

*Below is a statement from Cardinal Robert Sarah regarding the chronology of his collaboration with Benedict XVI on their book, From the Depths of Our Hearts.*

Statement of His Eminence Robert Cardinal Sarah

January 14, 2020

On the fifth of September last year, after a visit to the *Mater Ecclesiae* monastery where Benedict XVI resides, I wrote to the pope emeritus to ask him if it was possible for him to write a text on the Catholic priesthood, paying special attention to celibacy. I explained to him that I myself had begun reflecting in prayer. I added, "I imagine that you will think that reflections from you would not be opportune because of the polemics that they could potentially stir in the media, but I am convinced that the entire church needs this gift, which could be published at Christmas or at the beginning of 2020.

On September 20, the pope emeritus wrote me to express his thanks and explain that he himself had also begun to write a text on this subject, before even having received my letter, but that his strength no longer allowed him to write a theological text. However, my letter had encouraged him to take up again this long task. He added that he would send me the text when the Italian translation was finished.

On October 12, during the Synod of Bishops on the Amazon, the pope emeritus gave me a long text in confidence, the fruit of his work over the preceding months. In noting the breadth of this writing, in both its substance and its form, I immediately considered that it would not be possible to offer this to a newspaper or to a magazine, taking account of its length and its quality. Therefore, I immediately proposed to the pope the publication of a book which would be an immense good for the church, integrating his own texts as well as mine. Following several exchanges in order to develop the book, on November 19, I finally sent a complete manuscript to the pope emeritus containing, as we had decided jointly, the cover, a common introduction and conclusion, the text of Benedict XVI, and my own text. On November 25, the pope emeritus expressed his great satisfaction concerning the sections prepared in common, and he added that "For my part, I agree that the text should be published in the form which you have planned."

On December 3, I visited the *Mater Ecclesiae* monastery in order to thank the pope emeritus once again for having such great trust in me. I explained to him that our book would be printed over the Christmas holidays, that it would be released Wednesday, January 15, and that, consequently, I would come to bring him the work at the beginning of January after returning from a trip to my homeland.

The polemic which has aimed for several hours to tarnish me in implying that Benedict XVI was not informed of the publication of the book *From the Depths of Our Hearts* is completely despicable. I sincerely forgive those who calumniate me or who desire to put me in opposition to Pope Francis. My attachment to Benedict XVI remains intact, and my filial obedience to Pope Francis absolute.

Robert Cardinal Sarah