



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH
THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



STATEMENT AND REQUEST FOR PRAYERS
AT
THE DEATH OF POPE BENEDICT XVI

December 31, 2022

The death of Pope Benedict XVI, who served as the Vicar of Christ, from 2005 through his resignation of office in 2013, is an occasion that causes us both sadness for our loss and gratitude for his ministry as a priest, a theologian, a bishop, and as the pope. I ask all Catholics and men and women of good will to join me in praying for his soul's repose.

While the Church and the world in his death have lost one of the most brilliant minds of contemporary times, his passing invites reflection on his long, faithful, and dedicated service to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

He very much respected the American value of religious liberty established with a respectful separation of Church and State. He saw this separation clearly as necessary for human flourishing. He once said, "Wherever politics tries to be redemptive, it is promising too much. Where it wishes to do the work of God, it becomes not divine, but demonic."

He reminded us about the need to celebrate the Mass with dignity and reverence, attentive to beauty as essential to worship of God. "Beauty, then, is not mere decoration, but rather an essential element of the liturgical action since it is an attribute of God himself and his revelation. These considerations should make us realize the care, which is needed, if the liturgical action is to reflect its innate splendor."

He taught eloquently about the human need for God amidst a world that had become more aggressively secular and functionally atheistic. This was exemplified by his profound respect and fostering of interfaith dialogue especially with the Jewish people and his strong admonition against antisemitism, "the hatred and contempt for men, women and children that was manifested in the Shoah was a crime against God and against humanity. This should be clear to everyone. It is beyond question that any denial or minimization of this terrible crime is intolerable and altogether unacceptable."

He understood the need for human beings to seek the truth in order to be truly free from the tyranny of relativism. He said, "I was able to observe and also to grasp that relinquishing truth doesn't solve anything but, on the contrary, leads to the tyranny of caprice. In that case, the only thing that can remain is really what we decide on and can replace at will. Man is degraded if he can't know truth, if everything, in the final analysis, is just the product of an individual or collective decision."

As the pope, he quickly recognized the human evil of sexual predation against children in too many of the clergy. He was bold in taking initial steps in acknowledging the evil and in decisively removing men from priestly ministry who had committed such crimes including the founder of the Legionaries of Christ, Marcial Maciel Degollado.

He humbly reminded us, “Evil draws its power from indecision and concern for what other people think.” It is that humility and love for Christ and His Church that prompted Pope Benedict XVI to resign the papacy when he discerned that he was unable to fulfill the demands of the office set forth by Christ.

Eternal rest grant unto him, Oh Lord. Let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace.

+ Michael F. Olson

Most Reverend Michael F. Olson, STD, MA
Bishop of Fort Worth

His Holiness Pope Francis will offer the Funeral Mass for Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in St. Peter’s Square on **Thursday, January 5, 2023**, at 9:30 a.m. Rome time and 2:30 a.m., Central time. Prior to the Funeral Mass, from Monday to Wednesday, the remains of Pope Emeritus Benedict will be solemnly displayed in St. Peter’s Basilica.

In Washington, D.C., a Book of Condolences will be open at this Apostolic Nunciature, 3339 Massachusetts Ave, NW, on **Tuesday, January 3** and **Wednesday, January 4, 2023**, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Public officials, diplomatic personnel, members of the Catholic community and of the general public will be welcome to sign the Book. Messages of condolence can also be sent by email to: na.usa@diplomat.va, or by regular mail to the above address.

Please join Most Reverend Michael F. Olson, STD, MA, Bishop of Fort Worth, in praying for the repose of the soul of Pope Benedict XVI at Mass on **Sunday, January 8, 2023**, at 5:00 p.m. at Saint Patrick’s Cathedral in Fort Worth.