Vatican



Retired Pope Benedict XVI attends the opening of the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican in this Dec. 8, 2015, file photo. (CNS/Stefano Spaziani, pool)

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The Vatican denied that retired Pope Benedict XVI has a degenerative neurological disease or paralyzing condition after his brother, 94-year-old Msgr. Georg Ratzinger, told a magazine that Benedict had a debilitating disease.

In an interview published Feb. 13 in the German weekly entertainment magazine, Neue Post, Ratzinger said Benedict suffered from a nerve disease that was slowly paralyzing him.

"The greatest concern is that the paralysis could eventually reach his heart and then everything could end quickly," Ratzinger was quoted as saying.

"I pray every day to ask God for the grace of a good death, at a good moment, for my brother and me. We both have this great wish," he added.

Although news about the interview also was published on the German edition of the Vatican News website, the Holy See press office said in a statement Feb. 15 that "the alleged news reports of a paralyzing or degenerative illness are false."

"In two months, Benedict XVI will turn 91 years old and, as he himself recently said, he feels the weight of years, which is normal at this age," the statement said.

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In a letter to an Italian newspaper dated Feb. 5, Benedict said that "with the slow diminishing of my physical strength, inwardly I am on a pilgrimage toward Home."

"It is a great grace in this last, sometimes tiring stage of my journey, to be surrounded by a love and kindness that I never could have imagined," Benedict wrote.