



Pope Appoints New 'Ambassador' to Stricken Iraqi Catholics

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Vatican City -- Benedict XVI appointed Monsignor Giorgio Lingua as the Holy See's representative to Iraq and Jordan on Saturday. The new apostolic nuncio will begin the position at a time in which the Iraqi Church struggles to find peace.

No stranger to international relations, Msgr. Lingua has been a member of the Vatican's diplomatic corps since 1992. In the last 18 years, the Italian priest has worked at diplomatic posts in the Ivory Coast, the U.S., Italy and Serbia, in addition to serving in the Holy See's Secretariat of State section for relations with states.

Msgr. Lingua was ordained a priest in 1984 and has a license in canon law. Besides Italian, he speaks French, Spanish and English.

He enters the Iraqi nunciature as Church officials in the nation cry out for assistance and protection after the departure of American combat troops. The country, said one official in an interview with Vatican Radio in August, is already unsafe for minority groups, and as U.S. forces are reduced, the situation can only worsen.

Chaldean Auxiliary Bishop Shlemon Warduni of Baghdad said that they will become the "scapegoats" for the three major groups in the country - Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds - after the U.S. withdraws. He added in the August interview, "We desire, we ask, and we scream for peace and security."

Pope Benedict acknowledged the difficult situation in Iraq in his address to welcome the new Iraqi ambassador to the Holy See at the beginning of July. At that time, he called for all the nation's people to unite in their "shared suffering" to build "a just, moral and peaceable environment."

Msgr. Lingua replaces Archbishop Francis Assisi Chullikatt who had held the position for more than four years before being appointed as the Holy See's permanent observer to the United Nations last July.

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