



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO PROFESSOR GIOVANNI MARIA VIAN
EDITOR IN CHIEF OF "L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO"***

To the Distinguished Prof. Giovanni Maria Vian

At the moment when you are taking on the office of Editor-in-Chief of *L'Osservatore Romano*, a post of great responsibility because of the special character of the Vatican newspaper, I address my greeting to you, dear Professor, together with my high esteem and sincere affection.

Your thorough cultural training as a historian of Christianity, and especially your knowledge of the history of the contemporary Papacy, your experience as a journalist and leader-writer for various daily newspapers and periodicals, the decade of your collaboration with *L'Osservatore Romano* as well as your membership in an illustrious family with a great Christian tradition of faithful service to the Holy See, constitute a sure guarantee for the sensitive role that has been entrusted to you.

Thus, you fit into the long and important history of the "Pope's paper". Founded in 1861, the publication has seen a succession of various famous Editors, from the lawyer Nicola Zanchini from Forlì together with the journalist Giuseppe Bastia, who were the first to take on this office, to beloved and appreciated Prof. Mario Agnes.

L'Osservatore Romano was born to support the freedom of the Holy See at a critical and providential time in its history. It has always spread the teachings of the Roman Pontiffs and the interventions of their closest collaborators on the crucial problems that humanity encounters on its journey.

The choice of impartiality which characterized the information provided by the Vatican paper during the First World War is well known. In the turmoil of events that followed at that time and then during the second tragedy of war in the 20th century, *L'Osservatore Romano* - by the end of 1929 moved to premises inside the Vatican State - further increased its prestige and distribution because it could draw from sources of information which at that time Vatican independence alone

could guarantee.

As an authoritative and respected means of information, precisely at that time it was flanked by important periodicals (*L'illustrazione Vaticana*", "*L'Osservatore della Domenica*", "*Ecclesia*"). Subsequently, the Vatican newspaper began to be published regularly in various foreign language editions so as to assure a truly international distribution.

This world dimension, which will become even more practical and effective through the possibilities offered today by its presence "on line", is particularly important for expressing the true reality of the universal Church, the communion of all the local Churches and their implantation into different situations within a context of sincere friendship with the women and men of our time.

In seeking and creating opportunities for discussion, *L'Osservatore Romano* will be able to serve the Holy See ever better, demonstrating the fruitfulness of the encounter between faith and reason, thanks to which cordial collaboration is also possible between believers and non-believers. Its fundamental task obviously continues to be the encouragement in the cultures of our time of that trusting yet profoundly reasonable openness to the Transcendent on which respect for the dignity and authentic freedom of every human being is ultimately founded.

As I invoke the motherly protection of Mary Most Holy and the intercession of St Peter upon you, upon Dr Carlo Di Cicco, Vice-Editor, and upon all the contributors and those who work to publish the newspaper, I gladly impart my Blessing to everyone as a pledge of abundant heavenly favours.

From the Vatican, 27 October 2007

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