

POPE BENEDICT XVI RESIGNS

Pontificate Marked By Teaching, Call to Return to Faith

By **JOHN THAVIS AND FRANCIS X. ROCCA**

During his nearly eight-year pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI impressed the world as a teacher, guiding Catholics to the sources of the faith and urging modern society not to turn its back on God.

Citing his age and diminishing energy, the 85-year-old pope announced Feb. 11 that he would be resigning effective Feb. 28 and would devote the rest of his life to prayer.

As pastor of the universal Church, he used virtually every medium at his disposal—books and Twitter, sermons and encyclicals—to catechize the faithful on the foundational beliefs and practices of Christianity, ranging from the sermons of St. Augustine to the sign of the cross.

Having served in his 30s as an influential adviser during the 1962-65 Second Vatican Council, he made it a priority as pope to correct what he saw as overly expansive interpretations of Vatican II in favor of readings that stressed the council's continuity with the Church's millennial traditions.

Under his oversight, the Vatican continued to highlight the Church's moral boundaries on issues such as end-of-life medical care, marriage and homosexuality. But the pope's message to society at large focused less on single issues and more on the risk of losing the basic relationship between the human being and the Creator.

He consistently warned the West that unless its secularized society rediscovered religious values, it could not hope to engage in real dialogue with Islamic and other religious cultures.

The German-born pontiff did not try to match the popularity of his predecessor, Pope John Paul II, but the millions of people who came to see him in Rome and abroad came to appreciate his smile, his frequent ad libs and his ability to speak from the heart.

He ended up making 24 trips to six continents and three times presided over World Youth Day mega-gatherings, in Germany in 2005, in Australia in 2008 and in Spain in 2011.

Talking about aging last March when he met the 85-year-old Cuban leader Fidel Castro in Havana, Pope Benedict told him, "Yes, I'm old, but I can still carry out my duties."

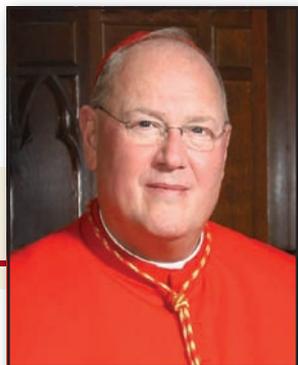
On a historic visit to the United States in 2008, which featured stops in New York and Washington, D.C., he set forth a moral challenge on issues ranging from economic justice to abortion. He also took Church recognition of the priestly sex abuse scandal to a new level, expressing his personal shame at what happened and praying with the victims.

The pope met three times with former U.S. President George



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CNS/Alessia Giuliani



LORD, TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?

Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan

The Gift of Peter: Reflections on the Resignation of Pope Benedict XVI

On Monday, February 11, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, news arrived from Rome that that has not been heard since decades before Columbus sailed for the new world: The Holy Father had renounced his office, declaring that the See of Peter would be vacant on February 28. This news was startling. While a papal resignation is foreseen in canon law, the Catholic imagination is stretched by it. I am grateful for Pope Benedict XVI's lifetime of service to the Church, and admire his humility in voluntarily relinquishing his ministry as Bishop of Rome. At the same time, I know that many Catholics have found the news unsettling. All of us are attached to the Holy Father, the universal shepherd of the earthly flock. Our hearts are therefore full of many sentiments, and with these reflections I invite you to consider how we might receive this news in the light of Christ Jesus, our unique Savior, our great High Priest, the Supreme Pastor of the Church.

A Special Day of Prayer

We began Lent last week on Ash Wednesday, and the Church's liturgy gave us the words of the prophet Joel, inviting us to return to the Lord with all our heart (Joel 2:12-13). Pope Benedict himself made those words the centerpiece of his homily that day: "This 'return to me with all your heart,' then, is a reminder that not only involves the individual but the entire community."

In these days of novelty and uncertainty, when many may be anxious and nervous, we need more than ever to return to the Lord, as individuals and together as the Church. That is why I have asked every parish in the Archdiocese of New York to participate in a novena, nine days of special prayer, between February 20 and February 28, to offer to God our gratitude for the blessing that Pope Benedict has been to the Church, peace and good health in his remaining days, and God's guidance as we await his successor. I have also asked that tomorrow, February 22, the *Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter*, we remember Pope Benedict in a special way with special Masses and Eucharistic adoration.

Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter

This *Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter* is the liturgical feast of the office of Peter in the Church. It commemorates Peter's role as the head of the apostles, the one designated by Jesus Christ to be the universal pastor of the entire Church. Just as here in the Archdiocese of New York, Saint Patrick's Cathedral is the place of the bishop's *cathedra*, or

chair, the symbol of his authority and mission, so too the feast of Peter's chair marks the Holy Father's authority and mission for the Church universal.

It is a suitable feast to give thanks for the gift of Peter's mission in the Church, carried out from the time of Jesus to our own day by Peter and his successors. The news of Pope Benedict stepping down from his office was a powerful reminder of how ancient this office is, given that what we are experiencing has not happened for more than half a millennium! The news invited us to look back over the history of the See of Peter, which has navigated more than

As much as we love the Holy Father, Benedict himself reminded us this week that it is Christ Jesus who remains always the Supreme Pastor of the Church. Popes, bishops, parish priests—yes, even cardinals—all come and go; Jesus alone remains. Peter is the rock to be sure, but it is the Lord Jesus who is the cornerstone and the sure foundation of the Church.

a few storms in her path through history. That in 2013 the Church is preparing to receive a new successor of Peter in peace and serenity is not to be taken for granted. The papacy is not to be taken for granted. Even secular historians marvel at the papacy's endurance; the eyes of faith see in that a testimony to the Holy Spirit's guidance of the Church, from the day that Peter himself preached on that first Pentecost to today.

We need Peter among us. Without the charism of Peter in the Church, we would be tossed about by every gust of wind, every false doctrine, every silly trend (cf. Ephesians 4:14). Today we know that all too well. It was Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, on the day before his own election as Bishop of Rome, who warned us about the "dictatorship of relativism," in preaching on that very passage from St. Paul. The "dictatorship of relativism" rebels against authority and flounders about in a world of nihilism. The Christian soul earnestly seeks the authority of Christ, of His Gospel, of His Church, and of His Vicar on earth.

Peter is the gift of Jesus to the Church, a teacher to hand on the deposit of the faith, and to be a sign of unity. *Ubi Petrus, ibi ecclesia*—Where Peter is, there is the Church—as the ancient expression puts it. From the Acts of the Apostles to World Youth Day, Catholics of every time and

place have recognized the gift of Peter and his successors in their midst. This archdiocese experienced this in a powerful way when Pope Benedict made a pastoral visit here in 2008, celebrating Mass in Saint Patrick's Cathedral and Yankee Stadium, praying at Ground Zero, and uniting with our Jewish neighbors, our disabled, and with our young people, at Saint Joseph's Seminary.

Last year, the Pope chose the *Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter* as the day for the consistory in which others and I were created cardinals. He wished to emphasize the responsibility of the cardinals to protect the gift of Peter in the Church. This is most evident when they gather in the conclave to renew the gift of Peter by electing a new pope. Yet it is also an ongoing task, to collaborate with the Holy Father in his ministry, and to lead the entire Christian people in praying for Peter, in listening to Peter, in following Peter, and in loving Peter. Soon we will have a new Pope to pray for, to listen to, to follow, and to love. Precisely because we prayed for him, because he was so marvelous to listen to, because he was so gentle to follow, because we loved him so much—for all these reasons and more it will be very difficult when Pope Benedict takes his leave from us. There will be many tears on February 28, 8 p.m., Rome time—not just among the cardinals who will bid him farewell, but among people the world over.

Upon this rock I will build my Church

It was the will of the Lord Jesus to build His Church upon the rock of Peter, after his confession of faith at Caesarea Philippi (cf. Matthew 16:18). Throughout all the twists and turns of history, the Church has remained faithful to the primacy of Peter, which is testified to repeatedly in the New Testament and in the teaching of the Fathers of the Church. These teachings were confirmed by the Second Vatican Council. At the same time as these doctrines were taught, the mass media age made the figure of the Holy Father more immediately present in the lives of Catholics. Those of us who grew up in the 1950s remember that portraits of the Pope Pius XII were in every Catholic parish and school, and we were able to listen to his voice on radio broadcasts, and see him on newsreels. Blessed John XXIII began papal travels in Italy, and Pope Paul VI extended that to the very ends of the earth. With Blessed John Paul II and Pope Benedict, it became a routine expectation that the Holy Father would visit us, and the Internet made their words immediately available to us.

(Continued at right)

POPE BENEDICT XVI RESIGNS

(Continued from left)

All of this has increased the profile of the Pope in the lives of Catholics. Consequently, many Catholics found themselves somewhat adrift, perhaps even feeling abandoned, by the news of last Monday. Was the rock of Peter suddenly less stable? To them I would like to address a few words. As much as we love the Holy Father, Benedict himself reminded us this week that it is *Christ Jesus who remains always the Supreme Pastor of the Church*. Popes, bishops, parish priests—yes, even cardinals—all come and go; *Jesus alone remains*. Peter is the rock to be sure, but it is the Lord Jesus who is the cornerstone and the sure foundation of the Church. The news of this past week should be a reminder of that.

A year ago, when I was created a cardinal, I knew in theory that one day a conclave would come. Now it is a reality, and I ask your prayers for me as your archbishop that I might be an instrument of the Lord's grace and providence in the days ahead.

All of us who witnessed the last years of Blessed John Paul II may have been surprised that Benedict would relinquish the office

that his predecessor lived out until he was stripped even of his ability to speak. Pope Benedict's announcement on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes called to mind the last foreign visit by Blessed John Paul II, which was to Lourdes itself in August 2004. It was an occasion of deep emotion, as he spoke of himself as a sick man among the sick. Pope Benedict has chosen, "after repeatedly examining my conscience before God," a different path. Catholics ought not be distressed by that, as if one choice implies that something is lacking in the other. Holiness is not uniformity, and the history of the Church provides many examples of holy men and women taking different decisions—think of Peter and Paul, Augustine and Jerome, Ignatius and Philip Neri, or Mother Theresa and Dorothy Day. Even the saints come to different conclusions, and different circumstances require different responses. So it is possible to recall with admiration the decision of Blessed John Paul II to suffer to the end, and, at the same time, to admire Pope Benedict's humility and courage in laying down, for the good of the Church, the office entrusted to him. And if we remain puzzled as to the will of God in these decisions, then that too can be a gift, for there is nothing more important than to reflect upon the will of God.

I would further add that the personal qualities of Pope Benedict ought to inspire confidence in his decision. He is deeply immersed in the Holy Scriptures and the wisdom of the Fathers, he knows the Catholic tradition better than almost anyone, and he is a disciple who has made heroic sacrifices to serve the Church as she wanted, not as he wanted, first as a bishop and later as pope. Above all, he has a deep friendship with Jesus. All of that should, for those who are unsettled, be a source of confidence and comfort. The gift of Peter in the Church does not mean that each individual successor of Peter corresponds to that gift. But in the popes of recent times, above all in Blessed John Paul II and in Pope Benedict, the whole world has seen transparent holiness. We can trust that.



CNS/Paul Haring

Strengthening the brethren

When Blessed John Paul II spoke of his Petrine office, he most often referred not to the biblical scene at Caesarea Philippi—a high point in Peter's life—but of the scene at the trial of Jesus in the house of the high priest—a low point in Peter's life, the night of the triplex denial. Jesus tells Peter that Satan has demanded to sift all of them like wheat, but that Jesus has prayed for Peter, that his faith may not fail, and when he has turned back to Jesus, his mission will be to strengthen his brothers in the faith (Luke 22:32). That scene, in which our heart breaks for both Jesus and Peter on the night of the denials, reminds us that Peter's mission of strengthening us in the faith is granted to him not because of his own virtues, but because of the prayer of Jesus Himself.

Pope Benedict told us that he no longer has the necessary strength to continue his mission of strengthening the faithful. That decision matured as the fruit of his prayer. The Holy Father knows that the mission given to Peter on the night of the denials must continue and cannot be left aside. And if he lacks the strength to do so himself, then another must take it up.

Simon, son of John, do you love me?

The night of the triplex denial is reversed at dawn on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus asks Peter three times about his love, and Peter responds with humble contrition: *Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you* (cf. John 21). Every vocation in the Church is an invitation to love, and to love means sacrifice for the sake of the beloved. The path of

PAPAL APPLAUSE—At the end of the Ash Wednesday Mass Pope Benedict XVI celebrated Feb. 13 in St. Peter's Basilica, the congregation broke into a standing ovation that lasted well over a minute, ceasing only after the pope, looking surprised but not displeased, said: "Thank you, let's return to prayer." The pope announced Feb. 11 that he will resign at the end of the month.

love leads to the Cross, which is why every vocation is accompanied by the Lord's exhortation to be not afraid.

In these Lenten days we need to pray and offer penance for the man who will be the new successor of Peter among us. That man will soon be asked a question both awesome and awful: *Do you accept your election?* The world may regard those words as a triumph of sorts, but they are put in the Sistine Chapel to a man who knows that they are invitation to walk a *via Crucis*. Pope Benedict referred to those words as an "ax" that fell upon his neck.

Lord, to whom shall we go?

At a critical moment in His preaching ministry, Jesus teaches the people about the Eucharist. After the "bread of life" discourse at the synagogue in Capernaum (cf. John 6), many of His disciples decided to follow Him no longer. Jesus asks the apostles whether they too would like to go away. Peter gives a beautiful response: *Lord, to whom shall we go? You alone have the words of eternal life!*

I chose those words for my episcopal motto—*Ad quem ibimus? To whom shall we go?* When I was told that Blessed John Paul II had chosen me to be a bishop I went to the chapel to pray, and those words came immediately to my heart. In the face of difficulties, in face of uncertainty, in the face of unexpected missions, the Christian disciple always has the response of Peter for inspiration: *Lord, to whom shall we go?*

A year ago, when I was created a cardinal, I knew in theory that one day a conclave would come. Now it is a reality, and I ask your prayers for me as your archbishop that I might be an instrument of the Lord's grace and providence in the days ahead.

In the conclave the cardinals cast their ballots by placing them in a chalice on the altar of the Sistine Chapel. Above the altar is the great fresco of Michelangelo, the Last Judgment. So each cardinal as he ascends the steps to cast his ballot has before his eyes the immense figure of Christ the Judge. The cardinals literally have to go toward the Lord Jesus at this solemn moment. It is our task in these days to go to the Lord more frequently and more insistently in our prayer. *Lord, to whom shall we go?* There will be many other voices, from the world, and even from enemies of the Church, offering advice on how we should conduct ourselves in the conclave. I ask you to pray for me that, in the midst of all the conflicting voices, I go to the Lord Himself, ascending those steps in a way that will be pleasing to Him on the day of my death and judgment.

With my anticipated gratitude for your generous response to my invitation, I conclude with a succinct Latin prayer that expresses well what it is in our hearts in these days. *Omnis cum Petro, ad Jesum per Mariam. All with Peter, to Jesus through Mary!*

Pope Shows Signs of Aging, But Vatican Reports No Illness

From the moment he was elected pope at the age of 78 in 2005, Pope Benedict XVI has kept a schedule that appeared light compared to that of Blessed John Paul II, but busy for a man who already had a pacemaker and who wanted to retire to study, write and pray when he turned 75.

Announcing Feb. 11 that he would resign at the end of the month, Pope Benedict, 85, said, "I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry."

Speaking to reporters after the pope's announcement, Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, told reporters the pope was not ill, but made the decision because of his declining strength due to his age.

When he was elected in 2005, he was said to have told his fellow cardinals that his would not be a long papacy like that of his predecessor, who held the office for more than 26 years.

The pope recognized his limits with "a lucidity and courage and sincerity that are absolutely admirable," Father Lombardi said.

Meeting reporters again Feb. 12, Father Lombardi confirmed that Pope Benedict had gone to a private health clinic in Rome about three months ago to have the batteries changed on his pacemaker. It was a simple, routine procedure and had no influence on the pope's decision to resign.

Father Lombardi said the pope had had the pacemaker put in several years before his election. A Vatican reporter, who had followed the career of the then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, said the pacemaker was put in in the 1990s at Rome's Gemelli Hospital.

Pope Benedict often has seemed tired, with large, dark circles under his eyes during especially busy periods of public litur-



CNS photo/L'O sservatore Romano via Reuters

gies and audiences.

In October 2011, Pope Benedict began riding a mobile platform in liturgical processions. At the time, Father Lombardi said it was "solely to lighten the burden" of processions, although he acknowledged the pope had been experiencing the kind of joint pain normal for a man his age. Just a few months later, the pope began using a cane to walk, although it often looks like he is carrying it, not relying on it, for support.

However, just in the past few months when celebrating Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, the pope no longer walks all the way around the altar when using incense at the beginning of Mass; instead he raises the thurible only from the back of the altar. And at the end of a Mass Feb. 2, the pope lost his grip on his crosier; as it fell, Msgr. Guido Marini, the papal master of liturgical ceremonies, caught it.

When he was elected in 2005, he was said to have told his fellow cardinals that his would not be a long papacy like that of his predecessor, who held the office for more than 26 years.

The German author and journalist Peter Seewald asked Pope Benedict in the summer of 2010 whether he was considering resigning then, a time when new reports of clerical sexual abuse were being published in several European countries.

"When the danger is great, one must not run away. For that reason, now is certainly

ANNOUNCEMENT—Pope Benedict XVI attends a Feb. 11 meeting with cardinals at the Vatican announcing that he will resign at the end of the month. The 85-year-old pontiff said he no longer has the energy to exercise his ministry over the universal church.

not the time to resign," he told Seewald, who published the remarks in the book, "Light of the World: The Pope, the Church and the Signs of the Times."

The pope did tell him, though, "one can resign at a peaceful moment or when one simply cannot go on."

"But one must not run away from danger and say that someone else should do it," the pope said.

In another section of the book, the pope told Seewald: "If a pope clearly realizes that he is no longer physically, psychologically and spiritually capable of handling the duties of his office, then he has a right and, under some circumstances, also an obligation to resign."

While no pope has resigned since Pope Gregory XII in 1415, even as a cardinal Pope Benedict did not rule out the possibility.

Even before Blessed John Paul's health became critical, reporters asked the then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger whether he thought Pope John Paul could resign. "If he were to see that he absolutely could not (continue), then he certainly would resign," he said.

—CNS

Pope Benedict XVI,
Thank you for your
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Historic Pontificate For More Than Its Ending

It's been a whirlwind since Pope Benedict XVI announced his resignation Feb. 11, becoming the first pope in nearly 600 years to do so. The announcement has brought forward a raft of questions, both large and small.

To help sort through some of mine, and hopefully clarify things for our readers, I spoke this week with Father Thomas Lynch, the pastor of Our Lady of Angels parish in the Bronx and a former professor of Church history at St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie.



JOHN WOODS

Editor's Report

"In a way this is really unprecedented," said Father Lynch of Pope Benedict's resignation. He said he shares that opinion with one of today's eminent Church historians, Eamon Duffy, a professor of the history of Christian-

ity at the University of Cambridge.

The Bronx pastor said it is important to note that Pope Benedict came to his decision of his own accord, without being pressured by others. "He realized for the good of the Church, he was going to resign and dedicate his life to prayer," Father Lynch said.

"This is new and exciting (for historians)," Father Lynch

said. "We haven't been here before."

Of course it isn't the first time that a pope has resigned, even if the last time was 1415 when Pope Gregory XII's forced abdication ended the Western Schism.

More than a hundred years earlier, in 1294, Pope Celestine V, who was later canonized, resigned after a rocky five-month pontificate. According to a report by Catholic News Service, Celestine did issue a papal bull establishing rules for an abdication, and defined how papal conclaves would operate. He was also imprisoned by his successor, Pope Boniface VIII.

Celestine's contributions were not lost on Pope Benedict XVI, who declared a Celestine Year beginning in August 2009 to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the saint's birth. According to the CNS story, Benedict twice visited the saint's relics during his pontificate.

While it may be a bit premature to apply the wide lens of history to Pope Benedict's papacy, Father Lynch did point to a few elements that are striking right now.

Though he admits he is far from the first to say it, Father Lynch said that Pope Benedict's pontificate was in many ways a logical second stage or extension of Blessed John Paul II's. If his predecessor was the great philosopher, then Pope Benedict used his nearly eight years as pope to lay out the theological teachings behind Pope John Paul's philosophy.

That trait surfaced from the very beginning of Benedict's papacy, Father Lynch said, when he amplified John Paul's widely cited words, "Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ."

"If we let Christ enter fully into our lives, if we open ourselves totally to Him, are we not afraid that He might take something away from us?...?" Pope Benedict said in his first homily as pope. "And once again the Pope said: No! If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. No! Only in this friendship do we experience beauty and liberation..."

Father Lynch said, "It's beautiful theology. Too many of us are afraid. We can be very afraid like the first disciples."

As a pastor, Father Lynch said he truly appreciated the messages Pope Benedict communicated in his weekly Wednesday audiences at the Vatican. "They were so rich theologically," he said.

He explained that the pontiff's style of teaching and writing did not fit neatly into today's "sound-bite" world, but "they got you thinking."

Asked whether he would like to prognosticate about who the next pontiff might be, Father Lynch declined, citing the wise comment of a great Church historian, the late Msgr. John Tracy Ellis, who said that historians should never play the role of prophet.



Keep alive the flame of divine love!

— Pope Benedict XVI, to the people of the Middle East, September 2012

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POPE BENEDICT XVI RESIGNS

HIS PONTIFICATE IN REVIEW

(Continued from Page 15)

W. Bush, including a formal visit to the White House, and the two leaders found wide areas of agreement on pro-life and family issues. When President Barack Obama was elected, the pontiff sent him a warmly worded telegram and a promise of his prayers, but when they met at the Vatican the next year, the pope spoke clearly about the Church's objections to the administration's policies on several life issues, including abortion and embryonic stem cell research.

Pope Benedict was 78 and in apparent good health when elected April 19, 2005, but was said to have told his fellow cardinals that his would not be a long papacy like that of his predecessor. In an interview with the German author Peter Seewald in 2010, Pope Benedict said: "If a pope clearly realizes that he is no longer physically, psychologically and spiritually capable of handling the duties of his office, then he has a right and, under some circumstances, also an obligation to resign."

Joseph Ratzinger was born in the Bavarian town of Markt am Inn, the third and youngest child of a police officer, Joseph Sr., and his wife, Maria. Young Joseph joined his brother, Georg, at a minor seminary in 1939.

Like other young students, he was automatically enrolled in the Hitler Youth program, but soon stopped going to meetings. During World War II, he was conscripted into the army, and in the spring of 1945 he deserted his unit and returned home, spending a few months in an Allied prisoner-of-war camp. He returned to the seminary late in 1945 and was ordained six years later, along with his brother.

In a meeting with young people in 2006, the pope said witnessing the brutality of the Nazi regime helped convince him to become a priest. But he also had to overcome some doubts, he said. For one thing, he asked himself whether he "could faithfully live celibacy" his entire life. He also recognized that his real leanings were toward theology and wondered whether he had the qualities of a good pastor and the ability "to be simple with the simple people."

After a short stint as a parish priest, the future pope began a teaching career and built a reputation as one of the Church's foremost theologians. At Vatican II, he made important contributions as a theological expert and embraced the council's early work. But he began to have misgivings about an emerging anti-Roman bias, the idea of a "Church from below" run on a parliamentary model, and the direction of theological research in the Church—criticism that would become even sharper in later years.

In 1977, Pope Paul VI named him archbishop of Munich and Freising, and four years later Pope John Paul called him to head the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, where he wielded great influence on issues such as liberation theology, dissent from Church teachings and pressure for women's ordination. Serving in this role for nearly a quarter century, Cardinal Ratzinger earned a reputation in some quarters as a sort of grand inquisitor, seeking to stamp out independent thinking, an image belied by his passion for debate with thinkers inside and outside the Church.

As the newly elected pope in 2005, he explained that he took the name Benedict to evoke the memory of Pope Benedict XV, a "courageous prophet of peace" during World War I, and said he wanted to place his ministry at the service of reconciliation and harmony among peoples.

The new pope spent most of his energy writing and preaching, in encyclicals, letters, messages, homilies and talks that eventually numbered more than a thousand.



Benedict XVI

2005	April 19	German Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, 78, elected pope, takes the name Benedict XVI
	Dec. 22	Meeting with top aides, insists the teaching of the Second Vatican Council must be read in continuity with the church's tradition
2006	Sept. 12	In a speech at University of Regensburg, Germany, cites a historical criticism of violence in Islam, setting off consternation and protests
	Nov. 30	Stands with Muslim leader in Turkey's Blue Mosque; says he prayed God would help all believers see each other as brothers and sisters
2007	April 16	First of what would be his three-volume work, "Jesus of Nazareth," goes on sale and is an immediate commercial success
	May 27	In letter to Catholics in China, criticizes government restrictions on religion and urges reconciliation among the country's Catholic communities
	July 7	Issues apostolic letter permitting wider use of pre-Vatican II Mass
2008	April 15-20	Journeys to Washington, New York and the United Nations, meets victims of clerical sex abuse for first time
	July 12-21	Travels to Sydney for World Youth Day
2009	Jan. 21	With his approval, Vatican lifts the excommunication of four traditionalist bishops from the Society of St. Pius X to clear the way for reconciliation talks with the group
	May 8-15	Travels to Holy Land, stopping in Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian territories
	Nov. 4	With "Anglicanorum coetibus," establishes personal ordinariates for Anglicans entering into full communion with Catholic Church
2010	July 15	With his approval, Vatican releases streamlined procedures for handling accusations of clerical sexual abuse and removing those found guilty from priesthood
2011	May 1	Beatifies his predecessor, Pope John Paul II
2012	March 23-28	Visits Mexico and Cuba
	Dec. 22	After nearly a year of Vatican scandal over leaked documents and the papal butler being convicted of theft, the pope visits the butler in jail and pardons him
2013	Feb. 11	Announces his resignation, becoming the first pope to do so in nearly 600 years



CNS photos/Alessia Giuliani and Paul Haring

barracks, pardoned him just before Christmas.

The idea that God is disappearing from the human horizon and that humanity is losing its bearings with "evident destructive effects" was a theme Pope Benedict saw as common ground for dialogue between Christians and Muslims. He voiced the Church's opposition to a potential "clash of civilizations" in which religion was seen as a defining difference. But sometimes his words drew as much criticism as praise, particularly among Muslims who felt the pope was unfairly questioning the foundations of their religion.

Pope Benedict also visited synagogues, in Germany in 2005, in New York in 2008 and in Rome in 2010, and his strong condemnations of anti-Semitism won the appreciation of many Jewish leaders. However, tensions arose in 2008 over the wording of a prayer for Jewish conversion, which the pope had revised for use in the Tridentine-rite Good Friday liturgy.

The pope considered Christian unity one of his priorities, and he took steps to improve dialogue with Orthodox churches in particular.

The fate of Christian minorities around the world was one of the pope's major concerns, especially in places such as Iraq and other predominantly Muslim countries. The pope strongly defended the right to religious freedom in his speech to the United Nations in 2008.

In early 2007, the pope turned his attention to China, convening a meeting of Church experts to discuss ways to bring unity to the Church and gain concessions from the communist government.

A papal letter to Chinese Catholics a few months later encouraged bold new steps to bridge the gap between Catholics registered with the government-controlled Catholic Patriotic Association and the so-called underground communities, whose leaders were frequently harassed or imprisoned by the authorities.

The pope's letter also issued a broad invitation to government authorities for dialogue on the appointment of bishops and other topics. A number of bishops were subsequently ordained with both papal and government approval, before the government returned to the practice of choosing bishops without the Vatican's approval.

One of the most important documents issued under Pope Benedict, and with his explicit approval, was a doctrinal congregation instruction on bioethics in 2008. The document warned that some developments in stem-cell research, gene therapy and embryonic experimentation violate moral principles and reflect an attempt by man to "take the place of his Creator."

His first encyclical, "Deus Caritas Est" ("God Is Love,"), issued in 2005, reminded all people that God loves them and called on them to share that love in a personal and social way. Two years later, his second encyclical, "Spe Salvi" (on Christian hope), warned that without faith in God, humanity lies at the mercy of ideologies that can lead to "the greatest forms of cruelty and violations of justice." His third encyclical, "Caritas in Veritate" ("Charity in Truth") was released in 2009 and said ethical values are needed to overcome the current global economic crisis as well as to eradicate hunger and promote the real development of all the world's peoples.

His three-volume work, "Jesus of Nazareth," published between 2007 and 2012 in several languages, emphasized that Christ must be understood as the Son of God on a divine mission, not as a mere moralist or social reformer. The books argued that while Christ did not bring a blueprint for social

Surprising those who had expected a by-the-book pontificate from a man who had spent more than 23 years as the Vatican's chief doctrinal official, Pope Benedict emphasized that Christianity was a religion of love and not a religion of rules.

He opened a Year of Faith this past October and presided over a synod focusing on the new evangelization and a revival of Christian faith in the secular West, one of the priorities of his pontificate.

Some of Pope Benedict's most memorable statements came when he applied simple Gospel values to social issues, such as the protection of human life, the environment and economics.

When the global financial crisis worsened in 2008, for example, the pope insisted that financial institutions must put people before profits. He also reminded people that modern ideals of money and material success are passing realities.

Pope Benedict's outreach to traditionalist Catholics brought him some opposition and criticism. In 2007, he widened the possible use of the Tridentine Mass and began introducing touches of antiquity in his own liturgies, including the requirement of kneeling when receiving Communion from the pope.

For much of the year preceding Pope Benedict's resignation, press coverage of the Vatican was dominated by the so-called "VatiLeaks" affair, a scandal about confidential and sometimes embarrassing confidential documents that had been provided to the press, allegedly by the pope's own butler, Paolo Gabriele. A Vatican court found Gabriele guilty in October and sentenced him to 18 months in jail. Pope Benedict, meeting his former aide outside his cell in the Vatican police

(Continued on Page 24)

Witnessing 'Christ's Hope' Among Us



PILGRIM POPE—Pope Benedict XVI's visit to New York, one leg of his April 2008 apostolic journey to America, took place nearly five years ago, but it remains fresh in the memory of Catholic New Yorkers. Clockwise, from top right, the pontiff electrifies the congregation that fills Yankee Stadium for the Papal Mass; Pope Benedict and Cardinal Egan bow their heads in prayer at Ground Zero, where 2,750 people died on Sept. 11, 2001, in the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center; the pope tenderly holds the hands of one of the young children with disabilities whom he blessed in the chapel at St. Joseph's Seminary in Dunwoodie; and the Holy Father, with Cardinal Egan at his side, extends his arms in greeting upon his arrival at the seminary.



Twelve to Watch as Cardinals Gather in Rome

Wherever journalists and bookmakers may be getting the names on their lists of top candidates for the next pope, it's not from the cardinals who will actually vote in the election. Both custom and canon law forbid the cardinals to discuss the matter in such detail with outsiders.

Moreover, the true "papabili"—literally, pope-ables—are likely to emerge only after all the worlds' cardinals—not just the 117 who will be under 80 and eligible to vote—begin meeting at the Vatican in the coming days.

One thing is already clear, however. Because of their experience and the esteem they enjoy among their peers, certain cardinals are likely to serve as trusted advisers to the rest in the discussions and election.

Here, in alphabetical order, are 12 cardinals expected to have a major voice in the deliberations:

- Conventional wisdom has long held that the cardinals will never elect an American pope, lest the leadership of the Church appear to be linked with the United States' economic and geopolitical dominance. But Cardinal Dolan, 63, charmed and impressed many in the College of Cardinals in February 2012 when he delivered the main presentation at a meeting Pope Benedict XVI had called to discuss the new evangelization. The pope himself praised the New York archbishop's presentation on how to revive the faith in increasingly secular societies as "enthusiastic, joyful and profound."

- Hungarian Cardinal Peter Erdo of Esztergom-Budapest, 60, is a major figure among his peers in Europe, the Church's traditional heartland and the region of more than half the cardinal electors. He was elected to a second five-year term as president of the Council of European Episcopal Conferences in 2011.

- Canadian Cardinal Marc Ouellet, 68, is a member of the Society of St. Sulpice, whose members are, strictly speaking, diocesan priests but which is normally considered a religious order. He is one of only 19 members of religious orders among the cardinal electors, who are overwhelmingly diocesan clergy. He is prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, which coordinates the nomination of bishops in Latin-rite dioceses around the world, so his work has brought him into frequent contact with most of his fellow cardinal-electors. As president of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, he is well acquainted with one of the Church's largest and fastest-growing regions. The former archbishop of Quebec, who taught at the John Paul II Institute at Rome's Pontifical Lateran University, is also a well-respected theologian.

- Italian Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, 70, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, was the prelate chosen by Pope Benedict to lead his 2013 Lenten retreat. The cardinal, a scholar with little direct pastoral experience, has been leading the universal Church's efforts to develop a non-confrontational dialogue with non-believers, trying to make Christianity intelligible to the modern mind and build a reason-based consensus on key moral issues.

- Another Salesian, Honduran Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, 70, is president of Caritas Internationalis, the umbrella group of national Catholic charities around the world. The multilingual cardinal aroused controversy in 2002 with remarks about clergy sex abuse that struck some as overly defensive of accused priests and the Church's past policies.

- Argentine Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, 69, was born to



Cardinal Dolan



Cardinal Marc Ouellet



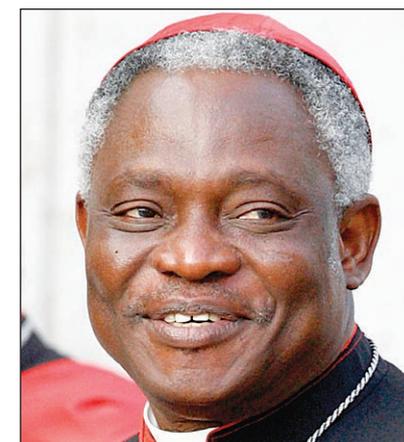
Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez



Cardinal Angelo Scola



Cardinal Luis Tagle



Cardinal Peter Turkson

parents of Italian descent and has maintained strong ties with both Italy and Argentina. As prefect of the Congregation for Eastern Churches, he is familiar with challenges facing Eastern Catholics and the pastoral concerns of the Church in the Middle East. He has worked in the Vatican for more than a dozen years, and previously served as nuncio to Venezuela and then Mexico.

- Guinean Cardinal Robert Sarah, 67, is president of the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum," which promotes Catholic charitable giving. A Scripture scholar and former diocesan bishop, he served nine years as secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

- Another leading voice of the South American Church is 63-year-old Brazilian Cardinal Odilo Scherer of Sao Paulo, Brazil, the country's largest diocese. The son of German immigrants, he also has strong ties to Rome. He studied philosophy and theology at Rome's Pontifical Brazilian College and Pontifical Gregorian University and worked as an official of the Congregation for Bishops from 1994 to 2001.

- Austrian Cardinal Christoph Schonborn, 68, has known Pope Benedict for nearly 40 years, having studied under him at the University of Regensburg, Germany. Even before his former professor became Pope, the cardinal was well known at the Vatican and in wider Church circles. He was invited in 1996 to preach Blessed John Paul II's Lenten retreat and was the main editor of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, published in 1992. As the Church in Austria has struggled with declining attendance and calls for change in

some of its most basic disciplines, Cardinal Schonborn's response has received increasing attention, with some praising his prudence and pastoral sensitivity, and others calling for more decisive action.

- Italian Cardinal Angelo Scola, 71, is the archbishop of Milan, the archdiocese led by both Popes Pius XI and Paul VI when they were elected. He previously served as patriarch of Venice, once the see of Blessed John XXIII. The cardinal, a respected academic theologian rather than a popular preacher, has longstanding ties to one of the new Church movements, Communion and Liberation, which is based in his archdiocese.

- Philippine Cardinal Luis Tagle of Manila, 55, is one of the youngest and newest members of the College of Cardinals, having received his red hat in November. This leader of one of the world's fastest-growing churches is a popular speaker with a doctorate in systematic theology and has served on the International Theological Commission, an advisory body to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

- Cardinal Peter Turkson is the 64-year-old former archbishop of Cape Coast, Ghana, and current president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. The cardinal, a biblical scholar who was active in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, aroused controversy in 2011 with a proposal for a "world central bank" to regulate the global financial industry, and then in October 2012 when he showed bishops at the Vatican a video warning about the growth of Muslim populations in Europe.

—CMS

Pope's Resignation Sets in Motion a Period of Transition

While the surprise resignation of Pope Benedict XVI is a first for the Church in centuries, it also leads to a complicated period of transition that ends in the election of a new pope.

Regulated by ancient traditions and recent rules, the period between popes—known by the Latin term “interregnum”—will begin exactly at 8 p.m. Rome time Feb. 28, a date and time Pope Benedict stipulated in a declaration he made Feb. 11 for when the See of Rome and the See of St. Peter will be vacant.

Normally the interregnum begins with a pope's death and is followed by a period of mourning.

This time the pope will resign from his ministry and spend a short period of prayer and reflection at the papal summer villa in Castel Gandolfo, south of Rome, before moving to a monastery at the Vatican.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, confirmed Feb. 16 that top cardinals and canon lawyers at the Vatican are studying the possibility of beginning the conclave to elect a new pope before March 15.

But only the cardinals can announce the exact date the conclave will begin, he told reporters.

Under the rules established in the apostolic constitution “Universi Dominici Gregis” on the vacancy of the papacy and the election of a pope, cardinals in Rome “must wait 15 full days for those who are absent” before they can enter into a conclave and begin the process of electing a new pope.

However, Pope Benedict XVI has scheduled a farewell meeting with cardinals the morning of Feb. 28—just before he leaves office—and many of the world's cardinals are expected to be present.

In addition, the fact that Pope Benedict announced his resignation Feb. 11 has given the cardinals plenty of time to make their arrangements to get to Rome. Therefore, the question has arisen: Does the 15-day rule apply if all the cardinals are in Rome before that?

“One could interpret the constitution in a way, precisely, that would say there is no longer a reason to wait,” Father Lombardi said.

The rules also say: “Should doubts arise concerning the prescriptions contained in this constitution, or concerning the manner of putting them into effect, I decree that all power of issuing a judgment in this regard belongs to the College of Cardinals, to which I grant the faculty of interpreting doubtful or controverted points.”

The rules governing the interregnum are matters of Church law, not dogma.

The apostolic constitution “Universi Dominici Gregis” confirms that as long as the Holy See is vacant, the universal Church is governed by the College of Cardinals, which cannot, however, make decisions normally reserved to the pope. Such matters must be postponed until the new pope is elected.

Until there is a pope, the Roman Curia—the Vatican's network of administrative offices—loses most of its cardinal supervisors and cannot handle any new business.

The College of Cardinals is to deal solely with “ordinary business and matters which cannot be postponed.” At present, there are 209 cardinals, and all of them are asked to meet in Rome to help administer the transition period.

The College of Cardinals does this through two structures: a general congregation, in which all the cardinals are to meet daily; and a particular four-member congregation, consisting of the chamberlain of the Holy Roman Church, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, and a rotating team of three cardinal assistants.

Only those cardinals under age 80 will be eligible to vote in the coming conclave. Cardinals who are age 80 or over by the time the “sede vacante” begins Feb. 28 are excluded from the closed-door proceedings. There will be 117 cardinal-electors on that date.

As chamberlain, Cardinal Bertone is to administer the goods and temporal rights of the Holy See until the election of a new pope. Meanwhile, the dean of the College of Cardinals, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, is charged with making preparations for a conclave to elect a new pope, and the cardinals must set the time for the conclave to start.

On the day set for entry into the conclave, the cardinal-electors assemble in St. Peter's Basilica to attend morning Mass. In the afternoon, they walk in procession to the Sistine Chapel, located just to the north of St. Peter's.

The voting may begin that afternoon with one ballot; on following days, normally two ballots are held in the morning and two in the afternoon.

A pope is elected when he obtains a two-thirds majority, reflecting a change Pope Benedict established in 2007 that effectively undid a more flexible procedure introduced by Blessed John Paul.

According to the new rule, the two-thirds-majority rule cannot be set aside even when cardinal-electors are at an impasse.

If the cardinals are deadlocked after 13 days, the cardinals pause for a day of prayer, reflection and dialogue, then move to runoff ballots between the two leading candidates. A papal

election will continue to require a majority of two-thirds of the voting cardinals.

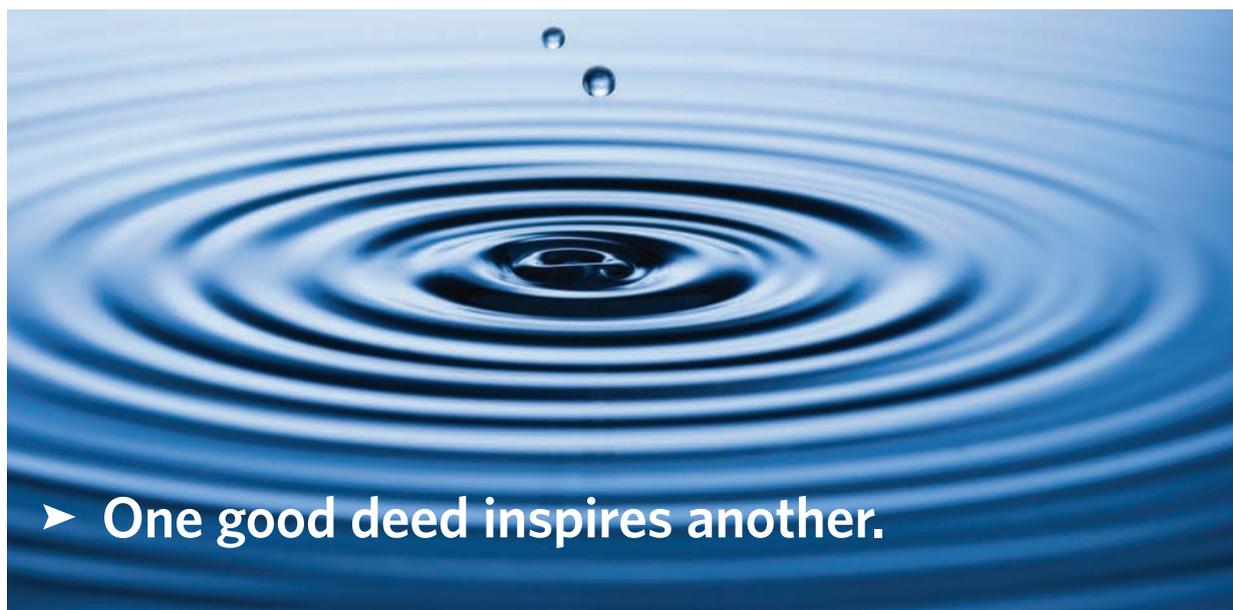
All voting is secret, in writing, on paper ballots, which are deposited in a receptacle by each elector, then counted. Ballots are taken to any cardinals residing at the Domus Sanctae Marthae but who are too sick to come to the Sistine Chapel.

After each morning and afternoon round of voting, the ballots are burned. By tradition but not by rule, they are burned with special chemicals to produce the black smoke signifying an inconclusive vote, or white smoke if a new pope was elected. Due to confusion in the past as people in St. Peter's Square tried to determine what color smoke was coming out of the Sistine Chapel smokestack, the basilica's bell is also rung to confirm a successful election.

Once a new pope has been elected, he is asked if he accepts the office—he is encouraged but not bound to do so by the current rules—and is asked to choose a name.

Traditionally, the senior member of the cardinal deacons—currently Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, 69—announces the successful election results from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica. After the new pope has donned papal robes, he proceeds to the balcony, where he greets the public and offers his first blessing.

At a time designated by the pope, usually a few days later, he officially opens his ministry with an investiture Mass at St. Peter's. The new pope receives a pallium, or stole, in recognition of his authority. —CNS



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POPE BENEDICT XVI RESIGNS

OFFICIAL STATEMENTS

STATEMENT OF CARDINAL DOLAN

Cardinal Dolan, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, issued this statement after learning of the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI on Feb. 11.

The Holy Father brought the tender heart of a pastor, the incisive mind of a scholar and the confidence of a soul united with His God in all he did. His resignation is but another sign of his great care for the Church. We are sad that he will be resigning but grateful for his eight years of selfless leadership as successor of St. Peter.

Though 78 when he elected pope in 2005, he set out to meet his people—and they were of all faiths—all over the world. He visited the religiously threatened—Jews, Muslims and Christians in the war-torn Middle East, the desperately poor in Africa, and the world's youth gathered to meet him in Australia, Germany and Spain.

He delighted our beloved United States of America when he visited Washington and New York in 2008. As a favored statesman he greeted notables at the White House. As a spiritual leader he led the Catholic community in prayer at Nationals Park, Yankee Stadium and St. Patrick's Cathedral. As a pastor feeling pain in a stirring, private meeting at the Vatican nunciature in Washington, he brought a listening heart to

SAYING GOODBYE—People watch from St. Peter's Square as Pope Benedict XVI leads the Angelus from the window of his apartment at the Vatican Feb. 17.

victims of sexual abuse by clerics.

Pope Benedict often cited the significance of eternal truths and he warned of a dictatorship of relativism. Some values, such as human life, stand out above all others, he taught again and again. It is a message for eternity.

He unified Catholics and reached out to schismatic groups in hopes of drawing them back to the Church. More unites us than divides us, he said by word and deed. That message is for eternity.

He spoke for the world's poor when he visited them and wrote of equality among nations in his peace messages and encyclicals. He pleaded for a more equitable share of world resources and for a respect for God's creation in nature.

Those who met him, heard him speak and read his clear, profound writings found themselves moved and changed. In all he said and did, he urged people everywhere to know and have a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

The occasion of his resignation stands as an important moment in our lives as citizens of the world. Our experience



CNS photo/Alessandro Bianchi, Reuters

impels us to thank God for the gift of Pope Benedict. Our hope impels us to pray that the College of Cardinals under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit choose a worthy successor to meet the challenges present in today's world.

His Pontificate...

(Continued from Page 20)

progress, he did bring a new vision based on love that challenges the evils of today's world—from the brutality of totalitarian regimes to the "cruelty of capitalism."

Some of Pope Benedict's longest and most-revealing encounters were with priests, in Rome and elsewhere. He frequently spoke of the importance of the formation of priestly candidates, and in 2005 he approved the release of a long-awaited document barring those with deep-seated homosexual tendencies from the priesthood.

Although he was expected to reverse a trend set by Pope John Paul, Pope Benedict did not slow the Vatican's saint-making machinery. While Pope Benedict asked Vatican experts to be more selective in picking candidates for sainthood, he ended up canonizing 44 new saints, including the

Native American Kateri Tekakwitha and Mother Marianne Cope of Molokai, Hawaii, both of whom have New York connections.

Pope Benedict named 90 new cardinals, including Cardinal Dolan; 67 of those he named are still under the age of 80 and therefore eligible to vote in the conclave to elect his successor.

As of Feb. 28, the day his papacy ends, Pope Benedict's appointments will represent just above 57 percent of the 117 cardinals under 80 that day.

In mid-2007, the pope made an important change in the conclave procedure, restoring the traditional rule that requires a two-thirds majority for papal election. In doing so, he reversed a modification made by Pope John Paul, who had allowed the possibility of moving to a simple majority vote in the case of a deadlocked conclave.

Contributing to this story was Cindy Wooden at the Vatican.

—CNS

STATEMENT OF CARDINAL EGAN

Cardinal Egan, Archbishop Emeritus, issued the following statement on Feb. 11.

The announcement by His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, that for reasons of advanced age he has decided to retire from his service as Supreme Pontiff is yet another proof of his total dedication to the Church of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. One of the most distinguished theologians of our time and a pastor of souls who has given himself to the People of God with unlimited commitment, he and his distinguished leadership will be sorely missed.

When I was consecrated a bishop in Rome in 1985, the Holy Father, at that time Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, kindly participated in the liturgy; and when I left Rome to travel to New York two months later, he returned to the Eternal City from a spiritual retreat to wish me well and assure me of his prayers. Thus it is that I have just written him a warm, filial letter to profess my unlimited loyalty and promise to keep him in my Masses and prayers throughout the years that lie ahead.



ST. JOSEPH'S SEMINARY
DUNWOODIE

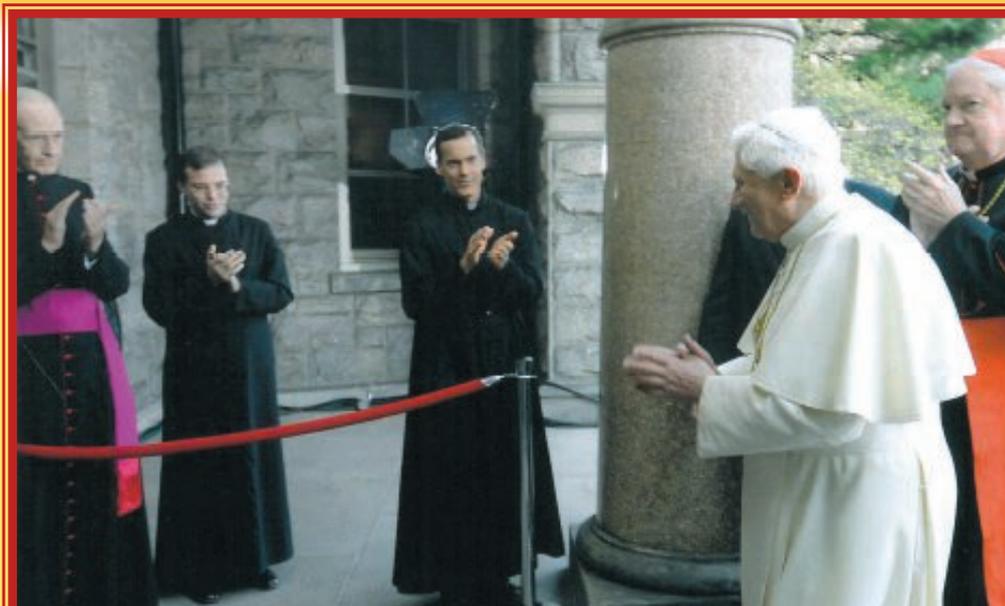
THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, SEMINARIANS, STUDENTS OF THE INSTITUTE OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES, FACULTY, AND STAFF OF ST. JOSEPH'S SEMINARY EXTEND A SINCERE, HEARTFELT AND PRAYERFUL WORD OF THANKS TO HIS HOLINESS, POPE BENEDICT, XVI FOR THE LIVING WITNESS AND INTEGRATION OF A LIFE OF FAITH, HUMILITY, DEDICATION TO SCHOLARSHIP, LOVE FOR THE CHURCH, AND CHARITY TOWARD ALL!

ON SATURDAY, APRIL 19, 2008, DURING HIS APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO THE UNITED STATES, HE VISITED OUR SEMINARY. DURING HIS VISIT HE GREETED YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES IN OUR CHAPEL, VISITED WITH THE LATE CARDINAL AVERY DULLES, S.J., AND ADDRESSED SEMINARIANS AND A LARGE GATHERING OF 25,000 YOUNG PEOPLE WHO GATHERED ON OUR ATHLETIC FIELDS!

HE REMINDED US THAT:

"YOU ARE CHRIST'S DISCIPLES TODAY. SHINE HIS LIGHT UPON THIS GREAT CITY AND BEYOND ..."

(BENEDICT XVI, ST. JOSEPH'S SEMINARY, APRIL 19, 2008)



La Dimisión Del Santo Padre

Sorpresa y conmoción ha generado en el mundo católico el anuncio del Papa Benedicto XVI de renunciar al ejercicio del ministerio como sucesor de San Pedro. Desde hace seis siglos no se producía la renuncia de un Papa, el último en renunciar fue el Papa Gregorio XII, que gobernó a la Iglesia desde 1406 hasta 1415, lo hizo para poner fin a lo que se llamó el Cisma de Occidente.



**PADRE
LORENZO ATO**

Si Escuchas Su Voz

La noticia de la dimisión de Benedicto XVI fue dada a conocer al mundo el día 11 de febrero del presente año (2013). Jefes de Estado y grandes personalidades han expresado su consternación por el anuncio, principalmente aquellos que valoran el ministerio de Benedicto XVI. Muchos católicos no salen de su asombro; otros especulan sobre las posibles causas de la renuncia. Ante todo esto hay que atenernos a lo expresado por el mismo Santo Padre.

Los rumores de una posible dimisión del Papa Benedicto XVI venían desde el mes de septiembre de 2011 por una información publicada por el periodista Antonio Socci en el diario italiano Libero, según la cual el Pontífice estaría pensando en presentar su dimisión en abril del 2012. Tales

rumores fueron desmentidos en aquél entonces por el vocero oficial del Vaticano Federico Lombardi.

Marco Politi, un italiano especialista en temas religiosos, en su libro "Crisis de un Pontificado" también había advertido la posibilidad de la dimisión del Papa por su frágil estado de salud; además, el mismo Benedicto XVI habría admitido en una entrevista concedida a Peter Seewald (su biógrafo oficial) la posibilidad de su renuncia, pues consideraba que un pontífice tiene el deber de retirarse si pierde la fuerza física, psicológica y espiritual para cumplir su misión.

Benedicto XVI quien fue elegido el 19 de abril de 2005 para suceder en el pontificado a Juan Pablo II, ha anunciado oficialmente que dimitirá este próximo 28 de febrero de 2013. Entre las razones aducidas para esta trascendental determinación está su edad avanzada, el decaimiento de sus fuerzas físicas que no le permiten cumplir a cabalidad con el ministerio encomendado.

En el consistorio para algunas causas de canonización (10 de febrero de 2013) el Papa dio el anuncio oficial de su dimisión en estos términos: "Os he convocado a este Consistorio, no sólo para las tres causas de canonización, sino también para comunicaros una decisión de gran importancia para la vida de la Iglesia. Después de haber examinado ante Dios reiteradamente mi conciencia, he llegado a la certeza de que, por la edad avanzada, ya no tengo fuerzas para ejercer adecuadamente el ministerio petrino. Soy muy consciente

de que este ministerio, por su naturaleza espiritual, debe ser llevado a cabo no únicamente con obras y palabras, sino también y en no menor grado sufriendo y rezando [...]

El anuncio tomó por sorpresa a muchos, pues si bien es cierto que existían rumores desde el año 2011 de una posible dimisión, dichos rumores habían sido desmentidos por el vocero oficial del Vaticano. Cabe hacer notar que entre las razones aducidas por el Santo Padre para su dimisión se señala la falta de fuerzas, por la avanzada edad, para ejercer adecuadamente el ministerio encomendado como sucesor de San Pedro. La decisión tomada, según el mismo pontífice, se basa en un examen de conciencia, no es una decisión apresurada sino resultado de un análisis, con toda libertad. El Papa se ha tomado su tiempo para reflexionar y decidir con criterio de conciencia. Los católicos, aunque nos entristezca su renuncia, tenemos que saber respetar la decisión del Santo Padre. El Papa ha puesto por encima el bien de la Iglesia, demuestra una gran honestidad para reconocer que sus fuerzas han flaqueado, no se aferra a un poder, sabe dar un paso al costado oportunamente. Tiene la certeza de haber tomado una decisión correcta. No olvidemos que nuestro Papa es un gran teólogo, con una gran capacidad de reflexión y pensamiento crítico; pero, sobre todo, es un hombre de profunda fe y fidelidad a la Iglesia. Por todo esto, debemos valorar la decisión tomada por el Santo Padre. Estamos seguros que ha pensado más en el bien de la Iglesia, se ha dejado guiar por el Espíritu Santo y su conciencia.

Los católicos hemos estado acostumbrados, por tradición, a que los Papas gobiernen la Iglesia hasta su muerte. Aún tenemos viva la memoria de Juan Pablo II que no obstante su grave estado de salud se mantuvo hasta el final de su vida al frente de la Iglesia; pero, no podemos esperar que todos los Papas piensen y actúen de la misma manera. Desde un punto de vista teológico y pastoral no hay ninguna razón o fundamento para obligar a un Papa a mantenerse hasta el término de su vida al frente de la Iglesia; la dimisión de un Papa es una posibilidad real, prevista en el mismo Código de Derecho Canónico, en el cual se establece como requisito para la validez de la renuncia del Romano Pontífice que ésta sea libre y se manifieste formalmente, no se exige que sea aceptada por nadie (Cf., Canon 332 & 2). En ese sentido es perfectamente legítima la decisión del Papa Benedicto XVI.

El Santo Padre ha manifestado en su anuncio de dimisión que "... para gobernar la barca de san Pedro y anunciar el Evangelio, es necesario también el vigor tanto del cuerpo como del espíritu, vigor que, en los últimos meses, ha disminuido en mí de tal forma que he de reconocer mi incapacidad para ejercer bien el ministerio que me fue encomendado". Personalmente me conmueve ese gesto de gran honestidad y humildad del Santo Padre; sabe reconocer sus limitaciones. El Papa nos ha dado una gran lección de honestidad, de humildad, de desprendimiento, que es lo que se debe esperar de un buen servidor del Señor. Ese gesto lo enaltece, nos hace admirarlo más.

Los ministros no son superhéroes, deben reconocer a tiempo que sus fuerzas flaquean, reconocer los propios límites de la condición humana y no escudarse en que el Espíritu Santo suplirá sus alicaídas fuerzas. Preguntémonos ¿Cuántos obispos reconocerían con humildad su "incapacidad para ejercer bien el ministerio encomendado" y "pedir perdón"



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(Continúa en la Página 26)

Un Pontificado Marcado por la Enseñanza, Llamado a Retornar a la Fe

Durante su casi ocho años de pontificado, el Papa Benedicto XVI impresionó al mundo como profesor, guiando a los católicos a las fuentes de fe y urgiendo a la sociedad moderna a no dar su espalda a Dios.

Citando su edad y disminuida energía, el papa de 85 años anunció el 11 de febrero que él estaría renunciando a partir del 28 de febrero, y que se dedicaría el resto de su vida a la oración.

Como pastor de la iglesia universal, él utilizó virtualmente cada medio a su disposición—libros y Twitter, sermones y encíclicas—para catequizar a los fieles en las creencias y prácticas fundamentales del cristianismo, desde los sermones de San Agustín hasta la señal de la Santa Cruz.

Bajo su supervisión, el Vaticano continuó destacando los límites morales de la Iglesia en temas tales como la muerte asistida, el matrimonio y la homosexualidad.

Pero el mensaje del papa a la sociedad en general se centró menos en temas individuales y más en el riesgo de perder la relación básica entre el ser humano y el Creador.

El pontífice nacido en Alemania no intentó igualar la popularidad de su predecesor, el Papa Juan Pablo II, y sin embargo millones de personas que vinieron a verle en Roma y en otras partes llegaron a apreciar su sonrisa, sus frecuentes improvisaciones y su capacidad para hablar de corazón.

Aunque él no esperaba viajar mucho, él terminó realizando 24 viajes a seis continentes y en tres oportunidades presidió las gigantescas reuniones del Día Mundial de la Juventud, en Alemania en el 2005, en Australia en el 2008, y en España en el 2011.

La Dimisión...

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por sus defectos como lo ha hecho valientemente el Santo Padre?

Los católicos debemos estar muy agradecidos por la labor realizada por el Santo Padre al frente de la Iglesia. No cabe duda que Benedicto XVI ha sido siempre un servidor fiel y que aún después de su dimisión no dejará de seguir trabajando por la Iglesia, de otra manera, como él mismo lo ha manifestado: "sufriendo y rezando". Demos gracias a Dios por haber tenido a un gran hombre al frente de la Iglesia, un gran teólogo e insigne pastor. Oremos todos por él. Confiamos en que el Espíritu Santo iluminará a los cardenales que en el próximo cónclave tienen la grave responsabilidad de elegir al sucesor de Benedicto XVI. Confiamos en que sabrán anteponer el bien de la Iglesia.



Hablando acerca de la vejez el pasado marzo cuando se encontró con el líder cubano Fidel Castro de 85 años en La Habana, el Papa Benedicto le dijo, "sí, yo soy viejo, pero aun puedo realizar mis deberes".

En una visita histórica a los Estados Unidos en el 2008, él presentó un desafío moral a temas incluyendo desde justicia económica hasta el aborto. Él también llevó el reconocimiento de la Iglesia del escándalo del abuso sexual de los sacerdotes a un nuevo nivel, expresando su vergüenza personal acerca de lo sucedido y orando con las víctimas.

El papa se reunió tres veces con el antiguo presidente de los Estados Unidos, George W. Bush, incluyendo una visita formal a la Casa Blanca, en donde los dos líderes encontraron amplias áreas de acuerdo en pro de la vida y temas de la familia.

Cuando el Presidente Barack Obama fue elegido, el pontífice le envió un caluroso telegrama y una promesa de que estaría en sus oraciones, pero cuando ellos se encontraron en el Vaticano al año siguiente, el papa habló claramente acerca de las objeciones de la iglesia a las políticas de la administración sobre varios temas acerca de la vida, incluyendo el aborto y la investigación con células embrionarias.

El Papa Benedicto tenía 78 años y contaba aparentemente con buena salud cuando fue elegido el 19 de abril de 2005, pero se dice que dijo a sus compañeros cardenales que su papado no sería tan largo como el de su predecesor.

José Ratzinger nació en la ciudad bávara de Marktl am Inn, el tercer y más joven hijo

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de un oficial de policía, también llamado José, y su esposa, Maria. El joven José se unió a su hermano Georg, en el seminario menor en 1939.

Como otros jóvenes estudiantes, él fue enlistado automáticamente en el Programa Juvenil de Hitler, pero pronto paró de asistir a las reuniones. Durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial, lo reclutaron en el ejército, y en la primavera de 1945 él deserto su unidad y volvió a casa, pasando algunos meses en un campo de los Aliados para prisioneros de guerra. El volvió al seminario a finales de 1945 y fue ordenado seis años más tarde, junto con su hermano.

Después de un corto periodo como sacerdote de una parroquia, el futuro papa comenzó una carrera de enseñanza y construyó una reputación como uno de los más destacados teólogos de la iglesia.

Cuando estaba en sus 30s, él sirvió como influyente consejero durante el Concilio Vaticano Segundo de 1962-1965.

En 1977, el Papa Juan Pablo VI lo nombró Arzobispo de Munich y Freising, y cuatro años más tarde el Papa Juan Pablo

PARTIDA—El Papa Benedicto XVI lleva su equipo pastoral después de celebrar la misa en la Plaza de la Revolución en La Habana el 28 de marzo de 2011. Durante el servicio el Papa pidió por la total libertad religiosa y un mayor respeto por los derechos humanos en Cuba.

CNS/Paul Haring

lo llamo a dirigir la Congregación para la Doctrina de la Fe.

Como el recientemente elegido papa en el 2005, él explicó que el había tomado el nombre Benedicto para evocar la memoria del Papa Benedicto XV, un "valeroso profeta de paz", durante la Primera Guerra Mundial.

El nuevo papa usó la mayor parte de su energía escribiendo y predicando, en encíclicas, cartas, mensajes, homilias y charlas que eventualmente llegaron a ser más de mil.

Cuando la crisis financiera global se empeoró en el 2008, el papa insistió que las instituciones financieras tienen que pensar en las personas antes que los beneficios. Él también recordó a la gente que los ideales modernos del éxito marcados por el dinero o pertenencias materiales son realidades que tienen que desaparecer.

El papa defendió fuertemente el derecho a la libertad religiosa en su discurso en las Naciones Unidas en el 2008.

Aunque se esperaba que el reversara una tendencia fijada por el Papa Juan Pablo, el Papa Benedicto no desaceleró la maquinaria para nombrar santos del Vaticano.

A pesar de que el Papa Benedicto pidió a los expertos del Vaticano ser más selectivos al escoger los candidatos para la santidad, él terminó canonizando 44 nuevos santos, incluyendo el nativo americano Kateri Tekakwitha, y la Madre Marianne Cope de Molokai, ambos con conexiones con Nueva York.

El Papa Benedicto nombró a 90 nuevos cardenales, incluyendo al Cardenal Dolan; de los cuales 67 son aun menores de 80 años y por lo tanto elegibles para votar en el conclave para elegir a su sucesor.

A mediados del 2007, el papa realizó un cambio importante en el procedimiento del conclave, restaurando la regla tradicional que requiere de dos tercios de la mayoría para la elección papal.

Al hacer esto, el reverso una modificación hecha por el Papa Juan Pablo, quien había permitido la posibilidad de moverse a un simple voto de la mayoría en caso de que un conclave llegase a un punto muerto. —CNS