



## The Holy See

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**THE TESTAMENT OF PAUL VI** During a meeting of the General Congregation of Cardinals on Thursday, 10 August, there was read the last will and testament of Paul VI which had previously been made known to the members of his family. The testament comprises a handwritten document dated the 30th June 1965, to which there were added two codicils, one of 1972 and the other of 1973. In all, there are fourteen pages of manuscript. The first of the three texts is written on three large sheets in letter form, each folded in four leaves. Paul VI numbered the first page of the three sheets in his own hand, and he also placed his signature in the margin of the fourth leaf of the first sheet. In all, there are eleven written leaves. The first codicil was added in Castel Gandolfo, and besides the date it specifies also the time, namely, 16 September 1972 7.30 am. It consists of two small handwritten leaves. The first has in brackets above, alongside the papal coat of arms, the words "Additional notes to the testament". The second, entitled "Addition to my testamentary dispositions" consists of a few lines written on a single leaf on 14 July 1973. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. 1 — I am fixing my gaze on the mystery of death and of what follows thereafter, in the light of Christ which alone sheds a light upon it; and therefore with humble and serene confidence. I am deeply aware of the truth, which for me is ever reflected from this mystery on the present life; and I thank the conqueror of death for having dispelled the darkness and revealed the light thereof. Therefore, in the presence of death, of the total and definitive separation from the present life, I deem it my duty to exalt the gift, the good fortune, the beauty, the destiny of this same fleeting existence: Lord, I thank thee for having called me into life, and even more so, making me a Christian, for having regenerated and destined me to the fullness of life. Likewise, I feel obliged to thank and to bless those who were the means of conveying to me the gifts of life received from thee O Lord: those who brought me into life (Oh! blessed be my most worthy parents!), those who educated me, loved me, did good to me, helped me, surrounded me with good examples, with care, affection, trust, goodness, kindness, friendship, fidelity and deference. I look with gratitude on the natural and spiritual relationships which have given origin, assistance, support, significance to my humble existence: how many gifts, how many beautiful and noble things, how much hope have I received in this world! Now that my day is drawing to a close, and all of this stupendous and dramatic temporal and earthly scene is ending and dissolving, how can I further thank thee, O Lord, after the gift of natural life, also for the higher gift of faith and grace, in which alone at the end my surviving existence finds refuge? How can I worthily praise thy goodness, O Lord, for the fact that as soon as I entered this world, I was introduced into the ineffable world of the Catholic Church? For having been called and initiated into the priesthood of Christ? For having had the joy and the mission of serving souls, brothers, the young, the poor, the people of God? And for having had the unmerited honour of being a minister of holy Church, especially at Rome, near the Pope, then later at Milan as Archbishop in the See, for me too elevated and venerable, of Saints Ambrose and Charles, and finally in this supreme, formidable and most Holy See of St Peter? I shall sing forever the mercies of the Lord. I wish to greet and bless all those whom I met in my earthly pilgrimage; those who were my collaborators, counsellors and friends—and they were so many and so good and generous and dear!—blessed be those to whom I

ministered and who were my sons and brothers in Our Lord! To you, Lodovico and Francesco, brothers by blood and in the spirit, and to all you dear ones of my family who have never asked anything from me, nor received any worldly favour from me, and who have always given me an example of human and Christian virtues, who have understood me with so much discretion and heartfelt feeling, and who above all have helped me to seek in the present life the path to the life to come, to all of you my peace and my blessing. My thought turns backwards and becomes more encompassing; and well do I know that this would not be a happy farewell if I should not remember to ask forgiveness of all those I may have offended, failed to serve and love enough; and besides to forgive those who should have desired forgiveness from me. May the peace of the Lord be with us! I feel the Church all around me: O holy Church, one, catholic and apostolic, receive with my blessing and greeting my final act of love. To you, Rome, the diocese of St Peter and of the Vicar of Christ, most beloved to this least servant of the servants of God, my most paternal and fullest blessing, so that you, the City of the World, may ever be mindful of your mysterious vocation, and that you may be able to fulfil, with human virtue and with Christian faith, your spiritual and universal mission, however long may be the history of the world. And to all of you, reverend Brothers in the Episcopate, my heartfelt and respectful greeting. I am with you in the one faith, in the same charity, in the common apostolic commitment, in the joint service of the Gospel, for the building up of the Church of Christ and for the salvation of the whole of mankind. To all priests, to all men and women religious, to the students of our seminaries, to the faithful and militant Catholics, to the young, to the suffering, to the poor, to those who seek truth and justice, to all, the blessing of the Pope as he dies. And thus, with special reverence and gratitude, to the Cardinals and to the entire Roman Curia: in the presence of you who have been closer to me, I solemnly profess our Faith, I declare our Hope, I exalt the Charity that does not die, humbly accepting from the divine will the death in store for me, calling upon the great mercy of the Lord, imploring the clement intercession of the most holy Virgin Mary, of the angels and the saints, and commending my soul to the prayers of the faithful!<sup>2</sup> — I appoint the Holy See my universal heir: to this I am bound by duty, gratitude and love. Except for the dispositions indicated below.<sup>3</sup> — My private secretary shall be the executor of my will. He shall take advice from the Secretariat of State, and follow the juridical rules in force and the recognized ecclesiastical customs.<sup>4</sup> — As regards the goods of this world: I wish to die poor and thus to facilitate everything in this regard. As regards movable and immovable possessions which have come to me from my family, they shall freely be disposed of by my brothers Lodovico and Francesco; I request their prayers for my soul and for our deceased relatives. Let them give alms to people in need or to charitable works. They may keep for themselves, and give to those who deserve and desire it, some souvenirs from the things or from the religious objects or from the books that belong to me. My personal notes, copybooks, correspondence and writings are to be destroyed. As regards other things which can be regarded as my own: they shall be disposed of by my private secretary as the executor of my will and he may keep some souvenirs for himself, and give to my closer friends some small things as a token of remembrance. I should like that manuscripts and handwritten notes of mine should be destroyed, and that correspondence received by me, of a spiritual or personal character and not destined for the knowledge of others, should be burned. In case that the executor of my will cannot carry out these instructions, let them be carried out by the Secretariat of State.<sup>5</sup> — I earnestly request that arrangements be made for suitable suffrages and generous alms, as far as possible. As regards my funeral: let it be simple and animated by religious piety (I do not wish to have the catafalque, as is the custom for the funerals of Popes; instead let things be carried out in a humble and becoming manner). As regards my tomb: I would like to be buried in the earth with a simple stone to indicate the place and invite a prayer of Christian piety. No monument for me.<sup>6</sup> — And most important of all, on taking my leave of this earthly scene, and going to face the judgment and mercy of God, there are so many things I should say, indeed so many. On the state of the Church; let her give ear to some words of ours which we uttered on her behalf seriously and lovingly. On the Council: let it be brought to a good conclusion, and let its

prescriptions be put into effect. As regards ecumenism: the approach to the separated Brethren must go on, with great understanding and patience, with great love; but without deflecting from the true Catholic doctrine. As regards the world: one must not think to help it by following its ways of thought, its habits and tastes, but by studying it, loving it and serving it. I close my eyes on this sorrowful, dramatic and magnificent world, invoking once again on her behalf the divine goodness. Again I bless everyone, especially Rome, Milan and Brescia. For the Holy Land, the land of Jesus, where I went as a pilgrim of faith and peace, a special greeting and blessing. To the Church, the most beloved Catholic Church, to all mankind, my apostolic blessing. Then—into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my Spirit. I, Pope Paul VI *Given at Rome, at St Peter's the 30th June 1965; the third year of our Pontificate. Additional Notes to my Testament* Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my Spirit.

My soul magnifies the Lord. Mary! I believe. I hope. I love. I thank all those who have done good to me. I ask pardon of those to whom I may not have done good. To all I give peace in the Lord. Greetings to my most beloved brother Lodovico, and to all my family, relations and friends, and to all to whom I have ministered. Thanks to all my collaborators. To the Secretariat of State in particular. With particular charity I bless Brescia, Milan, Rome, the whole Church. How lovely is thy dwelling place, O Lord! All my possessions I leave to the Holy See. Let my private secretary, the dear Don Pasquale Macchi, arrange for suffrages and works of charity and let him keep for himself and give to persons dear to me some souvenirs from among the books and things belonging to me. I do not desire any special tomb. Just some prayers to obtain God's mercy. In thee, O Lord, have I hoped. Amen, alleluia. My blessing to all, in the name of the Lord. POPE PAUL VI *Castel Gandolfo, 16 September 1972, 7.30 a.m. Addition to my testamentary dispositions* I wish to have a very simple funeral, and I do not wish to have either a special tomb or any monument. Just some suffrages (some works of charity and prayers). POPE PAUL VI *14 July 1973 L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO, Weekly Edition - August 24, 1978*