

Immediate Release

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Bishop Gainer Releases Statement on Death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

HARRISBURG, Pa. – Today, the Most Reverend Ronald W. Gainer, Bishop of Harrisburg, released the following statement on the death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI:

“Today we mourn the death of our beloved Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. We thank God for his life and ministry and pray that the Lord, whom he served with fidelity and love, will welcome him to eternal glory. As we mourn his passing, we also pause to reflect on his life as the Vicar of Christ.

“As Holy Father, he led the Church for nearly eight years with strength, wisdom, and a strong witness to the value and dignity of the human person. His prolific writings and speeches leave us a great theological and spiritual legacy. His catechesis, encyclicals on central aspects of the faith, and his writings on Jesus of Nazareth are some of Pope Emeritus Benedict’s greatest contributions. It is not just that his writings and teachings were sound theologically, but they were eminently clear, rational and reverent. I will always remember Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI for his unfaltering teaching and witness that in all things – the liturgy, society, and our very lives – we must place God first.

“As a Cardinal and then also as pope, he promoted a rigorous dialogue between Christians and non-Christians, opening doors for dialogue that, in some cases, had not occurred in decades. His emphasis on valuing the spiritual and liturgical heritage of the Church are also items for which he will be remembered.

“Pope Emeritus Benedict also demonstrated great courage and leadership in addressing clergy sexual abuse. His leadership as Holy Father led to the dismissal of hundreds of abusers from the clerical state and he regularly met with survivors, listening intentionally to their pain and offering to pray with them. And then, when he recognized with humility that his health and age were preventing him from truly fulfilling the responsibilities of the Chair of Peter, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI made a courageous decision to step down – the first pope to do so in almost 600 years – and devote himself to a life of prayer.

“The source of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI’s strength was his deep faith in God and his intimate friendship with Christ. He was a man of deep prayer and contemplation. While we mourn with heavy hearts the passing of this humble pastor, teacher and pontiff, we draw our hope from the Paschal Mystery, the victory of Christ over death and the promise of Eternal Life.

“In closing, I share with you a powerful quote from Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, which he shared during World Youth Day in 2011: “Dear friends, may no adversity paralyze you. Be afraid neither of the world, nor of the future, nor of your weakness. The Lord has allowed you to live in this moment of history so that, by your faith, His name will continue to resound throughout the world.”

“May eternal rest be granted unto Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and may his soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.”

Tonight, Saturday, Dec. 31. at 5:30 p.m. at Saint Patrick Cathedral, Harrisburg, Bishop Gainer will celebrate Mass for the Solemnity of Mary Mother of God, during which we will remember and pray for Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

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The Catholic Diocese of Harrisburg was established on March 3, 1868. It covers 15 counties in south and central Pennsylvania, is home to 89 parishes and 35 Catholic schools, and has over 200,000 Catholics.