



The Holy See

LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO CARDINAL DONALD WILLIAM WUERL

To our Venerable Brother Cardinal Donald William Wuerl Archbishop of Washington

On 21 September I received your request to accept your resignation from the pastoral leadership of the Archdiocese of Washington.

I am aware that this request rests on two pillars that have marked and mark your pastoral ministry: to seek in all things the greater glory of God and to secure the good of the people who have been entrusted to your care. A shepherd knows that the good and the unity of the People of God are precious gifts that the Lord implored and for which he gave his life. He paid a very high price for this unity, and our mission is to take care that the People not only remain united but become witnesses to the Gospel: “that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (Jn 17:21). This is the horizon from which we are constantly invited to discern all our actions.

I recognize in your request the heart of a pastor who, by broadening his gaze so as to recognize a greater good that can benefit the whole body (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *[Evangelii Gaudium](#), 235*), favours actions that support, encourage and cultivate the unity and mission of the Church above every type of sterile division sown by the father of lies, who, seeking to wound the shepherd, wants only that the flock be scattered (cf. Mt 26:31).

You have sufficient elements to ‘justify’ your actions and to distinguish between what it means to cover up crimes or fail to address problems, and to commit errors. However, your nobility has led you not to use this means of defense. Of this I am proud and I thank you.

In this way you emphasize the intention to put God’s Plan first, before any kind of personal plan, including what might be considered as beneficial for the Church. Your resignation is a sign of willingness and docility to the Spirit who continues to act in his Church.

In accepting your resignation I would ask you to continue as Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese until the appointment of your successor.

Dear Brother, I make my own the words of Sirach: "You who fear the Lord, trust in him, and your reward will not fail" (2:8). May the Blessed Virgin shelter you with her mantle and may the power of the Holy Spirit give you the grace to discern how to continue serving him in this new season that the Lord has given you.

Vatican, 12 October 2018

Francis

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