Vatican
Vatican News
Retired Pope Benedict XVI sits with Ratzinger Prize winners

Retired Pope Benedict XVI sits with Ratzinger Prize winners Joseph H. H. Weiler, professor of law at New York University School of Law, and Jesuit Father Michel Fédou, professor of dogmatic and patristic theology at the Centre Sèvres in Paris, during a visit to the Mater Ecclesia monastery at the Vatican on Dec. 1, 2022. Also seated are Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, president of the foundation, and Archbishop Georg Gänswein, Pope Benedict's private secretary. (CNS photo/courtesy of Joseph Ratzinger-Vatican Foundation Benedict XVI)



by Christopher White

Former Vatican Correspondent (2021-2025)

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Retired Pope Benedict XVI's health condition remains serious, but stable, according to a Dec. 29 statement from the Vatican press office.

"The pope emeritus managed to rest well last night, he is absolutely lucid and alert and today, although his condition remains serious, the situation is currently stable," said Vatican spokesperson Matteo Bruni in a communique.

"Pope Francis renews his invitation to pray for him and to accompany him in these difficult hours," it continued.

Bruni's statement is the first official update to be provided on the retired pope's health since his original Dec. 28 communication confirming that the former pope's condition was deteriorating due to advanced age.

On Wednesday, at the conclusion of his general audience, Pope Francis unexpectedly asked for prayers for the 95-year-old Benedict XVI, saying that he is "very sick." After the audience, Francis visited the retired pope at the monastery inside the Vatican where Benedict has lived since resigning the papacy in 2013.

Following the surprise news of the retired pope's health, prayers poured in from Catholic bishops and episcopal conferences, as well as from Jewish leaders.

Twenty-four hours after news of his declining health rippled around the world, the Diocese of Rome announced that a Mass for retired Pope Benedict XVI would take place on Dec. 30 at the Basilica of St. John Lateran, celebrated by Rome's Auxiliary Bishop Guerino Di Tora.

On Thursday, Dec. 29, thousands of tourists continued to fill St. Peter's Square, queuing to visit the basilica, while television crews from around the world descended upon the square awaiting further updates on the retired pope's condition.

To date, the Vatican has not commented on the exact nature of Benedict XVI's underlying health conditions. The most recent publicly available photo of him was taken on Dec. 1, capturing the frail former pope visiting with theologians at his residence.