



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO BISHOP LUCIANO MONARI OF BRESCIA
FOR THE 30th ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF PAUL VI***

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the death of Pope Paul vi, I would like to send my cordial greetings and good wishes to you, Venerable Brother, to the Presbyterate and to the whole Diocesan Community of Brescia from which my Predecessor received the gift of faith and drew those great values of piety, culture and humanity, to which he always conformed his life as a Priest, as a Bishop and as the Successor of Peter. He was introduced to this Church by zealous Priests and always bound to it by a love that never faded and by sentiments of deep and sincere gratitude, which he never failed to express in various circumstances with gestures full of affection and veneration. I am also personally grateful to the Servant of God Paul VI for the trust he placed in me by appointing me Archbishop of Munich and, three months later, admitting me to the College of Cardinals.

He was called by divine Providence to guide the Church in a historical period marked by a multitude of challenges and difficulties. In thinking back to the years of his Pontificate, one is struck by the missionary fervour that motivated him and impelled him to undertake demanding apostolic journeys even to distant nations and to make gestures of great ecclesial, missionary and ecumenical importance.

This Pontiff's name continues to be linked above all to the Second Vatican Council. The Lord desired that a son of the land of Brescia take the helm of the barque of Peter precisely during the celebration of the Council sessions and the years in which they were first implemented.

With the passing of years the importance of his Pontificate for the Church and for the world becomes ever more obvious, as does the priceless heritage of his Magisterium and virtue that he bequeathed to believers and to humanity as a whole.

Thirty years have passed since that 6 August of 1978, when Pope Paul VI died at the Summer Residence in Castel Gandolfo. It was the evening of the day on which the Church celebrates the

luminous mystery of the Transfiguration of Christ. In the text he had prepared for the Angelus on 6 August but was unable to deliver, turning his gaze toward Christ transfigured, he wrote: "That body, which is transfigured before the astonished eyes of the Apostles, is the body of Christ our brother, but it is also our body called to glory. That light, which bathes it, is and also will be our share of inheritance and of splendour. We are called to share such great glory because we are 'partakers of the divine nature' (2 Pt 1: 4)" (*L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 17 August 1978, p. 1).

In commemorating his devout death, I thank God fervently for having given to the Church as Pastor a faithful witness of Christ the Lord, who was so sincerely and profoundly in love with the Church and was so close to the expectations and hopes of the people of his time, and I warmly hope that every member of the People of God will be able to honour his memory with the commitment to a sincere and constant search for truth.

With these sentiments, as I invoke the motherly protection of the Virgin Mary, I cordially impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you, Venerable Brother, and to all those who are entrusted to your pastoral care.

From Castel Gandolfo, 26 July 2008.

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