



MARYMOUNT HERMITAGE

NEWSLETTER

2150 Hermitage Lane Mesa, Idaho 83643-5005

Website: www.marymount-hermitage.org

Tel. (208) 256-4354

E-mail: marymount@ctcweb.net

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A HERMIT'S REFLECTIONS AS THE POPE RESIGNS

By Sister M. Beverly, H.S.M.

When the phone rang at 6:45 AM today, Feb. 11, 2013, I wondered why anyone would be calling me so early. I was just about to leave the house here and walk to chapel. It was a Protestant friend calling from her hospital bed to tell me news of her surgery and recovery and mentioning that in the world news the Pope had retired. (With all due respect to my Catholic friends, their early morning e-mails quickly followed.) After I hung up the phone, I sat down and cried. I love Pope Benedict XVI so much; he has been my mentor as a teacher of the faith and Scripture. I read him daily, constantly, and quote him often. I will miss him terribly. I see his decision as emblematic of his life and pontificate: courageous, graced, and full of clarity of mind and heart. He is so humble and wise and this historic decision bears witness to these virtues.

When I finally had time after prayer and work periods this morning to go to the Vatican website, I discovered something that none of the secular media outlets have mentioned. Someone retiring to pray is not news worthy? The detail of the Pope's plans for his retirement, which I found stirring, is that he will retire to a cloistered monastery at the Vatican to pray. Wow! Does that ever give inspiration to me for my life of prayer as a hermit! That was (and is) a singular grace for me. The Pope specifically said: "I wish to also devotedly serve the Holy Church of God in the future through a life dedicated to prayer." It is such a tremendous witness to the importance of silence, solitude and prayer in the Church and the world especially today.

Today is the Memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes and World Day of Prayer for the Sick. I re-

flected on how appropriate it is that the Holy Father would choose a Marian feast to announce his retirement due to advanced age. Certainly we should include him in our daily prayers as we do all our frail elderly and sick. I also think that it is a witness to the importance of Mary, Mother of the Church, that the Holy Father would resign under her mantle, so to speak.

February 28, 2013 is the effective date of the Pope's retirement which coincides with my father's 90th birthday. It is an historic day I shall certainly never forget. I do wonder what we will call the retired Pope. Will he be Cardinal Ratzinger again? Will he be referred to as Pope-emeritus Benedict XVI? I also wonder if he will do any writing. I suspect he will, but I also anticipate that his future writings will only be published after his death. Who knows? Everyone has their own questions and points of curiosity. This has not happened in the Church for almost 600 years, so none of us alive today has ever experienced this before.

As my own act of devotion and solidarity in prayer, I removed the framed photograph of our Holy Father in the hallway and put it under the altar in chapel. I will leave it there until we have a new pope.

A new pope is a gift from the Holy Spirit to the Church and the world. It is really a very exciting prospect. Let's continue to pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the Cardinal-electors and for the success of the conclave. We can already be praying for the man the Lord has chosen, whoever he is and his future ministry as chief shepherd. In this Year of Faith, we entrust ourselves anew to the loving Providence of God the Father.