After nearly a decade of retirement (2013-2022) following an eight-year pontificate (2005-2013), Pope Benedict XVI (born Joseph Ratzinger in 1927) died this morning in Rome at the age of 95. According to the official declaration issued by Matteo Bruni, director of the Holy See Press Office:

> "With sorrow I inform you that the Pope Emeritus, Benedict XVI, passed away today at 9:34 in the Mater Ecclesiae Monastery in the Vatican.
>
> Further information will be provided as soon as possible."

> Declaration of the Director of the Holy See Press Office, Matteo Bruni
>
> "With sorrow I inform you that the Pope Emeritus, Benedict XVI, passed away today at 9:34 in the Mater Ecclesiae Monastery in the Vatican.
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>
> — Holy See Press Office (@HolySeePress) December 31, 2022

The Vatican subsequently announced that the body of the deceased pontiff will lie in state in St. Peter's Basilica beginning at 9:00am Rome time on Monday, January 2 — Feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus — and that Pope Francis will preside over the funeral Mass on the morning of January 5 in St. Peter's Square.

> BREAKING UPDATE: #Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni has just announced that Benedict XVI's funeral will be celebrated by Pope Francis on Thursday, Jan 5, in St Peter's Square. He also confirmed that the Pope emeritus received last rites on Wednesday afternoon after the Holy Mass.
>
> — Diane Montagna (@dianemontagna) December 31, 2022

Earlier this week following his general audience address (Dec. 28), Pope Francis asked the faithful to pray "for Pope Emeritus Benedict, who is supporting the Church in silence. Remember him — he is very ill — asking the Lord to console him and to sustain him in this witness of love for the Church, until the end."

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Later that day, Vatican press director Matteo Bruni issued a statement with further details regarding Benedict's status of health, as reported and translated from the original Italian by journalist Diane Montagna:

> "Regarding the health condition of the Pope Emeritus, for whom Pope Francis asked for prayers at the end of this morning's general audience, I can confirm that in the last few hours there has been an aggravation due to advancing age. The situation at the moment remains under control, constantly monitored by doctors.
>
> At the end of the general audience, Pope Francis went to Mater Ecclesiae monastery to visit Benedict XVI. We join him in praying for the Pope Emeritus."

Following this announcement, Edward Pentin, longtime Rome correspondent for the *National Catholic Register*, reported:

> "Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI is suffering from aggravated kidney failure and had a recent modification to his pacemaker, an informed Vatican source has told the Register.
>
> The source said Benedict XVI has been experiencing 'kidney failure which has worsened in the last few hours.' The source added that the 95-year-old Pope Emeritus had a modification to his 'pacemaker about a month and a half ago to regularize his heartbeats' but stressed that it was unrelated to his kidney failure."

As of this writing, the Vatican has yet to confirm a specific cause of death.

The Spiritual Testament of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

Following the announcement of his death, the Vatican published a brief text called the "Spiritual Testament of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI" (German and Italian here; English here), which the late pontiff composed some 16 years ago (the text is dated Aug. 29, 2006).

"When, at this late hour of my life," the text begins, "I look back on the decades I have wandered through, I see first of all how much reason I have to give thanks. Above all, I

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thank God Himself, the Giver of all good gifts, Who has given me life and guided me through all kinds of confusion; Who has always picked me up when I began to slip, Who has always given me anew the light of His countenance. In retrospect, I see and understand that even the dark and arduous stretches of this path were for my salvation and that He guided me well in those very stretches."

The late pontiff goes on to thank his "parents, who gave me life in difficult times and prepared a wonderful home for me with their love," as well as his sister and brother (Benedict was the youngest of three children).

He then thanks God "for the many friends, men and women, whom He has always placed at my side; for the co-workers at all stages of my path; for the teachers and students He has given me," and asks "for forgiveness from the bottom of my heart from all those whom I have wronged in some way."

Next, he offers a word of exhortation "to all who were entrusted to my service in the Church," namely:

> "Stand firm in the faith! Do not be confused! Often it seems as if science — on the one hand, the natural sciences; on the other, historical research (especially the exegesis of the Holy Scriptures) — has irrefutable insights to offer that are contrary to the Catholic faith. I have witnessed from times long past the changes in natural science and have seen how apparent certainties against the faith vanished, proving themselves not to be science but philosophical interpretations only apparently belonging to science — just as, moreover, it is in dialogue with the natural sciences that faith has learned to understand the limits of the scope of its affirmations and thus its own specificity. For 60 years now, I have accompanied the path of theology, especially biblical studies, and have seen seemingly unshakeable theses collapse with the changing generations, which turned out to be mere hypotheses: the liberal generation (Harnack, Jülicher, etc.), the existentialist generation (Bultmann, etc.), the Marxist generation. I have seen, and see, how, out of the tangle of hypotheses, the reasonableness of faith has emerged and is emerging anew. Jesus Christ is truly the Way, the Truth, and the Life —and the Church, in all her shortcomings, is truly His Body."

"Finally," Benedict concludes, "I humbly ask: pray for me, so that the Lord may admit me to the eternal dwellings, despite all my sins and shortcomings. For all those entrusted to me, my heartfelt prayer goes out day after day."

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Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

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