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Scenes from a papal resignation

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Benedict Resigns
Rome

At 8 p.m Thursday, the reign of the 265th Pope, the 264th successor of St. Peter, came to an end, having lasted 7 years, 10 months, and 9 days.

As Pope Benedict XVI left the Vatican for the last time as the reigning pontiff three hours earlier, pilgrims and admirers came to St. Peter's Square to see his white helicopter fly away.

As jumbo-tron screens showed the final moments -- Benedict saying goodbye to the Roman curia, then waving to the crowd one last time before entering the helicopter -- many could be seen wiping away tears.

Others were holding high banners of appreciation -- one group of pilgrims even held a some 14-foot high wooden cross -- in hopes of notice from above as the chopper circled the square's iconic colonnades and then passed near the obelisk.

As the bells of St. Peter's -- the same bells which will announce the election of Benedict's successor -- slowly ceased ringing, people in the crowd lingered well past dusk.

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