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Latest News

BREAKING NEWS New Pope expected by Easter, says Vatican, following Benedict XVI's shock resignation announcement

11 February 2013



The Catholic Church will have a new Pope by Easter, the Vatican spokesman said at a press conference today following the shock announcement that Pope Benedict XVI is to resign with effect from 28 February.

In the highly unusual move, the 85-year-old Pope told a meeting of cardinals in the Vatican that he would leave office for health reasons.

Fr Federico Lombardi said that Benedict XVI's decision to retire had taken everyone by surprise. He confirmed that Pope Benedict will leave office on 28 February and will dedicate the rest of his life to study, prayer and reflection.

He said that the Pope will first go to live at his summer residence Castel Gandolfo. Once his successor is elected Benedict XVI would live in a monastery that formerly belonged to an order of enclosed nuns at the Vatican.

Fr Lombardi confirmed that Pope Benedict would play no part in the election of his successor. He stressed his decision to retire created a situation without precedent.

Asked whether there was a danger of schism with some Catholics continuing to recognise the old pope following the election of a new pontiff, Fr Lombardi said Pope Benedict has absolutely no concerns of this kind.

He stressed Pope Benedict that following his retirement would be surrendering the office of pope completely.

The Pope, speaking in Latin, told cardinals today that said his strength in mind and body "had deteriorated ... to the extent that I have had to recognise my incapacity to adequately fulfill the ministry entrusted to me".

Speaking in Latin he said: "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.



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He thanked the cardinals for their love and work and asked their "pardon for all my defects".

He said it would fall to the Cardinal Fathers to elect his successor and that he planned to continue serving the Church "through a life dedicated to prayer".

Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Dean of the College of Cardinals, said today's announcement came as "a bolt out of the blue".

Archbishop Vincent Nichols, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, said the news had "shocked and surprised everyone" but praised him for "his courage and his decision".

But he added: "I am sure that many will recognise it to be a decision of great courage and characteristic clarity of mind and action.

The Holy Father recognises the challenges facing the Church and that "strength of mind and body are necessary" for his tasks of governing the Church and proclaiming the Gospel.

I ask people of faith to keep Pope Benedict in their prayers. We Catholics will do so, with great affection and the highest esteem for his ministry as our Holy Father remembering with joy his Visit to the United Kingdom in 2010. Pray, too, for the Church and all the steps that must take place in the next weeks. We entrust ourselves to the loving Providence of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Scottish Cardinal Keith O'Brien said today: "Like many people throughout the world, I was shocked and saddened to hear of the decision by Pope Benedict XVI to resign. I know that his decision will have been considered most carefully and that it has come after much prayer and reflection.

I will offer my prayers for Pope Benedict and call on the Catholic community of Scotland to join me in praying for him at this time of deterioration in his health as he recognises his incapacity to adequately fulfil the ministry entrusted to him.

I hope I will also be able to rely on the prayers of Catholics across the world for the Cardinal Electors as we prepare to travel to Rome in order to participate in the conclave, which will be convoked to elect a successor as Bishop of Rome and Supreme Pontiff."

[Listen to the Pope's announcement in Latin \(Vatican Radio\)](#)

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