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## US Secretary of State Kerry: Wishes of 'peace and health' to Pope Benedict

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Benedict Resigns

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry says the U.S. government is "grateful to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI for his leadership of and ministry to the world's 1.2 billion Catholics."

"He has been a man of action and principle, working to promote human rights and dignity in places around the globe where they are too often denied, and a voice of clarity and conviction about our obligations as stewards of a fragile planet," Kerry, himself a Catholic, said in a statement.

Remembering Pope Benedict's visit to the U.S. in 2008, Kerry states: "As I heard Pope Benedict say during the Mass he celebrated in Washington nearly five years ago, Americans remain a people of hope and America a land of freedom and opportunity."

"He believes, as we do, that the qualities that have made our nation strong can also help make the world freer and more just."

"We have been honored to work with the Holy See during the nearly eight years of his papacy and look forward to continued collaboration in areas of common interest to our nation and to the Catholic Church," Kerry concludes. "We wish Pope Benedict great peace and health and we will keep him in our prayers."

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