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A view of the Mater Ecclesiae Monastery where Pope Benedict XVI lived after he resigned, inside the Vatican, Tuesday, March 5, 2013. The converted monastery in the Vatican gardens that served as Benedict’s retirement home will once again house a small community of nuns. Pope Francis signed a note Oct. 1, 2023, ordering the Mater Ecclesiae monastery to resume its original purpose as home within the Vatican walls for communities of contemplative nuns, the Vatican said Monday. St. John Paul II had created the monastery for that purpose in 1994. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini, File)

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The converted monastery in the Vatican gardens that served as Pope Benedict XVI's retirement home will once again house a small community of nuns.

Pope Francis signed a note Oct. 1 ordering the Mater Ecclesiae monastery to resume its original purpose as a home within the Vatican walls for communities of contemplative nuns, the Vatican said Nov. 13. St. John Paul II had created the monastery for that purpose in 1994.

Francis invited a community of Benedictine nuns from his native Buenos Aires to take up residence starting in January, the Vatican said in a statement. The aim is for the six sisters of the Benedictine Order of the Abbey of St. Scholastica of Victoria to support the pope's ministry through their prayers, "thus being a prayerful presence in silence and solitude," it said.

When Benedict decided in 2012 he would retire in early February 2013, he had the recently vacated monastery renovated in secret so it would be ready for him and his papal family to move into. Benedict died there on Dec. 31.

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During Benedict's 10-year retirement, the monastery came to epitomize the problems of having two popes living together in the Vatican. It became the symbolic headquarters of the anti-Francis conservative opposition that still considered Benedict an important point of reference.

After Benedict died, Francis ordered his long-time secretary, Msgr. Georg Gaenswein, to move out and relocate to Germany.

While Francis has given no indication he plans to retire any time soon, he has made clear that if he does step down, he would not follow in Benedict's footsteps by taking up retirement residence in the Vatican. He has said he would instead live somewhere else in Rome.