

February 11 holiday marks establishment of Vatican city-state

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February 11 is a holiday at the Vatican, with most offices closed in celebration of the 81st anniversary of the Lateran Accords, which established the sovereign Vatican city-state.

The Lateran accords-- so-called because they were signed in the Lateran Palace-- provided compensation for the Italian seizure of papal lands, guaranteed the independence of the Vatican and established Catholicism as the official religion of Italy. The agreement ended a long conflict between the papacy and the emerging Italian national government, secured the juridical status of the Vatican city-state, and set the terms of relations between the Holy See and secular Italy which have endured, with a few revisions, to this day. The Lateran pacts were signed by two notable historical figures. For the Holy See, the documents were signed by Cardinal Pietro Gasparri, the Secretary of State under Pope Pius XI. The representative of the Italian kingdom was Benito Mussolini.

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