



The Holy See

*LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO HIS EMINENCE THOMAS CARDINAL COORAY
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY
OF HIS PRIESTLY ORDINATION*

These words of the Psalmist: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" (Ps 115:12), said by you, our esteemed brother, a thousand times in the past, you will say in a special way from the bottom of your heart on 23 June as if it were a hymn in which you condense, as it were, into a sentence all the favours bestowed on you by the Lord. For, fifty years have passed since you were ordained a priest. In the course of these years God has continually bestowed his blessings upon you. These can be reduced to this one: whilst abiding in Christ the true vine, he granted you the blessing of continuing in his love and, from the nature of the priesthood itself, of being a branch of the vine bearing much fruit (cf. Jn 15:1-9). For from then on, being aware of your dignity and responsibility, you were given the strength to resolve to live a holy life so that you might portray an image of Christ, the High Priest, which would not be deformed. From then on, you became docile to his teachings, a strong defender of his truth, a guardian of the faith in all the eventualities of life, a constant and diligent worker, a model of virtue, a lesson in living and interpreting life itself in a way so different from the fashion of this age which is agitated by an unbridled desire for pleasure, and is rushing headlong into a new form of paganism. Finally, you have been that witness of Christ, who for fifty years have brought many to Christ with you, or at least, in the name of Christ you have confounded and stimulated them and have proposed him to the minds and hearts of many for their consideration. This is much fruit. Nevertheless the day on which you will solemnly celebrate this long period of your zealous activity, will, without doubt, be an occasion for adding something to this rich store of good works. For you will not be celebrating yourself but him who used you as an instrument to bring his life to men; and you will experience what John the Baptist experienced when he says: "He must increase but I must decrease" (Jn 3:30). And this will give you great joy, for the most pleasant of the delights of any true priest—inasmuch as he is acting in the place of Christ—are these: in modern times to let Christ himself increase, as it were, so that Christ alone might be made manifest. And realising clearly that what you have accomplished has been only the work of God, you will give it back into

the hands of that merciful Father.

While we address you, our esteemed brother, as a priest raised to the rank of a bishop, we also remind you that as you were a staunch supporter of our Predecessors so you continue to be to us in that great work which is implied in the words of the Lord's Prayer: "Thy kingdom come". Do not think that these fifty years have vanished into thin air or have been destroyed. Think rather that it has been a time which has given life which will continue in the Church in so far as you played your part in extending that kingdom and at the same time the way to immortality.

This belief will bring joy to the solemn celebrations which you are about to experience, for you will be celebrating the feast of life—a sure "is" and not a sure "was".

This solemn assurance we confirm with our prayers and with the Apostolic Blessing which we willingly impart to you and to those who throughout the celebrations will be with you as the voice of God, as it were: the voice of praise, of congratulations, and of affection.

From the Vatican on the thirtieth day of May in the year 1979, the first of our Pontificate.

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