



The Holy See

LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI TO PROFESSOR MARIO AGNES

*To the Most Distinguished
Professor Mario Agnes*

I address you, dear and distinguished Professor, with great respect and sincere affection at the time when, having reached the age limit, you are retiring after years of dedication in a service of lofty responsibility, as is that of the Editor-in-Chief of *L'Osservatore Romano*. First of all, I feel it is my duty to express to you my deep appreciation for your talents, mind and heart, of which you have given proof in carrying out your sensitive and demanding mandate. In this regard, I am pleased to confirm the opinion expressed by my beloved Predecessor, Pope John Paul II, who in a Letter addressed to you in March 1985, emphasized "Your professional competence, and in particular, your consistent Christian commitment, your love for the Church and your exemplary fidelity to the Magisterium".

"Consistent Christian commitment, love for the Church and exemplary fidelity to the Magisterium" are in fact features that have always accompanied your witness as a believer. Indeed, how can we forget your service as National President of the Italian Catholic Action from 1973 to 1980? Moreover, it is well known that you were actively engaged in the ranks of this Association from the years of your youth, initially as head of the children of Catholic Action in your parish, then as Diocesan President and Regional Delegate.

It is important to point out that in all these phases of your service to the Church you always showed a special interest in the written communication of the Christian Message. As diocesan President of Catholic Action, you founded and edited a fortnightly paper which for years carried the voice of Catholic students in lively and stimulating tones. Then, as National President, you took special care of the printing sector, among other things seeing to the coordination and improvement in quality of existing publications to make the presence of the Catholic laity more effective in the "agora" of the mass media. To this end, you did not fail to press the laity for their unanimous agreement to intervene on themes of great ecclesial and social importance, such as deeper

knowledge of the conciliar teachings and their expression in practical life, attention to the reality of the human person and to the requirements of respect for his or her dignity, the defence of human life throughout the span of its existence, the commitment to making gatherings of associates into authentic schools of formation in democracy.

Trusting in this great wealth of experience, Pope Paul VI summoned you to preside over the Editorial Society of the *Avvenire* newspaper, which in those years was distinguished by its special, incisive treatment of various themes concerning Italian ecclesial, cultural and political life. It was Pope John Paul II, who was well acquainted with you, who then desired to entrust to you the editorship of *L'Osservatore Romano*, an office which you have managed effectively until today.

In the light of this daily and high quality service to the Popes and to the Church, how could one fail to feel for you, dear Professor, sentiments of sincere esteem and deep gratitude? It comes naturally to think of the numerous efforts you made during these years to carry out your daily duty as well as to not disappoint the expectations of your Superiors. Likewise, it is only right to recognize your commitment to creating among the personnel of *L'Osservatore Romano* a working community equal to the noble traditions it has inherited. For all these reasons and as a sign of my personal appreciation, I have desired to enrol you among my Gentlemen, thereby introducing you into the Pontifical Family on a permanent basis. I am close to you with the assurance of a special prayer to the Lord that he may lavish upon you inner consolations and support you in the activities you will continue to carry out in a spirit of love and service to the Church. As I invoke upon you the motherly protection of Mary Most Holy and the special protection of St Peter, whose Successors you have generously served in these years, I willingly impart to you my affectionate Blessing, as a pledge of abundant heavenly favours.

From Castel Gandolfo, 20 August 2007

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