



# The Holy See

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**VISIT TO THE VATICAN APOSTOLIC LIBRARY  
AND THE VATICAN SECRET ARCHIVES  
*ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI***

Monday, 25 June 2007

*Your Eminences,  
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,  
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I accepted with joy the invitation addressed to me by Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, Librarian of Holy Roman Church, to visit the [Vatican Apostolic Library](#) and the [Secret Archives of the Vatican](#).

Because of the important service they render to the Apostolic See and to the world of culture, both these institutions certainly deserve special attention on the part of the Pope. I have therefore gladly come to meet you and as I thank you for your warm welcome, I address my cordial greeting to you all.

In the first place, I greet Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, whom I thank for his words and the sentiments he has expressed on your behalf. With equal affection I greet Bishop Raffaele Farina and the Prefect of the Vatican Secret Archives, Fr Sergio Pagano, as well as those of you who are present here and all who collaborate in various capacities in the Library and in the Archives.

Your work, dear friends, is not merely work but, as I have just said, a unique service that you offer to the Church and especially to the Pope.

Moreover, it is well known that the Vatican Library, which - as Cardinal Tauran has just announced - is getting ready for an immense restoration project, is not called "Apostolic" by chance, since it is an institution which since its foundation has been held to be the "Pope's library", belonging directly to him.

In recent times too, the Servant of God John Paul II desired to recall this bond which binds the Vatican Apostolic Library to the Successor of Peter and which sheds light on its special mission, stressed by Pope Sixtus IV in former times: "*Ad decorem militantis Ecclesiae et fidei augmentum* - for the decorum of the militant Church and for the dissemination of the faith".

This was echoed by another of my Predecessors, Pope Nicholas V, who mentioned its purpose in these words: "*Pro communi doctorum virorum commodo* - for the use and common interest of scholars".

Down the centuries, the Vatican Library has assimilated and refined this mission, giving it an unmistakable character so that it has become a welcoming house of knowledge, culture and humanity, which opens its doors to scholars from every part of the world, irrespective of their origin, religion or culture.

Your task, dear friends who work here every day, is to foster the synthesis between culture and faith which transpires from the valuable documents and treasures in your custody, from the walls that surround you, from the Museums near you and from the splendid, luminous Basilica which can be seen from your windows.

I am very familiar with the work you carry out with humble and almost hidden daily commitment in the Secret Archives, the destination of so many researchers who come from across the world: in the manuscripts, less grand than the rich codices in the Apostolic Library but equally important for their historical interest, these researchers seek the roots of many ecclesiastical and civil institutions and study the history of remote and more recent times.

Furthermore, they can trace the outline of the distinguished figures of the Church and of civilization and make the many-faceted work of the Roman Pontiffs and numerous other Pastors better known.

The Vatican Archives were opened for consultation to scholars in 1881 by Leo XIII with his wise foresight; entire generations of historians have referred to them, as indeed have the European nations themselves.

The latter, to encourage research into such an ancient and rich *scrinium* as the Church of Rome, founded specific cultural Institutes in the Eternal City.

Today, people turn to the Secret Archives not only for erudite research concerning periods remote from us - although this in itself is praiseworthy and highly commendable - but also for their interest in ages and times that are close to us, even very close.

This is proven by the initial results produced to date thanks to the recent opening to scholars of the Pontificate of Pius XI, on which I decided in June 2006.

Besides research projects, studies and publications, polemics may sometimes arise. In this regard I have nothing but praise for the unselfish and unbiased service which the Vatican Secret Archives has carried out, steering clear of barren and also often weak and partisan historical views and offering to researchers, without exceptions or preconceptions, the documentary material in its possession, which has been seriously and competently organized.

The Secret Archives, as also the Apostolic Library, receive from many places tokens of the appreciation and esteem of cultural institutes and private scholars from different nations. This seems to me to be the best recognition to which the two Institutions can aspire. And I would like to assure them both, their Superiors and all their Personnel at the different structural levels of my gratitude and closeness.

I confess that, on reaching 70 years of age, I would have liked for beloved John Paul II to permit me to devote myself to study and research into the interesting documents and materials that you carefully conserve, true masterpieces that help us to review the history of humanity and of Christianity.

In his providential design the Lord had other plans for me and here I am with you today, not as a passionate scholar of ancient texts but rather as a Pastor who is required to encourage all the faithful to cooperate in the world's salvation, each one doing God's will wherever God places us to work.

For you, dear friends, this means fulfilling your Christian vocation in contact with the rich testimonies of culture, knowledge and spirituality, spending your days and in the end a large part of your lives in study, publication and service to the public and particularly to the bodies of the Roman Curia.

For your multifaceted activity you avail yourselves of the most advanced information technology, in cataloguing, restoration, photography and in general in everything that concerns the protection and fruition of the very rich patrimony that you preserve.

In praising you for your commitment, I urge you always to view your work as a true mission to be carried out with passion and patience, kindness and a spirit of faith. Always be concerned to present a welcoming image of the Apostolic See, aware that the Gospel message also passes through your consistent Christian testimony.

Now, at the end of our meeting, I am pleased to announce the appointment of Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran as President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. I have appointed Bishop Raffaele Farina to replace him as Archivist and Librarian of Holy Roman Church, and have raised him at the same time to the dignity of Archbishop.

I have called upon Mons. Cesare Pasini, until now Vice-Prefect of the Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana, to succeed him as Prefect of the Vatican Apostolic Library. Straightaway, I wish both of them success in their new offices.

I now thank all of you once again for your precious service in the Apostolic Library and in the Vatican Archives. I impart my Blessing warmly and with special affection to each one of you and willingly extend it to your respective families and loved ones.

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