



MARYMOUNT HERMITAGE NEWSLETTER

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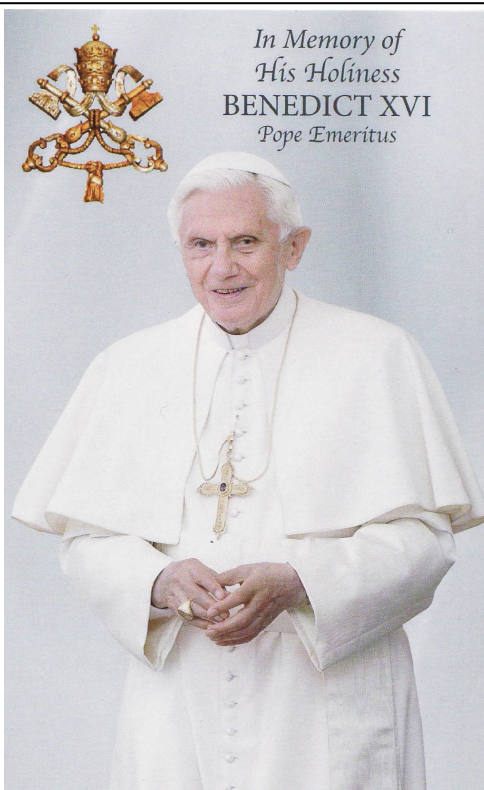
POPE BENEDICT: A BLESSING FROM GOD

By Sister Mary
Beverly, HSM

I want to share with you how important Pope Benedict XVI has been in my life. I never met him in person, but I did see him close by in the pope mobile at a Wednesday audience in Rome in 2009. (See photo pg. 3) This is my memoir of how Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI,

was a spiritual and intellectual mentor to me. This is my testament to what a great and holy man he was, and what a gift he was to the Church.

As a young priest, Joseph Ratzinger was a theological assistant to Archbishop Frings of Cologne during the Second Vatican Council held 1962-1965. I was in high school those years and I was not aware of Father Ratzinger as a peritus at the Council. I was only generally aware of the Council itself. Later in the novitiate 1966-1968, as a young religious, we studied the Vatican II documents, which was only the beginning of a life of study and teaching for me. I did not know then that Father Ratzinger was an important theologian and writer, who contributed greatly to the three major conciliar documents: *Sacro-sanctum Concilium* (on the Liturgy), *Dei Verbum* (on



the Word of God), and *Lumen Gentium* (on the Church)...in the order in which they were published.

After 1984, as a hermit at Marymount, I first read Ratzinger's major work, *Introduction to Christianity*. I realized it was a book of great depth and theological importance, but it was somewhat beyond me at the time. After that, I read *The Spirit of the Liturgy* and found a fountain of teaching and enlightenment. The topic was entirely new to me and very appealing. It was in that way that I began to see the work of Ratzinger (along with other theologians) in the Church's dynamic liturgical life. His teachings drew from both Scripture and Tradition in a clear, coherent, and cogent manner. Ratzinger was a prolific and accomplished author, with over 65 books to his name, but more fundamentally, he was a gifted teacher. As a teacher myself, I gravitated to him. Imagine his surprise and dismay when he was called by Pope John Paul II out of his academic life to be a bishop!

Father Joseph Ratzinger was made Archbishop of Munich and Freising, Germany, and also named a Cardinal in 1977. In 1981, Pope John Paul II asked him, much against his personal and professional desires, to be Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF). They had known each other at Vatican II and the Pope wanted him at his side as his right-hand man. One great work, which was a result of them being teamed up, was the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* published in 1994. The last time we had a catechism was after the Council of Trent and that was 500 years ago. Cardinal Ratzinger oversaw the writing and editing of this new compendium of the faith which had been requested by the world's bishops. It is a treasure and will be for generations to come. Together, it is fair to say, these two great men were the dynamic duo for the good of the Church. I have read this 800 page book more than once. I love it. The CCC has often been the basis of my classes, especially for RCIA and for religious and faith formation

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presentations for adults.

I began to read more of Ratzinger because the answers the CDF would give to questions about the faith coming in from worldwide sources. These short documents were published in *L'Osservatore Romano* (the Vatican paper) which, under Pope John Paul II, weekly published in English the homilies, speeches, travels and writings of the Pope. Questions to the Congregation and the answers Ratzinger and his team wrote were very instructive. I appreciated these documents, especially answers regarding prayer and the sacraments. Cardinal Ratzinger served 21 years as Prefect of the CDF. He once asked to retire, so he could study and write as was his heart's desire, but Pope John Paul II kept him on. Even with the death of Pope John Paul II, Ratzinger could not retire,



"Habemus papam!" On the loggia of St. Peter's on April 19, 2005.

because then, at the age of 76, he was elected Pope!

I have a favorite memory of the election of Pope Benedict XVI. At first I was thrilled. Then I made the resolution to read all his books (in English) which we had. I am sure it was not a complete set of all his translated works, but there were many. Sr. Rebecca Mary was with me in this resolve and we went over together to the library and hauled to our house all of his books. Truthfully, I did not complete my self-appointed task, but I did read a lot of his books at that time. One book in particular which I remember was new to me then: Daughter of Zion: Meditations on the Church's Marian Belief. Then, of course, as our new Pope, the teacher Ratzinger had a world-wide audience. His Wednesday audiences were published as books by Ignatius Press. I was always eager to buy, read and use these on topics such as the saints, the Fathers of the Church, prayer, and more.

Pope Benedict XVI wrote three encyclicals: *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love) on Dec. 25, 2005, *Spe Salvi* (Saved by Hope) on Nov. 30, 2007 and *Caritas in Veritate* (Love in Truth) on June 29, 2009. His two papal Exhortations are *Sacramentum Caritatis* (The Sacrament of Charity on the Eucharist) and *Verbum Domini* (on The Word of the Lord). Jesus of Nazareth, published in three volumes, is a regular resource for me. It is Pope Benedict's last major work, the fruit of a life-time of prayer, research, and writing. It made history and headlines because, in his humility, Pope Benedict did not want to publish this as a part of the Church's magisterium. So he had it privately published under his personal name. Many wished he had not done it that way because they thought it worthy of the official Church, but I believe it is a tremendous witness to his openness, wisdom, and humility. He courageously defended the faith of the Church, but he was at peace with others not agreeing with his theological opinions. As I had done with Pope John Paul II writings, I digested these encyclicals and documents and turned my notes into classes for adults in parish venues. I felt drawn to make the theological teachings of these two great Popes available to everyone. Now I have a great longing to again read Pope Benedict's writings and pray over them. That ought to be a project for the rest of my years! His writings are classics and will always be such to teach us and to build up the faith of the Church.

I have given a fairly intellectual, theological outline of Ratzinger's work and my relation to him, but one of my most vivid and emotional memories is when, as Dean of the College of Cardinals, he was designated as main celebrant and homilist for the funeral of Pope John Paul II. The homily was excellent, as always with him, but it was the poignant image he painted for us at the end of that historic homily that remains with me. Cardinal Ratzinger said that "Pope John Paul II is now looking at us from the window of the Father's House and blessing us." Millions of people had seen the Holy Father on TV or in person making that very gesture from the window of the papal apartment for 27 years. Now that same image was given to us as an eternal, heavenly icon. It still makes me cry because I know it is true and it touches my heart.

It was then that I think I began to have a more personal relationship with Ratzinger. These two great men loved and respected each other. I could love and trust Pope Benedict XVI in much the same way I did Pope John Paul II. I am convinced that Pope Benedict ratified and solidified the great legacy of the Polish Pope and, carrying on the gift of Vatican II, created stability in the Church. With his wise, gentle, good-humored, and humble demeanor, the German Pope was the leader the Church and the

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world needed for the next 8 years.

An important way I got to know and love Pope Benedict was through the remarkable interviews and books about him done by the German journalist, Peter Seewald. Salt of the Earth, Benedict XVI: Light of the World, Benedict XVI: An Intimate Portrait, and God and the World are books I have read more than once. As an anecdote to show the personalism and persuasive power of the gentle Ratzinger as Cardinal and Pope, Seewald introduces himself by admitting he was a non-practicing Catholic and had serious objections to the Church when he first interviewed Cardinal Ratzinger. But by the time of the second interview, Seewald was totally converted to the faith of the Catholic Church. Seewald himself tells of the one question and answer, which began his conversion: Seewald's Q: "How many ways are there to God?" Seewald admits that he expected Ratzinger to say: "Only one way, the Catholic Church." Ratzinger's A: "As many ways as there are people." Seewald reveals that the answer blew him away as he realized that faith is a relationship with God which, by definition, would be personal and unique. He was totally taken in by this truth. From this vignette, you can see the wise teacher and gentle pastor at work. I was touched by the relationship which grew up between Ratzinger and Seewald. It was so authentic and trusting, a true friendship. I recommend the above named four books by Peter Seewald. I note with interest that his newest book is to be published in

English in Nov. 2023, Benedict XVI: The Biography.

One of the points which Ratzinger made in the first interview was that he was born on Saturday, April 16, the Vigil of Easter, in 1927. He believed that it was a special grace, which put the liturgy first and foremost in his mind and heart. This was the personal impetus for his work on the liturgy at Vatican II, as Archbishop and teacher in his archdiocese, and as Pope giving us, for example, the Extraordinary Form. From peritus to Pope, his work had come full circle!

Another liturgical innovation which Pope Benedict instituted created a path for Anglicans, as whole parishes with their priests, to enter the Catholic Church. These Vicariates are an insightful, wise and courageous decision and have already borne great spiritual fruit in the Church.

I am in awe that Pope Benedict could read and speak 9 languages. For that and many other reasons, I can well believe what commentators have said: that he was probably the most intellectual pope the Church has ever had and certainly one of the most important theologians.

My last personal reflection about Pope Benedict is when he shocked everyone on February 11, 2013 by announcing he was resigning from the papacy effective on Feb. 28. He entered into silence and solitude for a life of prayer and seclusion at Mater Ecclesiae (Mother of the Church) Monastery on the grounds of the Vatican. Even though we heard almost nothing about him for ten years, as a hermit, I felt especially close to him. I united myself to his prayers and sacrifices and asked the Lord to ease his sufferings. I wondered, for instance, what the growing schism in the German Church was costing him. God alone knows.

It was reported that Pope Benedict's last barely audible words before he died on December 31, 2022 at 3 AM were "Jesus, I love you." You know that these simple words from a man of great intellect and learning show the soul of a saint. I do believe he will be canonized some day. I also predict that he will be declared a Doctor of the Church, even if we do not live to see it in our day. I believe it is the way of great saints to continue their charism and holiness in the life of the Church. We are seeing it begun already. At the Pope's funeral, I saw a large sign "Santo Subito". The Church is speaking an affirmation of holiness witnessed and ratifying it.

For the Diocese of Boise, Bishop Peter Christensen offered a Memorial Mass for Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI at the Cathedral on January 5, 2023. The Mass booklets we were given only had the texts of the songs. When I began to hear the Scripture readings, I thought: "I have never heard these used for a funeral! Who chose them?" Bishop Peter told us in his homily that the Holy Father had requested these readings. They were so utterly profound and mov-

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ing that I thought, "Pope Benedict is still teaching us!" It took me all of January 6 to watch the EWTN live-streamed two-hour video of the January 5 funeral Mass in Rome with extensive commentaries beforehand. I basically cried through the whole program.

"Holy Father, I love you. I miss you. Yet in my sadness, I am so grateful for all that you gave us: your whole self. You were a great gift, a continuing blessing. With your great heart, please pray for us now, even more powerfully from the House of the Father. We depend on you. Amen."

MEMORIALS

for

MICHAEL E. NOURSE

by

**Ceara, Brooke and John Nourse
Janey F. McGarry, Boise, ID**

for

ROBERT A. GREGER

by

Virginia Arnold, Washington, IN

for

**DR. HARROLD W. & LOIS
HATTEN**

by their children

for

SHIRLEY WILKINS

by

Richard Wilkins

COMMUNITY NEWS

By Sister Mary Beverly, HSM

CORRESPONDENCE: This work occupies me from November through January annually. If you sent a donation to Marymount Hermitage since December 22, I am still replying to these loving notes and generous gifts. Thank you for your patience!

NEW E-MAIL ADDRESS: Marymount Hermitage has a new e-mail address. It is on the masthead of the newsletter here. The local phone company originally hosted an e-mail server, but they are discontinuing it as of Feb. 28, 2023. Until that time, both the old and new servers are operative. Please update your address book, so I do not lose contact with you.

NEXT NEWSLETTER: I will not be able to produce and publish a February newsletter. Please visit the website by or after March 15, 2023 for the next newsletter. Thanks!

MEXICO CITY PILGRIMAGE: The only thing on my "bucket list" was to see Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico. By God's providence and the generous help of friends, I will finally be able to make this pilgrimage from February 15-21, 2023. Salt & Light Radio, our Catholic radio station in Boise, is sponsoring this pilgrimage and we will be accompanied by two Idaho priests and have daily Mass. My sister, Lucille A. Dungan, from Colorado Springs, CO will travel with me and we will be roommates. I ask prayers for us for safety and protection during this graced time. I promise to pray for you and your intentions when our Mother's eyes are on me.

R.I.P.: We lost another great churchman on January 10, 2023. George Cardinal Pell of Australia died in Rome at the age of 81. I recommend his Prison Journal in three volumes. I have a real sense of reading the modern version of the prison journal of the great English Saint Thomas More. Cardinal Pell is factual about the false accusations against him of child abuse and his wrongful imprisonment, including in solitary confinement, without giving in to self-pity or bitterness. The indignities which he suffered will shock you! He is forgiving of those who wronged him. The Supreme Court in Australia cleared him of any wrongdoing after 404 days. The Cardinal's prayers are heartfelt and beautiful. His distinctive Australian humor is a touchstone of authenticity. In his frankness, sometimes he is funny. Here is another modern-day saint. Get to know him, if you have reading time to do so. God bless you!

The MARYMOUNT HERMITAGE NEWSLETTER is published by Marymount Hermitage, Inc., a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation in the State of Idaho. The Hermit Sisters of Mary are a canonically approved, Catholic community of women hermits, following the Rule of St. Benedict. The newsletter is published each month by the 15th on our website only. The purpose of the newsletter is to share the spirituality and material progress of Marymount Hermitage. Please pray that we may be faithful to our way of life in prayer and penance, solitude and silence for the sake of the Church and the world. Donations are sincerely appreciated and are tax-deductible. Thank you in advance to those who have remembered Marymount Hermitage in their wills. God bless you!