



## The Holy See

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**LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI  
TO Fr. FRANÇOIS-MARIE LETHÉL, O.C.D.,  
PREACHER OF THE LENTEN SPIRITUAL EXERCISES**

*Reverend Father*

*François Marie Léthel, O.C.D.*

*Prelate Secretary of the Pontifical Academy of Theology*

I would truly like to express to you my deep gratitude for the precious service you have offered me and my colleagues in the Roman Curia by preaching the Spiritual Exercises in these past few days. Thanks to your dedication in this circumstance, we have been able to enter the Lenten Season, following the divine Word as Mother Church asks of us: making ourselves more attentive to the voice of the Lord.

A cause of special gratitude, Reverend Father, is the path on which you have led us through your meditations: a spiritual journey, inspired by the testimony of my Venerable Predecessor, John Paul II. His upcoming Beatification has suggested the theme of holiness, to be deeply explored in the encounter with the living figures of certain saints, like bright stars rotating around the sun which is Christ, Light of the world.

You assimilated this structure very well with the programme of the Catecheses I have given this year at the General Audiences. My aim has been to make the Church better known and loved, as she is revealed in the life, works and teachings of the saints, starting with the Apostles and passing through the long array of the Fathers and other ancient writers, theologians and medieval mystics, with special attention to a large group of women, to take up the series of Doctors of the Church, which I am about to complete.

This line of reflection and contemplation of the mystery of Christ, mirrored, as it were, in the existence of its most faithful imitators, constitutes a fundamental element which I have inherited from Pope John Paul II and which I carry on with full conviction and with great joy.

I know well, dear Brother, that my thanks to you is intended also for the Carmelite Order to which you belong. I appreciate and share this sentiment, and extend it to the broader ecclesial dimension, since this course of Exercises has made us more aware than ever of the Church as the Communion of Saints.

May our gratitude go to the Church, enlivened by the action of the Holy Spirit, and to her Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary. May Our Lady and St Joseph, Spouse and Patron of the universal Church whom we are celebrating today and to whom you have dedicated your meditation this morning, obtain for you an abundance of heavenly gifts, as a pledge of which I warmly impart to you a special Apostolic Blessing which I gladly extend to all your loved ones.

*From the Vatican, 19 March 2011*

## **BENEDICTUS P P. XVI**

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