

# At funeral, Vatican official says nuncio was to get Vatican post

VATICAN CITY – At the end of the funeral for Italian Archbishop Pietro Sambi, the former nuncio to the United States, a Vatican official confirmed that Pope Benedict XVI had been planning to bring the archbishop back to Rome to take up an important post at the Vatican.

Archbishop Giovanni Becciu, who holds the No. 3 position at the Vatican Secretariat of State, said Aug. 2, “The Holy Father wanted to recognize the valid work carried out by his Excellency Monsignor Sambi, especially in the last few years, by calling him to an important position in the Roman curia. But the Lord, in his inscrutable plan, wanted to call this good and faithful servant home.”

Earlier in the summer, Italian media reported Pope Benedict would be giving Archbishop Sambi a Vatican position that would guarantee he would become a cardinal at the next consistory.

The funeral Mass for Archbishop Sambi, 73, who died July 27 at Johns Hopkins Medical Center in Baltimore, was celebrated in a sunny public square in his hometown, Sogliano al Rubicone.

Bishop Francesco Lambiasi of Rimini presided over the Mass and over the archbishop’s burial near his parents in the town cemetery.

The funeral Mass began with the reading of a telegram of condolence from Pope Benedict XVI, who said the archbishop had given “generous service to the Holy See in different countries” during his long service as a Vatican diplomat.

The pope praised the archbishop’s “diligent diplomatic and pastoral activity,” especially “in the Holy Land and, most recently, in the United States where he worked wisely, revealing the giftedness of his intellect and his heart.”

During the homily, Bishop Lambiasi said Archbishop Sambi was a man who lived the values of mercy, faith and mission.

The bishop read from a spiritual testament Archbishop Sambi had written in May and told mourners, “the password to enter into his spiritual testament is ‘mercy,’” because the archbishop’s life was “the story of mercy received and given.”

Speaking at the end of the Mass, Archbishop Becciu expressed his condolences to Archbishop Sambi’s family and to the people of Sogliano al Rubicone, “where he took the first steps of his human and Christian journey,” and to the Diocese of Rimini “where he was formed spiritually and culturally and from where he departed to go to different nations as ambassador of the pope and messenger of the justice and peace of the Gospel.”

He said the archbishop dedicated his entire life to serving God and the church, “working in many difficult places to bring the concern of the church and to share the mysteries of redemption with different peoples, always with an authentic priestly spirit and joyful availability.”

While he worked in Cameroon, Cuba, Algeria and Nicaragua, among other places, the archbishop is best known for “his capable and diligent activity as apostolic nuncio in the Holy Land and in the United States of America, undertaken in difficult times and in complex and delicate social and ecclesial circumstances,” he said.

No matter how difficult the challenge, Archbishop Sambi “showed he was a man of firm and profound faith, a zealous and fervent pastor,” Archbishop Becciu said.