

## **Legates 'a latere'**

This title, which was used as early as the Council of Sardica in 343, refers to a cardinal who has received from the pope the right to represent him as if he were the pope in person. As a rule, this level of solemnity is confined to celebrations or to exceptional gatherings. The mission of such legates is time-limited and characterized by the fact that he is the personal representative of the pope. Inde, legates 'a latere' are sent to enhance the solemnity of celebrations in which the pope cannot personally take part.

In the past, a legate 'a latere' was appointed in the Consistory, whereas today a papal brief gives notification of the appointment. Such legates have precedence over all other cardinals outside Rome and are entitled to the honours due to a sovereign in the countries they visit during their term of office. The staff of legates 'a latere' is composed of clerics and laymen, chosen by the pope and his Master of Ceremonies. The title 'cardinal legate' on its own refers to a cardinal who is not part of the curia who is sent by the pope to preside in his name over a celebration of special importance, such as a eucharistic congress or the consecration of an important sanctuary.

Bernard Ardura