

Pope Benedict to concelebrate at Sunday's sainthood Mass

Joshua J. McElwee | Apr. 26, 2014 NCR Today
Vatican City

Retired Pope Benedict XVI will be attending Sunday's ceremony at the Vatican making Popes John XXIII and John Paul II saints of the Roman Catholic church and will concelebrate at Mass with Pope Francis and thousands of other cardinals, bishops, and priests, the Vatican announced Saturday.

Like many other things surrounding Benedict -- the first pope to resign in six centuries -- the announcement is historic, representing the first time a reigning pope will celebrate Mass with his predecessor. It also raises the specter of two living lives popes together honoring two of their predecessors.

Benedict, Vatican spokesman Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi said at a briefing Saturday, "has accepted an invitation to attend" from Francis. The former pontiff, said Lombardi, will not be celebrating at the altar with Francis, but will be sitting with other concelebrating prelates under a tent in St. Peter's Square.

Around one million people are expected to converge near the Vatican from around the world Sunday for the event in the Square, during which Francis is naming Popes John XXIII and John Paul II as saints. John led the Catholic church from 1958-63; John Paul II from 1978-2005.

At a briefing Thursday, the Vatican said it expects other concelebrates for the Mass to include about 150 cardinals; 1,000 bishops; and 6,000 priests. Some 270 deacons will also attending to help with the distribution of communion.

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