

*The Pope*

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

As you know Pope Benedict the Sixteenth has stepped down as the world leader of the Catholic Church as of February Twenty Eighth. The news media used such words as quitting, retiring, and abdicating (among others). The media also likes to dramatize the fact that the Catholic Church is now without a leader and this is the first time in six hundred years that a Pope has left his position before his death. As to the fact that the Church is now without a leader: Over the past two thousand years there have been two hundred and sixty six popes (including Pope Benedict). There is always a period between popes where no one sits in the official position and the times during the past two thousand years that a reigning Pope has been incapacitated for one reason or another thus leaving the Church "rudderless" yet the Church goes on. During the period between Popes, the Cardinal Chamberlain is in charge, currently that would be Vatican Secretary of state Tarcisio Bertone, working with three Cardinal assistants who are chosen at random and replaced every three days. Regarding the fact that this is the first time in six hundred years that a Pope has left office before his death, I commend Pope Benedict the Sixteenth for his good judgment. As a person ages (we all know this), both physical and mental health diminishes faster in some cases and slower in others. The weakness of any life time appointment, whether it be the Pope, a ruler of a country or a Supreme Court Judge is the ageing of the individual and the disabling that eventually takes place. I think that anyone in a position of power should be aware of their limitations and act accordingly. Any ageing ruler that lies near death, while still in office, is not capable of providing anything positive relating to his or her station. I believe that the Pope has weighed his mental and physical abilities against today's challenges of the World and sees the need for a younger, dynamic person to take charge. The first pope to leave office while still alive in six hundred years has forced the Vatican to quickly establish new procedures. Pope Benedict cannot return to being a cardinal. Cardinal is not a job but an honor bestowed upon a bishop or archbishop, which remains his former job. He will be the first pope to be honored as "Pope Emeritus". He will no longer wear the red "shoes of the fisherman". The gold "ring of the fisherman" made personally for every pope will be smashed with a silver hammer to keep it from being used to forge documents. His personal seal will be broken for the same reason. One last thing: The pope flew to the summer residence by helicopter. He was not at the controls this time although he does have a pilot's license and he does fly choppers.

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