the world, they intended nothing other than to work all the better for this salvation of souls. With full justification did Paul VI visualise the Roman Curia as another cenacle or upper room of Jerusalem totally dedicated to the Church. We ourselves have proclaimed to all who work there that the only possible code of action is to set the norm for the Church and to deliver eager service to the Church. Indeed, in this new legislation on the Roman Curia it has been our will to insist that the dicasteries should approach all questions "by a pastoral route and with a pastoral sense of judgement, aiming at justice and the good of the Church and above all at the salvation of souls."<sup>13</sup> Now as we are about to promulgate this Apostolic Constitution, laying down the new physionomy of the Roman Curia, we wish to bring together the ideas and intentions that have guided us. First of all we wanted the image and features of this Curia to respond to the demands of our time, bearing in mind the changes that have been made by us or our predecessor Paul VI after the publication of the Apostolic Constitution *Regimini Ecclesiae universae*. Then it was our duty to fulfill and complete that renewal of the laws of the Church which was brought in by the publication of the new *Code of Canon Law* or which is to be brought into effect by the revision of the Oriental canonical legislation. Then we had in mind that the traditional dicasteries and organs of the

Roman Curia be made more suitable for the purposes they were meant for, that is, their share in governance, jurisdiction, and administration. For this reason, their areas of competence have been distributed more aptly among them and more distinctly delineated. Then with an eye to what experience has taught in recent years and to the never ending demands of Church society, we reexamined the juridical form and *raison d'être* of existence of those organs which are rightly called "postconciliar," changing on occasion their shape and organization. We did this in order to make the work of those institutions more and more useful and beneficial, that is, supporting special pastoral activity and research in the Church which, at an ever accelerating pace, are filling pastors with concern and which with the same urgency demand timely and well thought out answers. Finally, new and more stable measures have been devised to promote mutual cooperation between dicasteries, so that their manner of working may intrinsically bear the stamp of unity. In a word, our whole steadfast approach has been to make sure that the structure and working methods of the Roman Curia increasingly correspond to the ecclesiology spelled out by the Second Vatican Council, be ever more clearly suitable for achieving the pastoral purposes of its own constitution, and more and more fit to meet the needs of Church and civil society. It is indeed our conviction that now, at the beginning of the third millennium after the birth of Christ, the zeal of the Roman Curia in no small measure contributes to the Church's fidelity to the mystery of her origin, since the Holy Spirit keeps her ever young by the power of the Gospel.<sup>14</sup> Having given thought to all these matters with the help of expert advisors, sustained by the wise counsel and collegial spirit of the cardinals and bishops, having diligently studied the nature and mission of the Roman Curia, we have commanded that this Apostolic Constitution be drawn up, led by the hope that this venerable institution, so necessary to the government of the Church, may respond to that new pastoral impulse by which all the faithful are moved, laity, priests and particularly bishops, especially now after the Second Vatican Council, to listen ever more deeply and follow what the Spirit is saying to the Churches (cf. *Rev* 2:7). Just as all the pastors of the Church, and among them in a special way the bishop of Rome, are keenly aware that they are "Christ's servants, stewards entrusted with the mysteries of God" (*1 Cor* 4:1) and seek above all to be utterly loyal helpers whom the Eternal Father may easily use to carry out the work of salvation in the world, so also the Roman Curia has this strong desire, in each and every sphere of its important work, to be filled with the same spirit and the same inspiration; the Spirit, we say, of the Son of Man, of Christ the only begotten of the Father, who "has come to save what was lost" (*Mt* 18:11) and whose single and all-embracing wish is that all men "may have life and have it to the full" (*Jn* 10:10). Therefore, with the help of God's grace and of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of the Church, we establish and decree the following norms for the Roman Curia. © Copyright 1988 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana