



Dear Praying Friends in Europe,

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## The Legacy of Pope Benedict XVI



"Deus caritas est" was Pope Benedict XVI's first teaching letter, an encyclical on love as the centre of the Christian faith and the highest knowledge of God, who is love.

On the evening of his resignation on 11 February 2013, a mile-long bolt of lightning struck the dome of St Peter's Basilica, ending an age whose spirit he embodied. "I no longer belong to the old world, but the new one is not

really here yet either," was how the Pope Emeritus described himself. He had been a Pope "between the times".[1]

He was called home to the Father on New Year's Eve in 2022, which had become a visible turn of the times for Europe. His last words were: "Lord, I love you".

The passing of Pope Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger) on the last day of the year set an exclamation mark behind all the signs and proclamations of a turning point in 2022. With him went one of the greatest thinkers of our time, teacher of the Church, apologist and defender of the philosophical foundations of Europe, of law and human dignity. As a Theology Professor, Cardinal and Pope, he saw himself throughout his life as a co-worker of the truth (3 John 1:8) – God's truth revealed in Christ for the salvation of mankind. Like no other Pope before him, he worked to make the Word of God bear fruit for the Church and society. In the 1968 student uprising against church and state, Ratzinger's most famous book "Introduction to Christianity" helped generations of young people to find the truth in the person of God.

Pope Benedict envisioned the spiritual roots of Europe from the encounter of Jerusalem, Athens and Rome, the three pillars of Europe's identity: from Israel's faith in God, the philosophical reason of the Greeks and the legal thinking of

Rome. He reconciled reason and faith where, in the course of secularisation, modernity had called them as opposites. He warned against the denial of objective truth and a dictatorship of relativism, which would destroy the inner core of liberal democracies and bring about totalitarianism and the rule of political might over human rights. He recalled that human rights were developed from the conviction of a Creator God, from the idea of the equality of all human beings before the law, the recognition of the inviolability of the dignity of each individual human being and the knowledge of the responsibility of man for his actions. Freedom comes only with truth, and all that is true, good and beautiful is an expression of participation in the divine.

He encouraged the believers to be memory, conscience and imagination in a post-Christian world, and as a creative minority, to serve humanity with the best of Europe's heritage. At the World Youth Day 2005 in Cologne with a million young people from 200 nations, he called a new "Generation Benedict": "... only from the saints, only from God does true revolution come, the definitive way to change the world. [...] It is not ideologies that save the world, but only a return to the living God, our Creator, the guarantor of our freedom, the guarantor of what is really good and true." [2]

In the first part of his Jesus Trilogy, Ratzinger highlights two events in the life of Jesus with his disciples: the Confession of Peter (Mark 8:27-29) and the Transfiguration of Jesus (Mark 9:2-8). Let us pray that the theological legacy of Pope Benedict XVI will unfold so as to firmly establish the Church as a whole in confessing Jesus as the Christ, and that, in the time now to come, an experience of the glory of God will bear witness to the truth of this confession of Christians to the world: "This is my beloved Son; listen to Him!" (Mark 9:7).

[1] <https://www.vaticannews.va/de/papst/news/2022-12/papst-benedikt-xvi-tod-nachruf-joseph-ratzinger-vatikan-kirche.html>

[2] [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2005/august/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20050820\\_vigil-wyd.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2005/august/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20050820_vigil-wyd.html)

### Additional Prayer Points:-

- Let us continue to pray for those affected by the earthquake in Turkey as well as Syria and the continuing quakes and aftershocks.
- Pray for those involved in discussions to end the deadlock over the Northern Irish Protocol between the UK and the EU.

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### Update:-

Today marks the sad anniversary of the start of the war in Ukraine. This week there has been an increase in the rhetoric from both Putin and western leaders with no sign of a move towards any mediation or peace talks. If anything, the tone has become more belligerent. Let us pray for a breakthrough and a change of position. Pray also for the people of Ukraine who long for an end to the conflict and a return to peace.