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Church reform group applauds Benedict for 'wise decision to resign'

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NCR Today

Benedict Resigns

FutureChurch, a church reform group based in Ohio, congratulated Pope Benedict XVI in a statement Monday "for his wise decision to resign," saying "it takes courage to recognize when one no longer has the physical strength and health to fulfill the responsibilities of one of the world's most demanding jobs."

"This precedent-setting decision, at least for the modern era, is pointing the Church away from a monarchical model where a leader rules for life," said Sr. Christine Schenk, executive director of FutureChurch, in a press release. "Pope Benedict is making it clear that papal leadership is an office, and doesn't belong to any one person. This is good for the Church, and bodes well for the future."

A member of the organization's board of trustees, Mary Louise Hartman, pointed to past instances where a papacy's final years was filled with "delayed, poor or politicized decisions," and said that the pope's resignation signals he understands that reality "and is taking steps to avoid problems that come with trying to govern when one is in declining health."

FutureChurch has focused its mission on seeking greater participation for all Catholics in the life and leadership of the church. That includes calling for married and celibate priests, opening the diaconate to women, and providing resources and support to parish communities faced with closing churches and parishes.

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