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Benedict intends to live 'hidden from the world'

by Wire Services

Benedict Resigns

Vatican City — Addressing church leaders for one of the last times of his papacy, Benedict XVI said Feb. 14 that he intends to live 'hidden from the world' in 'a life dedicated to prayer' after his retirement Thursday.

But news that his closest aide will assist his successor raised the issue whether Benedict will continue to exert influence on the papacy even in retirement.

The Vatican's top spokesman said Archbishop Georg Gänswein, the pope's former personal secretary, will remain in his current role as head of the papal household after the election of Benedict's successor.

A monastery in the Vatican Gardens is currently being renovated for the pope's future residence. It will 'guarantee him a certain autonomy and freedom,' but at the same time, allow him to remain in the Vatican. Gänswein is expected to live with Benedict there.

Benedict appointed Gänswein prefect of the Papal Household, a role that entails setting up the pope's agenda and meetings, on Dec. 7, when arguably he had already decided to retire. *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican's semiofficial newspaper, reported Feb. 12 that the decision to step down had been made after Benedict's March 2012 trip to Mexico and Cuba.

Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi, head of the Vatican press office, said Gänswein will leave the Vatican with Benedict on Thursday, when the pope's resignation becomes effective at 8 p.m.

Benedict and his secretary, together with four lay religious women who served in the papal apartment during his eight years as pope, will remain in the papal villa in Castel Gandolfo, outside Rome, as

cardinals from all over the world gather to elect a new pope.

Lombardi dismissed questions over Gänswein's role and its possible influence on the next pope. "It's a very practical position, having to do with the pope's appointments," he said. "It is not involved in matters of governance."

Asked what title Benedict would use after Thursday, Lombardi had said that was a question still being studied, but it seemed to him that the most accurate title would be "bishop emeritus of Rome."

When questioned again Feb. 14, he said it still was not clear, though many experts had been voicing their opinions in the media. One thing is certain, he said, "being a bishop is a result of a sacrament," and that cannot be taken from the pope.

"Being a cardinal, on the other hand, is a title, not the effect of a sacrament, and so it has a different kind of value or importance," he said.

In addition, he said, Benedict XVI "is his name" and that won't change.

Asked if there would be a public ceremony for the breaking of Benedict's fisherman's ring, Lombardi said he believed the act -- the responsibility of Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone as chamberlain of the Holy Roman Church -- would take place in private, as it does after a pope dies.

Asked if Benedict would receive a pension, Lombardi said a retirement fund had not been set up, "but obviously he will be taken care of." Italian media reported that the pension for a retired Italian bishop is about \$3,340 per month.

Asked if Benedict would continue wearing the white papal cassock, the spokesman said he doubted that, since the white robes have a symbolic significance in the popular imagination.

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