

Pope Benedict XVI Resigns



"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," he said according to a statement from the Vatican.

Vatican spokesman, Federico Lombardi said: "The pope announced that he will leave his ministry at 8:00 pm (1900 GMT) on February 28."

The announcement was "a bolt from the blue", said Angelo Sodano, a senior Vatican cardinal.

Last year the Pope started using a cane on occasions and recently he appeared to have trouble reading the text of an address he delivered in Rome.

There was no immediate official comment from the Vatican.

In November last year, he declared that it is "beautiful to be old".

"The quality of a society, I'd say of a civilisation, is judged by how well it treats its elderly," the

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Written by Alaba Johnson

Monday, 11 February 2013 11:36 -

85-year-old pontiff said during the visit to the home run by the Saint Egidio Community, a Catholic charity.

While it was "beautiful to be old", age brought challenges and difficulties with which he himself was familiar.

"I know well the difficulties, the problems and the limits of this age, and I know that these difficulties are aggravated for many people by the economic crisis," the Pope said.

Here is the Pope's Statement in full below;

Dear Brothers,

I have convoked you to this Consistory, not only for the three canonisations, 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 recognise 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

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Church of God in the future through a life dedicated to prayer.

From the Vatican, 10 February 2013

BENEDICTUS PP XVI