

From Our Sunday Visitor

Benedict XVI: Quick Facts About Our New Pope

Many questions are being asked about our new Pope Benedict XVI. Here are some of the more frequent queries. Check back regularly for more information, or email webmaster@osv.com with your questions.

Q. What about Pope Benedict and the Nazis?

A. The young Joseph Ratzinger was not a Nazi. He was only 6 years old when the Nazis came to power in Germany. His father was vehemently opposed to the party, but all young people were obliged to join the Hitler Youth, the youth wing of the Nazi party which combined sports and other activities with indoctrination. Resistance would have proven disastrous to his family so 14-year-old Joseph, who was in the seminary at the time, joined under duress, but left as soon as possible. Along with fellow seminarians, he was drafted into an anti-aircraft unit of the German army at age 18. He deserted two years later without having fired a shot.

Q. Why did he take the name “Benedict”?A. According to Associated Press reports: “Ratzinger told cardinals he wanted to pay homage to Benedict XV, known for tireless efforts to help refugees and reunite a world divided by what was then known as the Great War, an archbishop said.

The new pontiff, Benedict XVI, felt his namesake “had done much for reconciliation among peoples,” Berlin Cardinal Georg Maximilian Sterzinsky told reporters Tuesday after attending the conclave.”

A second reason he may have chosen the name is to pay homage to St. Benedict, the 6th century monk who was the founder of Western monasticism, thereby indicating that despite the lack of ardor for the Faith in Western Europe, he will continue to preach the Gospel in that part of the world.

A third reason may be subtle homage to Pope John Paul II. Pope Benedict XV followed the last saint pope—Pope St. Pius X. By choosing the name Benedict, Pope Benedict XVI may be sending a message about the sanctity of his own predecessor.

Finally, Pope Benedict’s birthday, April 16, is the feast day of a famous pilgrim, St. Benedict Joseph Labre. Since Pope Benedict’s birth name is Joseph, he now shares both names with his namesake.

Q. Who were the previous Pope Benedicts?

A. “Benedict” is one of the most popular names for a pontiff. Fifteen men have chosen the name prior to the current Pope.

Pope Benedict I, 575-579: A Roman, almost nothing is known about him except that he granted an estate to an Abbot Stephen of St. Mark’s.

Pope St. Benedict II, 684-685: Known for his knowledge of the Scriptures, his singing, and care for the poor.

Pope Benedict III, 855-858: Experienced a troubled papacy, including a rival pope, Anastasius.

Pope Benedict IV, 900-903: Another short reigning and troubled pope who crowned Louis the Blind as Emperor.

Pope Benedict V, 964-965: His pontificate was forcibly ended by Emperor Otho I who put his own man on the throne of Peter.

Pope Benedict VI, 973-974: Very little is know of his papacy except that he was strangled by a faction of nobles in Castle of Sant’ Angelo.

Pope Benedict VII, 974-983: Known for battling simony and championing monasticism.

Pope Benedict VIII, (Theophylact), 1012-1024: A layman, elected (and ordained) by force, he became a good and strong pope.

Pope Benedict IX, (Theophylactus), 1012-1024, 1032-1045, 1045: Only 20 years old when he assumed the Chair of Peter, he was deposed and reinstated twice, thus being the 145th, 147th and 150th pope.

Benedict X, 1056 (John Mincius): An antipope.

Blessed Pope Benedict XI, (Niccolo Boccasini), 1303-1304: A Dominican who restored peace with the French court, he died suddenly after 8 months.

Benedict XII, (Jacques Fournier), 1332-1342: Third of the popes who ruled from exile in Avignon, France.

Benedict XIII, an antipope, (Pedro de Luna), 1394-1417 or 23).

Benedict XIII, (Pietro Franceso Orsini), 1724-1730: A Dominican champion of ecclesiastical discipline.

Benedict XIV, (Prospero Lorenzo Lambertini), 1750-1757: Cheerful, witty, moderate, a statesman.

Benedict XV, 1914-1922: A peacemaker whose attempts to end war were met with disappointing failure, he is also the pope who canonized Joan of Arc.

Q. Is Pope Benedict XVI as hard-line and conservative as reported?

A. As Defender of the Faith, it was Cardinal Ratzinger's duty and responsibility to make sure that the teachings of the Church were clearly expressed and defended against the onslaughts of modern civilization. In his last homily before his election, he spoke of the need to be "adults in the faith," and not "children in a state of guardianship, tossed about by the waves and carried here and there by every wind of doctrine," warning against a "dictatorship of relativism which recognizes nothing as definitive and leaves as the ultimate standard one's own personality and desires."

Nevertheless, his role has now changed from Defender of the Faith to the Holy Father. Those who know him say that while he will never change his firm stands (which, by the way, are same positions as held by Pope John Paul II), our new pontiff is also a humble, pastoral good listener.

In an article in the Los Angeles Times, Cardinal Roger Mahony, Archbishop of Los Angeles, said of the transition from doctrinal watchdog to universal shepherd: "I think what you're going to see and hear is a very pastoral, spiritual dimension. Remember, he's no longer the chief theologian of the church in that same sense.... He is the chief theologian as being pope."

In addition, Pope Benedict XVI has promised to continue the course set by Pope John Paul II, including ecumenism, interreligious dialog, World Youth Day etc. saying in his first Mass, "We will not spare our forces to pursue the dialogs opened by my predecessor. With mutual understandings, we will lay down a foundation for a better future."

Q. What's the bear on Pope Benedict's coat of arms?

A. According to "Inside the Vatican" (<http://www.insidethevatican.com/latest-newsflash.htm0>), the bear with a pack on his back "is connected with a legend about Munich's first bishop, St. Korbinian. Traveling to Rome, Korbinian encountered a bear which attacked the horse which was carrying the saint's luggage. As punishment Korbinian made the bear carry his pack to Rome before releasing him. The bear reminds Ratzinger of Augustine's meditation on Psalm 72 (73). ...

"Ratzinger writes about it as follows:



The psalm speaks about the testing of faith, which seems to bring no earthly reward. The person who is faithful to God does not necessarily enjoy success. Often the cynic seems to prosper most. Why? The psalmist finds his answer as he stands before God and sees how insignificant material prosperity and success are, and what really counts and saves: 'I was stupid and did not understand, no better than a beast in your sight.' Augustine takes the 'beast' in this verse to be a draft animal. He compares his work as a bishop to that of an ox pulling a wagon. ... Augustine had chosen a scholar's life — only to find that God harnessed him to his wagon, to pull it through the world. How often Augustine rebelled against all his petty duties, which took him away from what he knew was his deepest calling. The psalm helped him overcome his bitterness. It enabled him to say: 'Yes, Lord, I am a beast, a pack animal, an ox — but that is how I serve you, you hold me in your hand.' As the farmer's ox is close to him and works for him, so Augustine realized that his humdrum duties brought him close to God. He was doing the Lord's work, closer to him than all others, essential to him.

"Isn't Korbinian's bear, compelled against his will to carry the saint's pack, a picture of my own life? 'I am no better than a beast in your sight' — but a beast close to God. What more can I say about my bishop's

years? The legend says that Korbinian set the bear free once he reached Rome. It doesn't tell us whether the animal went to the Abruzzi Mountains or returned to the Alps. Meanwhile I have carried my pack to Rome and wander for some time now through the streets of the Eternal City. When release will come I cannot know. What I do know is that I am God's pack animal, and as such close to him."

The Official Biography of Pope Benedict XVI, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, former prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, President of the Pontifical Biblical Commission and of the International Theological Commission, Dean of the College of Cardinals, was born on April 16, 1927 in Marktl am Inn, Germany. He was ordained a priest on June 29, 1951.

His father, a police officer, came from a traditional family of farmers from Lower Bavaria. He spent his adolescent years in Traunstein, and was called into the auxiliary anti-aircraft service in the last months of World War II. From 1946 to 1951, the year in which he was ordained a priest and began to teach, he studied philosophy and theology at the University of Munich and at the higher school in Freising. In 1953 he obtained a doctorate in theology with a thesis entitled: "The People and House of God in St. Augustine's doctrine of the Church." Four years later, he qualified as a university teacher. He then taught dogma and fundamental theology at the higher school of philosophy and theology of Freising, in Bonn from 1959 to 1969, in Munster from 1963 to 1966, and in Tubinga from 1966 to 1969. From 1969, he was professor of dogmatic theology and of the history of dogma at the University of Regensburg and vice president of the same university.

He was already well known in 1962 when, at Vatican Council II at the age of 35, he became a consultor to Cardinal Joseph Frings, archbishop of Cologne. Among his numerous publications, a particular post belongs to the "Introduction to Christianity," a collection of university lessons on the profession of apostolic faith, published in 1968; and to "Dogma and Revelation" an anthology of essays, sermons and reflections dedicated to the pastoral ministry, published in 1973.

In March 1977, Paul VI appointed him Archbishop of Munich and Freising and on May 28, 1977 he was consecrated - the first diocesan priest after 80 years to take over the pastoral ministry of this large Bavarian diocese.

Created and proclaimed cardinal by Paul VI in the consistory of June 27, 1977, he assumed the titles of the suburbicarian Church of Velletri-Segni (April 5, 1993) and of the suburbicarian Church of Ostia (November 30, 2002).

On November 25, 1981 he was nominated by John Paul II as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith; and as president of the Biblical Commission and of the Pontifical International Theological Commission.

He was relator of the 5th General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (1980).
He was president delegate to the 6th Synodal Assembly (1983).

Elected vice dean of the College of Cardinals November 6, 1998, the Holy Father approved his election, by the order of cardinal bishops, as dean of the College of Cardinals on November 30, 2002.

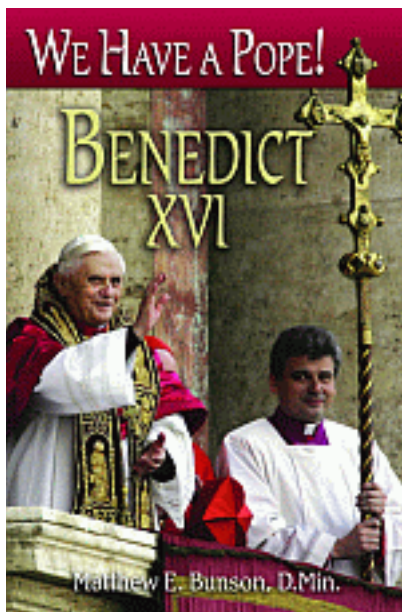
As President of the Commission for the Preparation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, after 6 years of work (1986-92) he presented the New Catechism to the Holy Father.

He received an honoris causa degree in jurisprudence from the Free University of Maria Santissima Assunta on November 10, 1999.

He became an honorary member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, November 13, 2000.

Curial Membership:

- Secretariat of State (second section).
- Oriental Churches, Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, Bishops, Evangelization of Peoples, Catholic Education (congregations).
- Christian Unity (council).
- Latin America, Ecclesia Dei (commissions). -*V.I.S.*



We Have a Pope! Benedict XVI by Matthew Bunson, D.Min.

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