



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE HON. MR PIER FERDINANDO CASINI,
PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES
OF THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC****

*To the Honourable Mr Pier Ferdinando Casini
President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Republic*

On 14 November 2002, Pope John Paul II of venerable memory made a historic Visit to the Parliament of the Italian Republic, meeting jointly with the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate in the Hall at Montecitorio.

The excited and warm welcome he received and his memorable Address on that occasion is the most solemn tribute of esteem that the Representatives of the Italian People ever paid to the great Pontiff.

I therefore learned with deep pleasure, Mr President, that on its third anniversary, the event is being commemorated by a special plaque that will be displayed in the same Hall, and I am pleased to assure you of my spiritual participation on this occasion.

In fact, the Visit of my beloved Predecessor to the Italian Parliament was unprecedented. It was made possible by the strengthening of a serene vision of Church-State relations in the awareness - to which the Pontiff referred in his Address - of the "highly positive results" that both the Church and the Italian Nation have derived from these relations over time (n. 2; L'Osservatore Romano English edition, 20 November 2002, p. 2).

On this happy anniversary, therefore, it only remains for me to express the hope that this spirit of sincere and loyal collaboration may grow ever deeper.

While I assure you of the Holy See's constant commitment in this regard, I would like once again

to reassert that the Church, in Italy and in every Country as well as at the different international Meetings, does not intend to claim any privilege for herself, but only the possibility of carrying out her own particular mission, with respect for the legitimate secularity of the State.

Moreover, if it is properly understood, this secularity is not in opposition to the Christian message but rather indebted to it, as experts in the history of civilization know well.

I am confident that the distinguished Members of the Italian Parliament will also continue in the future to honour the memory of the late Pope John Paul II, effectively drawing inspiration from his teachings and promoting the formation of the human person, culture, the family, schools and full-time, dignified employment, with due attention to the weakest, and to the old and new forms of poverty.

"A self-confident and internally cohesive Italy can be a great enrichment for the other nations of Europe and the world" (*ibid.*, n. 9), the Pontiff said on 14 November 2002. This cohesion presupposes a centre, a nucleus of meaning and value around which the various ideological and political positions can converge.

Such a centre must be the human person, with the values inherent in his or her individual and social dignity, whom the Church, through Christ's mandate, desires ardently to serve.

It is my hope that the Holy See and the Italian State will be able to cooperate ever better in this noble commitment. I assure you of my special prayers for this, as I cordially impart my Blessing to you, Mr President, and to all who have joined in this devout act of commemoration.

From the Vatican, 18 October 2005

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

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