

# Treasures of history

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## Editorial

### Why the Apostolic Archives are so important

It is indeed true that words serve as appropriate maps for knowledge. Take the word ‘archives’. It comes from the Greek *arché*, a term that has a double meaning. On the one hand it means the ‘beginning’, the ‘territory of origin’, ‘the start’. On the other hand, it also indicates the place where the law is kept. In fact, the Hellenic *archeion* served both as a repository for official documents and as the home of the archons, whose mission was to preserve and interpret legislative texts.

We can say that, in some way, these very ancient meanings of the term *arché* persist in the contemporary mission of a monumental historical archive such as the Vatican Apostolic Archives. These are the central archives of the Holy See, intimately linked to the exercise of the Petrine ministry and all that is associated with it. In this sense, the Apostolic Archives are the custodians of the law in the multiple forms that it has taken over the centuries. But *arché* also refers to the ‘beginning’, the ‘origin’. And this is another fundamental aspect of the Apostolic Archives: it brings us closer to the living course of memory, it shows us where we come from, what we are rooted in.

For us Christians, history is a crucial foundation. I am reminded of what one of the great masters of the twentieth century, Marc Bloch, wrote. He observed that while other religious systems have based their rites and beliefs on a mythology that is practically foreign to human time, Christians anchor their faith in historical facts. For Christians, the pilgrimage they make in actual history is the setting for the drama of salvation. That is why, according to Bloch, “Christianity is a religion of historians”. When we say this, we do not mean that only historians can be Christians, or that only Christians can be historians, but rather that every Christian is called to base his or her existence on the Good News that begins with the historical Incarnation of the Word of God (cf. *Jn 1:14*). It is not surprising that for the Catholic Church an archive is not just a repository of documents. An archive allows the Church to tell her story and to recognize herself as a “sacrament, or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race” (*LG 1*).

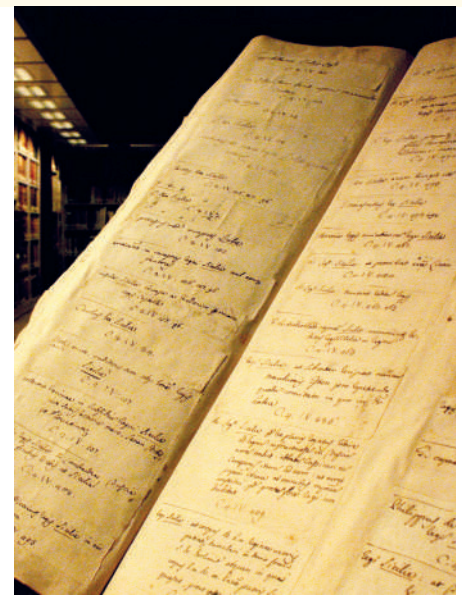
Failure to love and adequately support archives entails not only the risk of letting portions of our history fall into oblivion. The danger is even greater and, if I may say so, more dramatic: it is the danger of that ‘amnesia’ so often denounced by Pope Francis; is the danger of forgetting who we are and the treasure of faith that has been entrusted to us. The Vatican Apostolic Archives are therefore deeply inscribed in the heart of the Church.

Card. José Tolentino de Mendonça



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AAV, Index Room, Schedario Garampi



### From “Secret” to “Apostolic”: the sense of a change

The sense of Pope Francis’ decision by which he changed the centuries-old title of *Archivum Secretum Vaticanum*, *Vatican Secret Archives*, to *Vatican Apostolic Archives* is well expressed in the apostolic letter in the form of a *motu proprio*

“The Historical Experience” of 22 October 2019 (*L’Osservatore Romano*, 28-29 October 2019, p. 11). A careful reading of this document reveals that already in the seventeenth century the pope’s archive was referred to as both *secretum* and *apostolicum*, and that in the nineteenth century it was still referred to as *Archivum Secretum Apostolicum Vaticanum*. In order to avoid the easy misunderstandings that such a title caused or could cause in modern languages, including Italian, in relation to the term *Secret*, Pope Francis thought it appropriate to drop this now ‘awkward’ and misleading term and replace it with the term *Apostolic*, which in practice is equivalent to *Secret*, because in Latin both *secretum* (which means separate, private) and *apostolicum* (i.e. of the *domnus apostolicus*, which is only the pope) refer to the same reality, also ju-

ridical. The Vatican Apostolic Archives have lost nothing of their original nature by relinquishing the term *Secret*, because even in the new title chosen by Pope Francis it continues to be the private Archive of the Pope (hence Apostolic), subject only to him and under his exclusive governance.

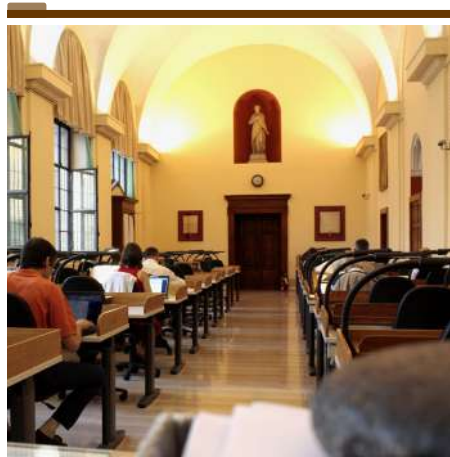
At first, this change of title to Vatican Archives was received – understandably – with some nostalgia (the old Latin term *secretum* had its allure too!), but then everyone realized that the change of name decided by the Pope responded, and in fact responds, to a need to accommodate the modern ‘sentiment’; indeed, the word *secretum* could conjure up hidden mysteries enclosed in obscure and vast repositories, romanticized only by those who have never known the reality of the Vatican Archives.

## The opening to consultation of the documents from the pontificate of Pius XII and the Study Day held on 21 February 2020

### The announcement of the opening and the previous openings

In his audience to the staff of the Vatican Archives on 4 March 2019, Pope Francis announced that the documents of the Vatican Archives relating to the pontificate of Pius XII (1939-1958) would be accessible to scholars for consultation from Monday 2 March 2020.

As is generally known, it is the pope who decides to open to consultation the documents of the archives in Vatican relating to the pontificates of his predecessors. When Leo XIII gradually opened the Vatican Archives for historical research in 1881, the documents available for consultation went as far back as 1815. In 1921 Benedict XV stretched the period to 1830, while shortly afterwards (1924) Pius XI extended it to 1846, marking the end of Gregory XVI's pontificate. In 1966, Paul VI authorized the consultation of documents from the pontificate of Pius IX (1846-1878). In 1978, John Paul II extended the period to the end of Leo XIII's pontificate (1878-1903) and, in 1984, to 1922, thus including the pontificates of Pius X (1903-1914) and Benedict XV (1914-1922). In December 2002, in order to allow scholars to consult the documents relating to the work of the Holy See during the two world wars, Pope Wojtyła authorized an early partial access to some fonds of the Vatican Archives (Archives of the Apostolic Nunciature of Munich, 1922-1934; Archives of the Apostolic Nunciature of Berlin, 1922-1930) and of the Archives of the Secretariat of State, Relations with States Section (formerly Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs: Bavaria, 1922-1939; Germany, 1922-1939). Hardly two years later, in June 2004, the extensive fonds of the Vatican Office for Information on Prisoners of War (1939-1947) was opened to consultation; it related to military and civilian prisoners or missing persons, about whom information was requested (the inventory was completed in 2004). Finally, in 2006, Benedict XVI made all the documents from the pontificate of Pius XI accessible, allowing for the early inventorying and consultation of the



AAV. Study Room Pius XI

### The Vatican Archives during the pandemic

The unexpected outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic that is disrupting the world became a real threat between the end of February and early

collection relating to the 1942 census of the Italian ecclesiastical archives and of the Pontifical Central Commission for Sacred Art in Italy (the inventories were published in 2010-2011 and 2013 respectively).

### The archives involved and the Study Day held on 21 February 2020

The opening to consultation of documents dating up to October 1958 involved the Vatican Archives, the Historical Archives of the Section for Relations with States of the Secretariat of State, the Historical Archives of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Historical Archives of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, the Historical Archives of the Congregation for Oriental Churches, the Archives of the Fabric of St. Peter, as well as other historical archives of Congregations, dicasteries, offices and tribunals, at the discretion of the relative superiors.

With an unprecedented initiative, the Vatican Archives promoted a Study Day, which took place on 21 February 2020 at the Patristic Institute *Augustinianum*, a few steps from the colonnade of St. Peter's, to present to scholars the work done to re-manage the archive of Pacelli's pontificate and to highlight some possible path of research. The Study Day was opened by Cardinal Archivist and Librarian of the Holy Roman Church José Tolentino de Mendonça. In the morning the archivists of the Vatican Archives took the floor: Alejandro M. Dieguez (*The governance of the Church*); Luca Carboni (*Aspects of the Pope's diplomacy: the pontifical representations*); Giovanni Coco (*The war and the post-war period*); Gianfranco Armando, Francesca Di Giovanni, Giuseppina Roselli (*The Pope's charity*); Daniele De Marchis (*Sacred art and the reconstruction of churches*). In the afternoon, the persons in charge of the other archives of the Holy See involved illustrated the collections for which they are responsible: Mgr Assunto Scotti (Archives of the Section for General Affairs of the Secretariat of State); Johan Ickx (Historical Archives of the Section for Relations with States of the Secretariat of State); Mgr Alejandro Cifres (Archives of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith); Mgr Luis Manuel Cuña Ramos (Historical Archives of the Congregation

March 2020. After the Study Day on the opening of the Vatican archives of Pius XII's pontificate (21 February 2020), following the actual access to the documents of the pontificate granted to scholars for consultation (2 March 2020), it was possible to accommodate only for five days, from Monday 2 to Friday 5 March, the numerous scholars who had booked in the previous months. On Monday 9 March, the Archives had to close their doors to scholars, but even during the most serious and acute phase of the general lockdown, a small number of employees was present. After just three months, as soon as the general provisions allowed a relative return to normality, the Archives were opened again to scholars from Monday 1 to Friday 26 June, limiting the number of people admitted to a maximum of 25/30, observing all the precautionary measures prescribed. To ensure the necessary social distancing, the two rooms in the Sala Sisto V, on the lower floor, and the Sala Pio XI were used for document consultation. In an at-



Pius XII walking in the Vatican Gardens

tempt to compensate scholars for the months lost, the Archives opened again on Monday 31 August 2020, one month earlier than normally scheduled, and has remained open ever since, except for the period from 9 November to 4 December, coinciding with the second 'wave' of the pandemic. Naturally, the courses of the Vatican School of Palaeography, Diplomatics and Archival Sciences have also been affected by the pandemic: some of the courses have been suspended, others have continued in "distance learning" mode, and a mixed solution is also currently being adopted, which envisages attendance in person for students who can travel to the Archives (especially from Rome or nearby locations) and online classes for those who, for various reasons, cannot travel.

On 27 February, some television networks were allowed to film the rooms of the Vatican Archives repository and selected documents.

### A wealth of documentation available

To give an idea of the vastness of the collected documentation that has become accessible since March 2020, in the Vatican Archives the following have become available for consultation, relating to Pacelli's pontificate: 73 archives of pontifical nunciatures, 15 series of the Secretariat of State, 21 archival fonds of Roman Congregations and curial and palatine offices, 3 fonds of the Vatican City State and an additional 8 fonds. Altogether, 120 archives and archival fonds containing some 20,000 archival units.

In these difficult times, the institution is striving to continue to serve the Church and studies in every possible way, aware of the confusion and frustration experienced by many on account of the disruption to research work and deferred projects.

## Treasures of History Foundation

In Atlanta, Georgia, USA, a tax-exempt foundation was recently established. It is called *Treasures of History Foundation*. It consists of two boards: the Board of Members, made up of US prelates, and the Board of Directors, made up of lay people, except for two clergymen who serve as CEO and Vice-President respectively. The Board of Directors actually manages the Foundation.

The Foundation is dedicated to raising funds for the Vatican Apostolic Archives, the papal archives, to assist the venerable institution in fulfilling the mission entrusted to it by the popes since its creation over 400 years ago as part of the Vatican Library. The Archives holds millions of parchments and documents, including diplomatic and personal correspondence between various popes and US presidents.

*Treasures of History Foundation*, 2722 N Green Valley Pkwy, Unit # 50705, Henderson, NV 89014-9997.



AAV. Photographic laboratory

## The work of the Relief Commission (1939-1958) in the documents of the Vatican Archives

### The charity of Pius XII as a response to evil

On 2 March 2020, the archival documents relating to the pontificate of Pius XII (March 1939-October 1958) kept in the historical archives of the Holy See were opened to consultation. The event had already been announced by Pope Francis on 4 March 2019 during an audience granted to the officials of the Vatican Apostolic Archives, received in the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace. In the vast documentary material now made available by the Apostolic Archives for historical research, the papers of the Relief Commission stand out for their considerable number, their chronological extension, and the richness and variety of the topics dealt with.

An inventory of these archives has recently been published in the *Collectanea Archivi Vaticani* series in two large volumes [*L'Archivio della Commissione Soccorsi (1939-1958)*. Inventario, I-II, edited by Francesca Di Giovanni and Giuseppina Roselli, Città del Vaticano, Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, 2019 (Collectanea Archivi Vaticani, III), pp. XXVII, 2132; the third volume, which contains the *Index of names*, is available only in electronic format and can be downloaded free of charge from the website of the Vatican Archives].

The volumes open with an introduction that traces the history of the Commission from its origins, outlining the process by which the archive was created. The central part of the volume con-

## The digitisation of the Archives of the Nunciature in Korea

### A community of martyrs in the heart of the universal Church

Under the sign of martyrdom, living for a long time without priests through the faithful witness of generations of lay people, in the course of the 20th century the Korean Church has pursued an increasingly intense relationship with the universal Church and with the See of Rome. The visits of John Paul II in 1984 and 1989 and of Pope Francis in August 2014 responded to this yearning, but the ties are centuries old. In vain one looks for Korea in the classic catalogue on *The Apostolic Nunciatures from 1800 to 1956* by Giuseppe De Marchi (1957), while it appears prominently in the update “from the second half of the 20th century” edited by Antonio G. Filipazzi in 2006. Established in 1949, the Apostolic Delegation in Korea became an Internunciature in 1963 and a Nunciature three years later, on 5 September 1966. Since the first Apostolic Delegate, Patrick James Byrne (taken prisoner during the war between North and South, and who died on 25 November 1950 in a concentration camp), there have been fourteen Pontifical Representatives in Korea who have definitively rooted the local Church, strategically located between China and Japan, in the universal Church.

The programme to digitize all the documents of the Nunciature Archive from 1949 to 1958 was recently completed at the Vatican Apostolic Archives. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea financed the purchase of two new generation

scanners and the work of two photographers who for six months, from last March, coinciding with the opening to consultation of the documents of Pius XII's pontificate, dedicated themselves to the digital reproduction of the documentation of the Vatican Archives from 1949 to 1958: several thousand sheets in a dozen boxes. Earlier documentation, from the Apostolic Vicariate and then the Apostolic Delegation, was largely lost when Communist troops invaded Seoul in June 1950. In the last days of his imprisonment, Mgr Byrne said that he considered the suffering he had endured for Christ to be the greatest privilege of his life after that of the priesthood. This story is told in the documents of the Vatican Archives reproduced at the behest of the President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea, Hyginus Kim Hee-Joong, and its Secretary General, Thomas Aquinas Kim Joon Chul. Subsequently (April 2021), the new president of the Bishops' Conference, Matthias Ri Longhoon, and its new Secretary General, Stephanus Lee Cheol Soo, decided to support the cataloguing and digitization of other documents of the Nunciature's archive, along with those of other collections relating to Korea.

If the blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christians, the Korean bishops and Catholics will be able to draw on the history testified to by these documents to strengthen the surprising dynamism of a Church - about five million faithfuls out of a population of fifty million - which is the third largest in Asia, after the Philippines and Vietnam, and is taking on an increasingly important role in the evangelization of the continent.

maintains an analytical description of the individual files handled by the office, and is accompanied by an initial numerical table and a detailed index of names and places, which can be consulted online on the website of the Vatican Apostolic Archives.

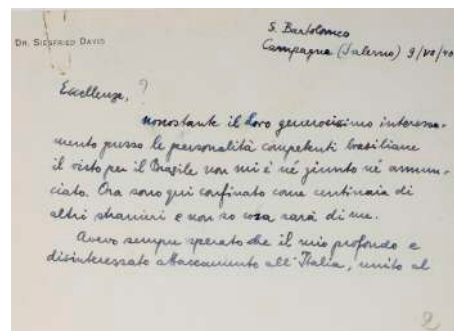
The office became operational in September 1939, when the Holy See began to receive requests for help from the Polish population, the first victim of the conflict that soon spread to many other countries across all continents. Within the second section of Ordinary Affairs of the Secretariat of State, a group of prelates, coordinated by Mgr Giovanni Battista Montini, then alternate, convened spontaneously and began to process the petitions and requests for help and assistance presented by private individuals, organizations and institutions. Due to the increased bureaucratic demands determined by the multiplication of requests and the need to regulate a coordinating body for the Pope's various charitable activities, on 12 November 1941, Mgr Montini officially invited Mgrs Paolo Giobbe, Carlo Chiarlo, Antonio Riberi and Luigi Centoz «to collaborate with this Relief Commission» with the help of Don Mario Brini as secretary; they were later joined by Mgrs Clemente Micara, Ettore Felici, Filippo Cortesi, Gustavo Testa, Angelo Rotta, Gennaro Verolino, Egano Righi Lambertini, Lino Zanini, Giuseppe Micossi, Alfredo Zanchi, Giuseppe Caprio, Paolino Limongi, Renato Ausiello Lanteri, Giovanni Battista Scapinelli di Léguigno, Emilio Rossi and Francesco Cherubini. Alongside these prelates of sound preparation and proven diplomatic experience, the employees of the Secretariat of State also worked under the vigilant and daily supervision of

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the alternate Mgr Montini, who on 21 December 1949 congratulated them as follows: “I see that much work has been done, and it has been well executed. I congratulate you and beg you not to tire!”.

The documents described in the inventory reveal that the main purpose of this office was to distribute “relief”, i.e. monetary contributions as well as material aid in the form of medicines, food, clothing, books and personal items for the civilian population affected by the war and for prisoners of war detained in prison camps all over the world. In order to do this, the Commission relied on the direct or indirect cooperation of the Red Cross, the Pontifical Assistance Commission, the Italian relief agency, the Opera nazionale assistenza religiosa e morale agli operai, the Opera San Raffaele of the Pallottine Fathers, various national Caritas organizations and numerous international associations and committees. The Relief Commission's main interlocutors, however, were the nuncios, apostolic delegates and bishops, who also in turn



AAV, Segr. Stato, Commissione Soccorsi 294, fasc. 90, f. 2r

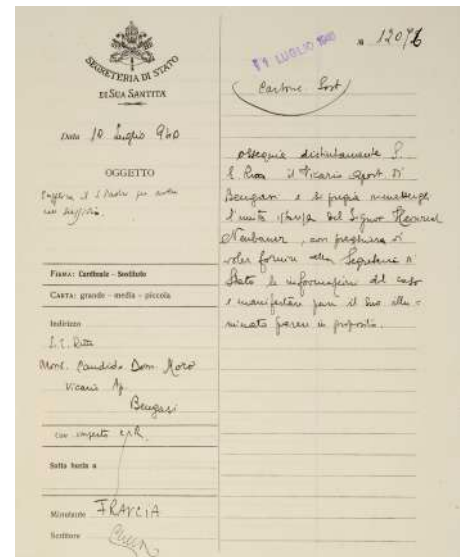
also directly involved in the office's charitable work. They wrote diplomatic reports, reports on prison camps, detailed memos on the political, religious and sanitary conditions of the cities - especially the Italian ones - destroyed by bombings. Also interesting are the papers relating to the war chronicles featuring accounts of violence and looting suffered by the civilian population, those concerning negotiations with the military commands of both sides for the declaration of 'open cities' or 'hospital cities' and for the protection of sites, works of art and famous monuments threatened by combat. The volumes also shed light on the assistance offered by the Commission to refugees and displaced persons in Italy in general, and to students and seminarians in particular. The Commission also received many requests for help to emigrate to neutral countries such as Spain, Portugal and Latin America, and with the assistance of the nunciature in Switzerland, it made available large sums of money to obtain transit visas and assist the exiles. Many dossiers describe the mediation work carried out by the Relief Commission between the emigrant populations and their fellow countrymen who remained in the war-torn countries. Numerous documents are dedicated to post-war matters, such as assistance to large masses of displaced persons, respect for the victims and cemeteries of war, the return of institutes, houses, religious and secular structures, the transformation of the functions of the Pontifical Assistance Commission, the appeal in favor of abandoned children, the distri-

bution of medicines, the granting of subsidies for the construction of orphanages, kindergartens, children's villages, shelters for the homeless, the setting up of the Pope's soup kitchens, the organization of summer camps and the allocation of funds to build new churches and oratories, the distribution of books to seminaries, prisons and hospitals, and the allocation of masses, cloth and cassocks to the Italian clergy in need. Every relief effort was inspired and nurtured by Pope Pacelli's profound yet reserved generosity and was given to all without distinction of religion, social status or geographical origin.

The inventory describes the archive as being divided into six original sections classified as *Italians, Foreigners, Race, Miscellaneous, 1949, 1950*, for a total of 586 archival units containing documentation arranged in files.

These volumes of the *Collectanea Archivi Vaticani* provide the scholarly community with numerous and diverse insights into the history of those difficult years with a view to deepening and shedding light on aspects that are still little known or partially understood, and testify to the importance of protecting and preserving the documentary heritage in order to ensure the preservation of historical truth. Mgr Montini himself expressed this in a lucid and far-sighted note dated 20 January 1945 to his collaborator Mgr Brini: "It seems to me that it is always up to us to promote a collection of the spiritual documentation of the war. Who thinks of this? Tomorrow, an anxious and ar-

bitrary literature will lend all kinds of strange and shady interpretations to the great drama; the true, good, pious, healthy, monitory pages of this story will be ignored, because they will be dispersed... what do we, who know that history is a providential event, do to collect the most genuine fragments of its spiritual meaning? And wouldn't it be good if these testimonies could be patiently and carefully sheltered near the great Pastor of souls? We will not be able to do everything, and perhaps not even much; but why not do something?"



AAV, *Segr. Stato, Commissione Soccorsi* 294, fasc. 65, f. 10r

## 2019-2021

### Inventories

The Vatican Archives provide access to the documents they keep not only through printed publications but also, and above all, through the preparation of inventories made available in paper form in the Index Room of the Archives and in digital form on the Archives intranet. Among the inventories for the years 2019-2020, in some cases resuming and updating older description works, we highlight:

*Secretariat of State. Pontifical Charity.* Inventory compiled by Sergio Pagano, Vatican City, March 2019 (AAV, *Index* 1297).

*Sacra Romana Rota. Causae (1939-1958).* Inventory compiled by Enrico Flaiani, Vatican City, February 2020 (AAV, *Index* 1299A).

*Consistorial Congregation. Ponente (1939-1948).* Inventory compiled by Alejandro M. Dieguez, Vatican City, March 2020 (AAV, *Index* 1277A).

*Bonatti (Pietro) Papers.* Inventory compiled by Mgr Stefano Sanchirico, Vatican City, revised October 2020 (AAV, *Index* 1296).

*Archives of the Apostolic Nunciature in Congo (Kinshasa)* (formerly Ap. Delegate in Belgian Congo and Rwanda Urundi 1930-1954). *Archives of the Apostolic Nunciature in Burundi* (1930-1954). *Archives of the Apostolic Nunciature in Rwanda* (1930-1954), Vatican City, November 2020 (AAV, *Index* 1327).

*Archives of the Apostolic Nunciature in Ecuador (1861-1953)* compiled by Sister Lucina Bianchini, F.S.P., June 1982; revised by Sergio Macchiusi, November 2020; additions by Flavia Tudini, December 2020 (AAV, *Index* 1231).

*Archives of the Apostolic Nunciature in Haiti* (1874-1942), compiled by Sister Lucina Bianchi-

ni (...) 1980. Revised by Giorgio Porri, Vatican City, December 2020 (AAV, *Index* 1232).

*Consistorial Congregation. Military chaplains (1926-1936).* List compiled by Luciano Seganti (1990), digital transcription by Luciano Cipriani and Alfredo Tuzi (2006), introduction and addendum by Alejandro Mario Dieguez, December 2020 (AAV, *Index* 1169B).

*Nonantola Collection. Monasterium S. Silvestri de Nonantula.* Inventory compiled by Mgr Giuseppe Gullotta (1953) with coeval notes by Angelo Mercati; digitisation by Daniele D'Incornato (2018); revision and introduction by Barbara Frale (2020), December 2020 (AAV, *Index* 1093).

*Archives of the Apostolic Nunciature in Cuba* (1950-1962). Inventory compiled by Daniele De Marchis, Vatican City, January 2021 (AAV, *Index* 1265A).

*Archives of the Apostolic Nunciature in the Dominican Republic* (1874-1935), compiled by Sister Lucina Bianchini (...) 1980. Revised by Giorgio Porri, Vatican City, January 2021 (AAV, *Index* 1234).

*Apostolic Palace. Castel Gandolfo.* Inventory compiled by Francesca Di Giovanni and Giuseppina Roselli, Vatican City, January 2021 (AAV, *Index* 1248 IV).

*Apostolic Protonotaries (1871-1978).* Inventory compiled by Mgr Stefano Sanchirico, Vatican City, January 2021 (AAV, *Index* 1316A).

*Secretariat of State, Allies Section* (1-30). *Secretariat of State, Migration Allies Section* (1-20). Inventory compiled by Francesca Di Giovanni and Giuseppina Roselli, Vatican City, January 2021 (AAV, *Index* 1332).

### Publications

Three important publications were released in 2019-2020:

Giovanni Coco, *Il labirinto romano. Il filo delle relazioni Chiesa-Stato tra Pio XI, Pacelli e Mussolini (1929-1939)*, I-II, foreword by Emilio Gentile, Vatican City, Vatican Secret Archives, 2019 (Collectanea Archivi Vaticani, 110), pp. cv, 1426, tavv. 16 [ISBN 978-88-98638-12-3].

*L'Archivio della Commissione Soccorsi (1939-1958). Inventario*, I-II, edited by Francesca Di Giovanni e Giuseppina Roselli, Vatican City, Vatican Secret Archives, 2019 (Collectanea Archivi Vaticani, 111), pp. xxvii, 2132 [ISBN 978-88-98638-13-0].

*L'Archivio della Nunziatura Apostolica in Italia*, II (1939-1953), *Inventario*, I-II, edited by Giovanni Castaldo, Vatican City, Vatican Apostolic Archives, 2020 (Collectanea Archivi Vaticani, 112), pp. xx, 1703, tavv. 8 [ISBN 978-88-98638-14-7]. The first volume of the work was published in 2010; a third volume on the nunciature of Giuseppe Fietta (1953-1958) is forthcoming.

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