Vatican
Vatican News
A gray-haired man in a suit talks to a bishop seen from the back with Pope Benedict XVI's boc



Justin McLellan

Vatican Correspondent

View Author Profile

jmclellan@ncronline.org
Follow on Twitter at @m/McLellan_Js



Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Vatican City — January 3, 2023
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Representatives from the world's Christian churches will travel to the Vatican to attend the funeral Mass of Pope Benedict XVI in St. Peter's Square Jan. 5.

As of midday Jan. 3, two dozen Christian churches and ecumenical organizations had announced they would have official representatives at the liturgy for the retired pope, who died Dec. 31 at the age of 95.

Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople appointed Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon and Metropolitan Polykarpos of Italy to represent him at the funeral.

During a Divine Liturgy New Year's Day, Bartholomew described the late pope as a "great theologian" who had many Orthodox students during his time as a university professor, and that he personally heard "Benedict saying that he got to know Orthodoxy better thanks to his Orthodox students."

The spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians also recalled a joint declaration he signed with Benedict during his trip to Turkey in 2006, in which the two called for their faithful "to take an active part" in working toward full unity between the Catholic and Orthodox churches "through prayer and significant gestures."

Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, head of external relations for the Russian Orthodox Church, will attend the funeral in Rome with the blessing of Russian Patriarch Kirill of Moscow.

In a statement issued Dec. 31, the Russian patriarch praised the late pope's "significant contribution to inter-Christian cooperation" and to "the defense of traditional moral values."

Kirill also remembered his three meetings with Benedict between 2005 and 2007, before he had become patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church in 2009, saying he had the opportunity to witness Benedict's "sincere respect for the tradition of the Russian Orthodoxy."

Advertisement

Three representatives of the Anglican community will attend the funeral; Archbishop Ian Ernst, the archbishop of Canterbury's representative in Rome, will lead the delegation on behalf of Archbishop Justin Welby.

In a statement Welby praised the "courageous and humble step" Benedict took in resigning the papacy, adding that by choosing to resign the late pope "acknowledged the human frailty that affects us all."

Bishop Anthony Poggo, secretary-general of the Anglican Communion, which comprises 42 autonomous Anglican churches, said Benedict's "theological wisdom has been of immense benefit not only to Catholics, but to countless faithful in other Christian traditions."

"Anglicans are deeply grateful for the wisdom we have received from Pope Emeritus Benedict," he added.

The Orthodox churches of Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Macedonia and the Orthodox Church in America also named representatives to the funeral.

The Assyrian Church of the East and various Oriental Orthodox churches, including the Coptic, Armenia, Syro-Malankara, also planned to send high-ranking clerics to the funeral.

Various Protestant churches also will have a presence at Benedict XVI's funeral. Representatives of the World Methodist Council, the World Evangelical Alliance, and the Lutheran Evangelical Church in Rome were scheduled to attend.

The ecumenical delegations are much more limited than for a funeral of pope who died in office. In 2005, Bartholomew attended the funeral of St. John Paul II, along with then-Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, and Kirill when he was head of foreign ecclesiastical relations for the Russian patriarchate.

This story appears in the **The Ratzinger/Benedict XVI legacy** feature series. View the full series.