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Message of the Holy Father on the occasion of the bicentenary of death of the Servant of God Pius VII

The following is the Message sent by the Holy Father Francis to Bishop Douglas Regattieri of Cesena-Sarsina, on the occasion of the bicentenary of the death of the Servant of God Pius VII:

Message of the Holy Father

Dear Brother
Bishop Douglas Regattieri
of Cesena-Sarsina

The significant occasion of the bicentenary of the death of the Servant of God Pope Pius VII is for me a happy occasion to address a cordial greeting to you, dear Brother, and to the entire civil and ecclesial Community of Cesena and Sarsina, which remembers with gratitude an illustrious son, a courageous pastor, a caring defender of the Church. To all those who take part in the many initiatives of the "Chiaramontian year" I wish to convey my paternal closeness together with my good wishes.

In re-examining the life of this venerable Predecessor, a personality of profound faith, meekness, humanity and mercy, who distinguished himself for his competence and prudence in the face of those who impeded *Libertas Ecclesiae*, feelings of gratitude and admiration emerge for the spiritual legacy he left behind and the evangelical frankness with which he sustained difficult trials during the twenty-three years of his Pontificate. Despite the political and social turmoil that marked that century, he trustfully abandoned himself to God's will and accepted the humiliation of exile with exemplary docility, offering everything to the Lord for the good of the Church.

Pope Chiaramonti was a man of farsighted intelligence, forged first at the Benedictine Abbey of Cesena and then at Saint Paul's Outside-the-Walls in Rome, who thus acquired a vast theological preparation placed at the disposal of the academic world. Furthermore, in addition to the proven culture with which he was endowed, along with the obvious virtues he possessed, at a young age he was called to be bishop in two different

dioceses. As a pastor, he distinguished himself for his charisma and goodness of spirit. Indeed, during the years of his episcopal ministry, he did not hesitate to devote himself to the care of the people, dedicating himself to alleviating the many sufferings of those in precarious conditions.

Certainly, if we consider the historic period in which Pope Pius VII lived, we cannot but note the great wisdom with which he was able to make himself an “ambassador of peace” to those who exercised temporal power. Confronted with a controversial political scenario and a specious action that threatened the *salus animarum*, with the calmness of one who always trusts in God’s provident intervention, he did everything in his power not to fail in his mission as “guardian and guide of the flock”, and despite the restrictions imposed on him, he continued fearlessly to proclaim the consoling force of Christ’s Gospel, in accordance with the spirit of the Beatitudes which call the children of God to be workers for peace (cf. *Mt 5:9*).

Dear Brother, I entrust to the faithful of this diocese the task of making the life and pastoral work of this esteemed Successor of the Apostle Peter, your beloved fellow-citizen, adequately known, so that it may inspire the same passion in the service of neighbour and the building up of a harmonious society, and point the way to peace as a path of hope, respectful dialogue and Christian reconciliation. As I entrust you to the maternal protection of the Virgin Mary, invoking the intercession of the Servant of God Pope Pius VII, I gladly bless each one, and I ask you, please, not to forget to pray for me.

Fraternally,

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 21 September 2023

Feast of Saint Matthew Apostle and Evangelist

FRANCIS
