

“I have asked God for forgiveness”

On September 18th, 1988, Cardinal Siri concluded the last conversation recorded with the author by saying: “A newly elected Pope — barring a miracle, and the Lord doesn’t do unnecessary miracles — what does he know, poor man, of the task awaiting him? He has to be integrated into it. The question that settles a pontificate is the choice of the Secretary of State, because it is he who must educate the Pope.

“Not all Popes become such after going through the school to become one. The schooling, whether he wants it or not, is completed before the election, when the positions, suitability for the positions, and dedication to the positions, are well matched.

“I say this because I have great remorse. I trust in the forgiveness of the Lord, and therefore I am at peace. During the first two conclaves in which I participated, my candidature was presented by an influential cardinal. He himself told me that all the French were behind him. The others, then, followed the French. At first the Germans held back, but gradually, along the way, joined the rest. I said no, and if you elect me I will say no. I have done wrong, I understand it today. Today? For some years. I did wrong, for I would have avoided carrying out certain actions. I would like to say, but am afraid to say it, making certain mistakes. Therefore I felt great remorse and I have asked the forgiveness of God. I hope God will forgive me.

“In both of these last two conclaves, my name was again put forward, but I didn’t make the same statement I did the other times. I told myself: I can’t do it. What will be, will be. I have gotten out of it well, but in the last conclave, consider this: Wyszynski paid a visit to my secretary, telling him, it is done; you will be the secretary of the Pope.

“I entered the conclave in a state of agony. I remember going to sit in a chair at the back of the Pauline Chapel as one torn. I was in agony. God has rescued me. How? Yes, a cardinal came to tell me what had happened. I cannot talk about it. But believe me. . . I have seen clearly the course of history over these long years; very clearly. And I also think that I have had the appropriate vision to see it. I wore glasses, but I could see it well. Now my desire is to leave this world without disturbing history; therefore others may do that which in conscience they believe. I only ask that no lies are told, and that is enough.”