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Pope Resigns

02.11.2013 | Hot Topics, Catholic, Faculty, Culture and Society

Pope Benedict XVI announced he will resign as pope at the end of the month.

Theologians and faculty at the University of Dayton in Ohio are available to comment on the significance of the announcement, the pope's legacy and what to look for in coming weeks.

The University of Dayton, founded by the Society of Mary, is among the nation's top Catholic universities and the largest private university in Ohio. Following in the footsteps of its Marianist founder, Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, it educates students for transformation in faith, adaptation to the times and servant leadership.

Benedict's legacy, from a former U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See

(Watch Díaz on CNN here (url: http://s3.amazonaws.com/TV/EyesMediaCenter/UserContent/180880/1592641.820/CNN_02-11-2013_11.44.58.mp4))

"The pope's tenure included the publication of three encyclicals, various theological writings and papal messages. Under his papacy, the Vatican advanced the important role of reasoned faith in society, interfaith dialogue, advocacy for the plight of Christians undergoing persecutions and new engagements with social media. Charity became the central theme of his papacy, touching upon the world of interpersonal, socio-political and economic relations. He also gained the reputation as the green Pope, recently calling on the world to defend all creatures as a way to pursue peace. Though a less frequent traveler than his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI visited numerous countries, including the United States in April 2008. His last trip to the American continent included stops in Cuba and Mexico."

"In making this decision, the Holy Father shows us his awareness of the grace of living the transcendence of human life while accepting its limitations. I feel personally happy for the Holy Father, who, like me, is a teacher, scholar and an intellectual at heart. May he know the blessing of physical rest and Sabbath prayer." — **Miguel H. Díaz, University Professor of Faith and Culture and U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See (retired); Contact Shawn Robinson at 937-229-3391 or srobinson@udayton.edu.**

Díaz served as United States Ambassador to the Holy See from 2009-2012. A prominent Catholic theologian, Díaz was the first Hispanic to represent the United States at the Vatican and joined the University of Dayton faculty last year. He is fluent in Spanish.

Benedict's mixed legacy, and the next pope

"The legacy of Benedict XVI will be mixed. I have seen that like his predecessor's, Benedict's project of conservative reform has attracted many young people toward a renewed sense of their Catholic identity. Yet, for every student so attracted by this vision, I find four or five who have little use for a Catholicism that seems focused in this country on opposing same-sex marriage or contraception to the apparent exclusion of all else. They do not find in his project any plausible way of life in response to their pressing concerns and often unspoken hopes."

"Might it be time to hope for that rarest of gifts, an able administrator of the church's positive legacy who can also begin the daunting work of addressing the concrete problems of the church's internal life?" — **Daniel Thompson, associate professor and chair, religious studies; 937-229-4539 or dthompson3@udayton.edu.**

Resignation as significant contribution to Church

"Pope Benedict XVI's resignation has set the stage for a new perspective for contemplating roles within the church. I believe this may be one of his most significant contributions to the Catholic church — not just a new perspective on papal leadership but something about the election of future cardinals, as well."

"As for the next pope, who is to say? The burgeoning challenges within and outside the church require a man who has a global

perspective, rich theological background and ability to communicate to the masses, particularly the youth of today. He needs to be a great communicator with the ability to bridge the tensions within the church. His life needs to be grounded with profound contemplative spirit and a deep listening heart." — **Sister Angela Ann Zukowski, M.H.S.H., director of the Institute for Pastoral Initiatives; contact Cameron Fullam at 937-229-3256 or fullam@udayton.edu.**

For more than 40 years, Sister Angela Ann Zukowski has served the church at the Vatican and around the world as an advocate for global communication. She was a member of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications (Vatican) 1994-2002 and received the "Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice" Medal from Pope John Paul II in Rome in 2001.

Shocking but not surprising

"There has been a kind of long-standing cultural expectation the pope should and will remain pope until he dies. And so there is legitimately an element of shock at this news. But there are several reasons why Pope Benedict's retirement should not be completely shocking:

- First, the 1983 revision of Canon Law makes explicit provisions for a pope to be able to retire.
- Second, Pope Benedict is known for wanting the papacy to be somewhat more functional and relatively less iconic and charismatic.
- Third, it has seemed for a few years now the pope has not been the one completely in charge. When he says that his strength is failing him, he is telling the truth."

— **Dennis Doyle, professor, religious studies; Currently teaching at the University of Augsburg, Germany; 011-49-821-598-5822 or ddoyle1@udayton.edu. Available for Skype interviews. Contact Cilla Shindell at 937-229-3257 or shindell@udayton.edu.**

Doyle is an expert in Vatican II, Catholic theology and the Catholic church and author of The Church Emerging from Vatican II.

Benedict redefines the papacy

"Pope Benedict XVI's statement is every bit as striking as his resignation itself. It deserves attention before talk turns to succession. This is not simply a retirement from the hectic pace of public office. Benedict emphasizes the humanity of the papacy and the demands of history. He humbly admits that he no longer possesses the mental and physical strength to lead the church as it faces "rapid changes" and is "shaken" by deep questions concerning the "life of faith." Always the theologian, Benedict is carefully refining the definition of the papacy even as he leaves it." — **Vincent J. Miller, professor and Gudorf Chair in Catholic Theology and Culture; 937-229-4564; vmiller1@udayton.edu.**

Miller is an expert on religion and politics, religion and consumer culture, the U.S. Catholic church's involvement in politics and public policy, social justice and public policy and the moral consequences of budgetary policies.

Resignation shows courage, humility, witness to accepting limits of age

"Benedict has shown a great deal of courage in resigning. He has recognized his limits and accepted them and this recognition has come no doubt with "prayer and suffering." He has shown a genuine humility in letting go of his office to allow someone physically more capable to take on the many demands of the contemporary papacy. In this age of longer life spans for those of us with access to medical care, he is a witness to letting go and accepting the limitations that come with advanced age." — **Sandra Yocum, professor, religious studies; 937-229-4322 or syocum1@udayton.edu.**

Yocum, president of the College Theology Society, is a well-known writer and lecturer nationally on U.S. Catholic life and thought. Her research interests include U.S. Catholic history and women in the Church. She's an associate professor of religious studies and former chair of the department.

U.S. media already discussing "candidates, campaigns and frontrunners"

"U.S. media markets and news programs are already viewing this decision and the consequent impending meeting of the conclave through the lens of American politics and culture, despite the fact these practices are not in place for the Vatican. News reporters and hosts talk about who would be a favorite, and who are the "candidates" for the next pope, but there is actually no public campaign, and often the person entering the conclave as the perceived frontrunner leaves as he entered — not as pope." — **Joe Valenzano III, assistant professor, communications; 937-229-2376 or jvalenzanoiii1@udayton.edu.**

Valenzano's research interests include rhetoric and public communication, political communication, religious communication and culture, and communication education. He has written about Pope John Paul II's death as a final homily and Pope Benedict XVI's trip to Turkey. He has a Ph.D. from Georgia State University in public communication. He teaches a course called "Priests, Preachers and Politics: Religious Communication"

Resignation brings certainty about future

"It is clear in making this announcement Pope Benedict XVI is attending to both the past and the future. First, he is careful to make sure that everyone knows his resignation is made freely in accordance with church law and that it is his certain intention to resign on a specific date and at a specific time so that there is no question the See of Rome will be vacant. There can be no repeat of the Great Western Schism when as many as three men claimed to be pope at the same time. Looking to the future, some theologians have lamented that the church had no explicit constitutional provision for a peaceful transition of office should the pope become unable to fulfill his duties due to illness or old age. Benedict's decision will have increasing significance in the future as medicine enhances human longevity and his successors with an alternative to the precedent set by Pope John Paul II, whose own conscience did not permit him to resign the office to which he had been called by God." —

William Portier, Mary Ann Spearin Chair of Catholic Theology; 937-229-4435 or wportier1@udayton.edu.

Portier is an expert on Catholic theology, U.S. Catholic history and Catholic higher education. He has written or edited several books, and contributed nearly 100 articles and reviews. He has been frequently quoted and interviewed by the national press on the U.S. Catholic church, evangelical Catholicism, church culture and young Catholics.

For more information, contact Cameron Fullam, assistant director of media relations, at 937-229-3256 or fullam@udayton.edu.