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## Benedict XVI Leaves the Papacy

By Carol Glatz  
and Cindy Wooden  
Catholic News Service

### VATICAN CITY

-- Saying he no longer has the strength to exercise ministry over the universal church, Pope Benedict XVI announced Feb. 11 that he would be resigning at the end of the month after an eight-year pontificate.

"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," Benedict told cardinals gathered for an ordinary public consistory to approve the canonization of new saints.

Benedict, who was elected in April 2005, will be the first pope to resign in more than 600 years.

He told the cardinals, "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 St. 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."

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, told journalists at a briefing that the pope's decision was not prompted by any medical illness, but was due to a natural "decline of strength" associated with old age.

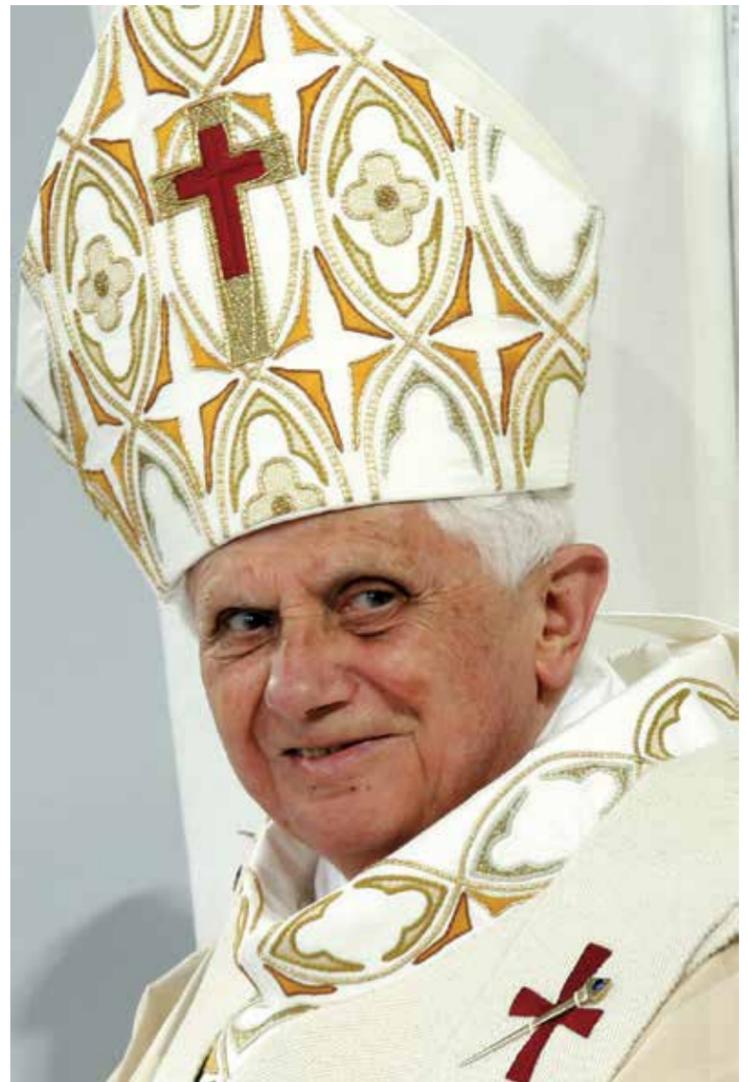
Even though the announcement had caught almost everybody by surprise, it was not a snap decision, but rather one that "had matured over the past few months," Lombardi said.

Benedict made his announcement in Latin from a pre-written text

during a morning ordinary public consistory where a large number of cardinals were present.

When he delivered his announcement, the pope seemed very "composed, concentrated" and read "in a solemn manner" in keeping with the importance of what he was saying, Lombardi said.

Fulfilling the canonical requirement, Benedict solemnly declared to the cardinals, "Well aware of the seriousness of this act, with full freedom I declare that I renounce the ministry of Bishop of Rome, Successor of St. 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 St. Peter, will be vacant and a conclave to elect the new supreme pontiff will have to be convoked by those whose competence it is."



Pope Benedict celebrated Mass in New York's Yankee Stadium in 2008. (CNS photo)

## Resignation Sets in Motion Period of Transition

**VATICAN CITY (CNS)** -- 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 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.

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.



Bishop Michael Warfel met with Pope Benedict XVI during the "ad limina" visitation of 2012

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# Benedict's Reign: Teaching, Call to Return to Faith

By John Thavis  
and Francis X. Rocca  
Catholic News Service

## VATICAN CITY

-- During his almost 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.

In his encyclicals and in his books on "Jesus of Nazareth," the pope honed that message, asking readers to discover the essential connections between sacrificial love, works of charity, a dedication to the truth and the Gospel of Christ.

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.

Although he did not expect to travel much, 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, 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, the pope brought his own identity into clearer focus for Americans. 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 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.

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



Pope Benedict cordially greets Bishop Warfel

German author Peter Seewald in 2010, 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."

Benedict named 90 new cardinals; 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, Benedict's appointments will represent just over 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 John Paul, who had allowed the possibility of moving to a simple majority vote in the case of a deadlocked conclave.

## Text of Pope Benedict's Resignation Announcement

**VATICAN CITY (CNS)** -- Here is the Vatican's English translation of Pope Benedict XVI's resignation remarks, delivered in Latin, during an ordinary public consistory to approve the canonization of new saints, February 11, 2013.

Dear brothers,

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 barque 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.

From the Vatican,  
Feb. 11, 2013  
Pope Benedict XVI



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The Harvest, P.O. Box 1399, Great Falls, MT 59403-1399.  
Telephone: 406-727-6683; 800-332-9998; Fax: 406-454-3480;  
E-mail: [vicargeneral@dioceseofgfb.org](mailto:vicargeneral@dioceseofgfb.org).

# Pope Has Signs of Aging; But No Reports of Illness

**VATICAN CITY (CNS)** -- 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 had 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, Benedict 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.

Benedict recognized his limits with "a lucidity and courage and sincerity that are absolutely admirable," Lombardi said. The pope often has seemed tired, with large, dark circles under his eyes during especially busy periods of public liturgies and audiences.

In October 2011, Benedict began riding a mobile platform in liturgical processions. At the time, 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 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 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."

Benedict 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."

In another section of the book, Benedict 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 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 John Paul could resign. "If he were to see that he absolutely could not (continue), then he certainly would resign," he said.

## Resignation Sets in Motion Period of Transition

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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 conclave starts are excluded from the closed-door proceedings. There will be 117 cardinal-electors when the "sede vacante" begins Feb. 28; by March 5, that number will be 116.

As chamberlain, 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.

The word conclave comes from Latin, meaning literally "with key," and reflects the previous tradition of locking the cardinals in an area where they would spend day and night until the new pope's election.

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 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 is no longer crowned with a papal tiara, but receives a pallium, or stole, in recognition of his authority.



Pope Benedict often greeted visitors to the Vatican as he rode in the popemobile. This was the scene on September 30, 2009.



## Pope's Decision Surprises U.S. Church Leaders

### Publisher:

Most Rev. Michael W. Warfel

### Submit News Articles to Supervising Editor:

Rev. Jay H. Peterson  
vicargeneral@dioceseofgfb.org  
800-332-9998  
406-727-6683, ext. 126

### News Editor & Feature Writer:

Kimbert Larsen

### Design & Layout

Mearle Tilton

### Advertising Billing and Mailing List:

Laurie Horton  
lhorton@dioceseofgfb.org

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## 14 U.S., Canada Cardinals Eligible To Vote for Pope

**VATICAN CITY (CNS)** -- Here is a list of the 14 cardinals from Canada and the United States who are under the age of 80 and therefore eligible to vote in a conclave to elect a successor to Pope Benedict XVI:

### CANADA:

Thomas Collins of Toronto  
Marc Ouellet, prefect of the Congregation for Bishops  
Jean-Claude Turcotte, retired archbishop of Montreal

### UNITED STATES

Raymond Burke, head of the Apostolic Signature  
Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston  
Timothy Dolan of New York  
Francis E. George of Chicago  
James M. Harvey, archpriest of the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls  
William Levada, retired prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith  
Roger M. Mahony, retired archbishop of Los Angeles  
Edwin O'Brien, grand master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre  
Sean O'Malley of Boston  
Justin F. Rigali, retired archbishop of Philadelphia  
Donald W. Wuerl of Washington

**WASHINGTON (CNS)** -- U.S. Catholic Church leaders who awoke to the news of Pope Benedict XVI's announcement that he will retire at the end of February said they were surprised by the news but admired the pontiff's courage and humility for making the decision.

Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said in a statement that the pope's announcement is "is but another sign of his great care for the church."

"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," Dolan said, adding: "We are sad that he will be resigning but grateful for his eight years of selfless leadership as successor of St. Peter.

"The occasion of his resignation stands as an important moment in our lives as citizens of the world. Our experience impels us to thank God for the gift of Pope Benedict," he continued. "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."

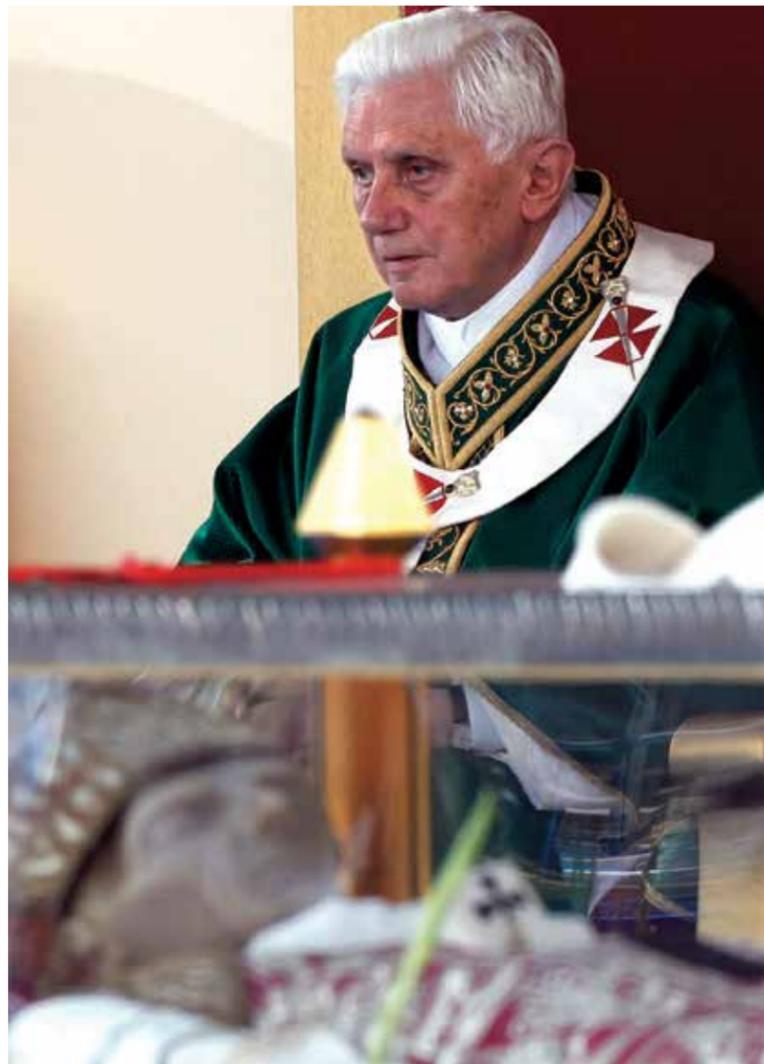
Dolan was interviewed on the NBC's "Today" show early Feb. 11 where he said he was as "startled as the rest of you" about the news.

Washington Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl was similarly talking about the pope's decision on local news radio WTOF before 8 a.m.

Wuerl said he was "very much surprised" by the announcement, noting that he had seen the pope less than a month ago and there was no indication of a possible resignation.

He said he was "just stunned" when he heard the news in the morning and when he "got a call very early from Rome confirming this."

What does not surprise Wuerl, though, is that the pope was able to make such a decision.



The relics of St. Celestine V, a 13th-century pope are seen as Pope Benedict XVI celebrates Mass during a 2010 pastoral visit to Sulmona, Italy. Celestine, a hermit elected at age 80, was overwhelmed by the office and became the last pope freely to resign from the papacy. (CNS photo)

"I don't think we should be surprised," he said, that when the pope realized he didn't "have the strength to continue" his role he had "the humility and courage" to act on it.

Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond of New Orleans also expressed his "great deal of admiration" for the pope, said he appreciated the pontiff's "recognition of the health issues he is facing" and admired "his humility in asking the cardinals to come together in prayer to select his successor."

In Chicago, Cardinal Francis E. George echoed his fellow U.S. prelates in saying the pontiff always has put "the will of God for the good of the church before every other consideration" and "that same resoluteness of purpose" is evident in his decision to resign.

Benedict "has taught with clarity and charity what God has revealed to the world in Christ; he has handed on the apostolic faith; he has loved all of God's people with all his heart," George said in a statement. "He has now shown great courage in deciding, after prayer and soul-searching, to resign his office."

Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron of Detroit said that he, "like most of my fellow Catholics, woke up to the very surprising news" that the pope was resigning.

The surprise, he noted, was followed by sadness -- "a sense of grief at losing his fatherly care for all us, bishops, clergy, and faithful. We have come to love him very much and will miss him."

Vigneron likened the news to what many people experience in their families when they witness a parent "grow old and decline in ability."

"That is the sense we bring to this announcement. Our spiritual father has determined, by the best light given to him in prayer, that for the good of us all he must lay down his office," he added.

Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Ky., said he, too, was surprised "along with the rest of the world" about the resignation and was "touched by his humble admission of the strength necessary to carry on this ministry of Christ. This is a decision that reflects Pope Benedict's stewardship of his office and is a sign of his deep humility."