

**A SIMPLE REFLECTION BEFORE THE RESIGNATION OF THE HOLY FATHER, H.H. BENEDICT XVI**  
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Dear Family:



May we learn in the Heart of Our Lady, Mother of the Church, to walk with the gaze of faith and to discover in every event the mysterious and fecund designs of God.

I briefly write to you to give a simple reflection at this moment in which the whole Church has received, with great surprise, the announcement of the resignation of His Holiness Benedict XVI from his Petrine mission. It has been difficult for us to comprehend this announcement, and as such, I believe that the most responsible and most Marian attitude is the one of prayer and keeping silence to "guard, treasure, and

ponder" the words and the choice that our Holy Father has made, and to perceive in the silence of prayer, the deepest meaning of this moment and this event.

From the moment the announcement spread throughout the world, many have been asking me if I have something to say about it. I responded to all of them that before saying something, we need to stay silent and listen. The Holy Father has spoken, let us listen to his words, his decision, and his reasons...I include them here so that you may understand, because rather than speaking about his decision, we should listen to his words:

*"I have convoked you to this Consistory, not only for the three canonizations, but also to communicate to you a decision of great importance for the life of the Church. After having repeatedly examined my conscience before God, 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. I am well aware that this ministry, due to its essential spiritual nature, must be carried out not only with words and deeds, but no less with prayer and suffering. However, in today's world, subject to so many rapid changes and shaken by questions of deep relevance for the life of faith, in order to govern the bark of Saint Peter and proclaim the Gospel, both strength of mind and body are necessary, strength which in the last few months, has deteriorated in me to the extent that I have had to recognize my incapacity to adequately fulfill the ministry entrusted to me. For this reason, and well aware of the seriousness of this act, with full freedom I declare that I renounce the ministry of Bishop of Rome, Successor of Saint Peter, entrusted to me by the Cardinals on 19 April 2005, in such a way, that as from 28 February 2013, at 20:00 hours, the See of Rome, the See of Saint Peter, will be vacant and a Conclave to elect the new Supreme Pontiff will have to be convoked by those whose competence it is. Dear Brothers, I thank you most sincerely for all the love and work with which you have supported me in my ministry and I ask pardon for all my defects. And now, let us entrust the Holy Church to the care of Our Supreme Pastor, Our Lord Jesus Christ, and implore his holy Mother Mary, so that she may assist the Cardinal Fathers with her maternal solicitude, in electing a new Supreme Pontiff. With regard to myself, I wish to also devotedly serve the Holy Church of God in the future through a life dedicated to prayer."*

Listening to him, there is not much more to say. The Holy Father has said everything that we should know to understand that his decision has been a long and painful process to come to the certainty that he could no

longer exercise the petrine mission with the necessary capacity to fulfill what he has discerned is necessary, urgently necessary, for the Church of today. From what he has already told us, we have nothing else to say...to analyze his decision is unnecessary, to compare his decision with others is also unnecessary since it corresponds to each Supreme Pontiff to discern according to the challenges of his historic moment. This decision of the Holy Father is historic, as are our times are also historic.... This reflection is centered on what I perceive, Jesus, the Chief Shepherd of the Church, wants to teach us...what He wants to tell us before the resignation of the Holy Father. For my heart, there are three dimensions, or three teachings, that could be a permanent fruit of this singular moment, delicate and at the same time, necessary in the plan of God....who makes everything work for the good of those who love Him.

#### 1. **Gratitude to the person of H.H. Benedict XVI**

Eight years ago, at 78 years old, the Holy Father took into his hands the arduous task of being the universal pastor of the Church. Taking in his hands a Church that was the fruit of the 27- year- Pontificate of his beloved predecessor. Saying "yes" to that call of Christ, at that moment when Cardinal Ratzinger, who was already older, possibly expected to dedicate himself to prayer, recollection, and writing...had to have been difficult...but his love for Christ, the Church and his fidelity to Bl. John Paul II were his strength to take the chair of Peter that was vacant after the death of his beloved predecessor. His "yes" was a supreme act of love for Christ, the Church and John Paul. He was aware, as he told us in his homily on April 20, 2005, that the Church that John Paul II left, *"is more courageous, freer, more youthful"*...After sharing his *"sense of inadequacy and human apprehension as I face the responsibility entrusted to me yesterday;"* the recently elected Pope Benedict remembered the memory of Pope John Paul II...*"I seem to feel his strong hand clasping mine; I seem to see his smiling eyes and hear his words, at this moment addressed specifically to me, "Do not be afraid!"*. With that spirit of greatest humility, serene confidence, profound meekness, and great poverty of spirit, this luminous Pope embarked upon the path to take the flock upon his shoulders in a period of a great crisis of faith in which his acute intelligence would have to imprint in everyone's heart, the most beautiful identity of God, that God is love; direct our gaze to true hope; teach us to live truth, without ever renouncing it and making it shine by the powerful splendor of love and faith.

Already from the beginning of his pontificate, we have seen H.H. Benedict XVI make sacrificial choices...of total abnegation for the good of the Church. I have always admired in him his profound humility...he never sought anything, never desired to create or do great things...but as he told us in his installation homily: *"My real program of governance is not to do my own will, not to pursue my own ideas, but to listen, together with the whole Church, to the word and the will of the Lord, to be guided by Him, so that He himself will lead the Church at this hour of our history."* His desire was to place himself in attentive listening to the Word of God...and by listening to let himself be guided by the will of God. We don't only contemplate this profound humility in his voice, figure, in his actions, gestures, words...but in a singular manner, in his desire to place himself at the service of such a deep, wide, and long legacy as that of his beloved predecessor.... He who sits to listen, who knows how to be a disciple, knows how to find his place, his mission, his direction...his orientation in life. In a very luminous way, Benedict XVI knew how to give himself without any aspiration other than making the gift of the Other and others shine. This attitude of *"decreasing so that others may increase"*...was, for me, the strength of the beginning of his pontificate and is also the strength at its end...in both moments, he took his place or left it, so that another may rise up with greater strength for the good of the Church.

Truly, as Cardinal Sodano said, responding to the Holy Father after the announcement of his resignation: *"You have said that you will always be close to us with your testimony and your prayer. Of course, the stars in the sky shine forever and so there will always shine in our midst the star of your pontificate."* Yes, humility and truth always shine out, especially in the darkness of a superficial, egocentric and hedonistic world...of competition and domination.... The light that shines from the hearts of the humble ones, the light that shines from the heralds of truth and love, powerfully illuminate history. It is very significant

that a bolt of lightning struck the cupola of St. Peter's Basilica the same afternoon as the announcement, as if directing the gaze to the light that proceeds from that 'cathedra'...to the light that illumines the darkness and the storms of our history with the Word of God, with the luminosity of the Gospel.

It is significant that there was a bolt of lightning when Cardinal Sodano described the announcement before the Holy Father himself with these words: "Your Holiness, beloved and venerable Successor of Peter, your moving message rang out in this hall *like a bolt from the blue*. We heard it with a sense of bewilderment, almost totally unbelieving. In your words we noted the great affection which you have always had for God's holy Church, for this Church which you have so deeply loved." May the short but luminous pontificate of our Holy Father Benedict XVI illumine the path of the Church through the deserts of the world taking us with the certainty of faith towards the realization of the designs of God in our historic moment. May we cooperate with the building of the Church, with her mission, being ardent witnesses of the Splendor of the Faith. It is time to love the Church...to love her with abnegation, generosity, with humility and firmness.

## 2. **Gratitude and responsibility before the gift of his Pontificate:**

The Pontificate of H.H. Benedict XVI has been short, but highly fecund. I think about his retirement...I think that in a few short weeks we will no longer read his words, nor hear his luminous, such luminous audiences, homilies and messages... I think that perhaps we won't be able to read the highly anticipated encyclical on Faith...and my heart is filled with tears. How much light there is in his Magisterium, and there is little time left to stay sitting in the school of his Petrine heart. How much we must value gifts when we have them. I believe that the Lord is telling us before the reality of the moment that we are living, that we have to be serious and responsible before the gifts that He gives us...the light and simplicity of the Magisterium of Benedict XVI that perhaps many have not read, have not taken the time to ponder, to study more deeply... How many prayers and sacrifices have not been made to sustain him with the heroic strength that he needed to guide the bark of Peter through such difficult moments...how much...how much....how much...before the resignation of our Pope, I only desire to ask myself and ask us in what way all of his spiritual children could have helped, supported, sustained him... How many battles he waged in his 8 years of Pontificate...how much effort, how many sacrifices...and perhaps, it is a moment that we Catholics have to be aware of our responsibility before the gift of the Papacy, of a man, the Successor of Peter who takes upon his shoulders the weight of the whole Church...who suffers in his own flesh the sins, faults, incoherencies, indifferences of the members of the Church and who also carries in his heart and his body everything that scourges, beats, weakens, dirties, wounds the face of the Church.

Today the Lord has wanted to call our attention to the fact that the Pope, the Successor of Peter, needs his children...our prayers, our fidelity, our holiness...our authentic life of faith and coherent and mature Christian and Catholic life. His short 8 years in the Pontificate have been so fruitful and we must give thanks, thanks for everything...for his Encyclicals, *Deus Caritas Est*, *Spe Salvi*, *Caritas in Veritati*...for his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortations, for his *Motu Proprios*...for his synods....on the Eucharist, the Middle East, Africa, the Word, and the New Evangelization...for his documents of CELAM in *Aparecida*...for the Pontifical Council of the New Evangelization...for the beatification of John Paul II...for the year of the Priesthood and the Year of Faith....for his catecheses on the Apostles, Fathers, and doctors, holy women...prayer...faith...for his messages to youth and for the World Youth Days, to the Family....etc. For his apostolic journeys...when he could have chosen not to make them because of the weakness of his age....we must give thanks for his arduous trip to Mexico, Cuba and Lebanon...For his courage and serenity before so many battles, being scorned for his constant denunciation of the *"dictatorship of relativism and secularization that has eclipsed God" in many hearts and nations*.

## 3. **The contemplation of his heroic humility and his abnegation:**

The choice that H.H. Benedict XVI has made is a lesson for every pastor and leader at any level of the life of the Church; his leadership is at the service of the Church...for its good...and in the awareness that he discerned that the greatest good for the Church would be to yield his place, to yield the See of Peter to another who could sustain it, defend it, care for it, and guide it with greater strength in these moments of a great need for the New Evangelization and of great threats to the faith.... H.H. Benedict considered in prayer and in "Christian realism" (a characteristic theme of his) that in the present need of the Church, to yield his place is the most concrete and visible way of loving the Church; to decrease so that another with greater strength, greater vigor, can lead the bark of Peter through these new oceans and areopagos that have to be conquered, and at the same time, with greater strength protect it from the pounding of the waves...is a great sign of love. The true shepherd gives his life for his sheep, the true shepherd knows how to recognize what the sheep need in the present moment and they deny themselves for the good of the sheep. What a mystery love is! His love for the Church today....with the battles of today, with the threats of today...were a guide for the certainty of his conscience to make this decision. To come to the conclusion that: *"in today's world, subject to so many rapid changes and shaken by questions of deep relevance for the life of faith, in order to govern the bark of Saint Peter and proclaim the Gospel, both strength of mind and body are necessary, strength which in the last few months, has deteriorated in me to the extent that I have had to recognize my incapacity to adequately fulfill the ministry entrusted to me."*... is a sign of a serious and loving process of "recognition" that in addition to his suffering and prayer, his teaching and his presence, the *Church today* needs something that he no longer has the strength to do...Something that now another, stronger than him, must bring about.... Here I cannot but think of the disposition of the heart of St. John the Baptist...another will come (Mc 1,7).... Or perhaps, the words of Jesus.... "it is better for you that I go" (Jn 16,7)... it is all a mystery to which we must simply incline our head and our heart in humility.

The announcement of his resignation, of the renunciation of H.H. Benedict XVI to *the ministry of the Bishop of Rome, Successor of St. Peter*, comes to us days before the beginning of Lent within the context of the Year of Faith...what a mystery that in this Year of Faith, Lent be filled with a feeling of sadness at the resignation of the current successor of Peter...and the election of the next Holy Father, the next successor of Peter who must lead the Church along the paths of the rediscovery of Faith...and guide it through the strong winds that threaten her... What a mystery that the Lent of the Year of Faith is so radically united to the Petrine charism...*"You are Peter and upon this rock I will build My Church"* (Mt 16, 18)....Upon the rock of Peter...the faith of the Church is confirmed. I want to ask you that this Lent in the Year of Faith, as a Family, we offer fasting every Wednesday for H.H. Benedict XVI and for the election of our next Holy Father. May Our Lady, Mother of the Church, give us another of her sons, formed in Her Maternal Heart, so that with the consolation and strength of Her Maternal love he can take the Church to the luminous contemplation of the Face of Christ, the author and perfecter of our Faith" (Heb 12.2). May we pray the Holy Rosary daily during this Lent asking for the grace that many hearts, eclipsed by relativism and secularism, may open to the gift of Faith...that the whole world may open its eyes to the luminous gift of Faith. May the light of Faith shine on the horizon of our contemporary world so that there may be a powerful and certain triumph of Faith in many hearts. Let us pray and fast, let us offer Holy Hours, in this Lent, as many as possible, so that the light of the Spirit may enlighten the College of Cardinals and that they may be able to distinguish with clarity who "is that" Shepherd's heart, who with vigor and fidelity to Christ and the Church, should occupy the See that Pope Benedict XVI will leave vacant so that he can occupy it.

It is a very meaningful Lent...an historic Lent... We will experience the departure of the Successor of Peter (for 600 years the Church has not lived it and it impacts our generation), we will experience the vacant See); we will experience the election of a new Pope...all during the Lent within the Year of Faith... A singular Lent that directs our gaze to the sublime gift, to the inestimable gift of Peter...of the Petrine charism in the life of faith...of the Church and of each one of us. Perhaps Jesus wants us to contemplate with greater gratitude the gift of "Peter" in the life of the Church, in our life, the gift of the one who has received the singular grace and the mission to communicate and guard, despite the sufferings that it brings, the purity of the Faith and the

integrity of the Faith to all generations. Perhaps Jesus wants us to contemplate with greater gratitude and reverence, the gift of the Succession and Chair of Peter...from which flows (as a fountain like in Lourdes), throughout history, the purity of the faith for our salvation, for the true freedom and fullness of the human heart and so that we may attain the eternal life promised by Jesus to those who follow His truth and His way. Perhaps Jesus wants us to treasure, together with the gift of faith, the gift of the Chair of Peter...and so let us pray more, protect more, take more care, and study more...all that the Successor of Peter communicates to us and all that he indicates. This is a historic moment in many senses...Jesus has been raised in the midst of the events of today and wants to tell us that we must place ourselves to listen to his will and to guard with abnegation and generosity the gifts that He freely gives us within the maternal womb of the Church, so that we may also freely give ourselves for the good of the Church.

This announcement reached us in the Diocese of Santa Ana, El Salvador, at the conclusion of a mission of evangelization and of consecration of the diocese to the Two Hearts that was effected by the bishop. Precisely the night before, in the atrium of the Cathedral of Santa Ana, on the vespers of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of that diocese, I preached on the topic "Be Not Afraid, Faith is Enough"....and during the Eucharistic Cenacle, held in the atrium of the Cathedral, the Lord gave me an image and a prophetic word that in light of what happened, I understand that it was not only for the hundreds of people that were gathered in the street before the Eucharistic Jesus, but that this word was instead for everyone, for the whole Church. I would understand this only a few hours later, on the morning of February 11. Here I am sending you the link, even though the last minutes cannot be heard clearly, the majority of the message is clear. I deposit it in your hearts.

[http://www.piercedhearts.org/multimedia/audio/madre\\_adela/adoracion\\_el\\_salvador\\_feb\\_10.mp3](http://www.piercedhearts.org/multimedia/audio/madre_adela/adoracion_el_salvador_feb_10.mp3)

***In the Heart of Mary, Mother of the Church,***

Mother Adela, sctjm  
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