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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE

Resignation of Pope Benedict XVI

SPEECH

Thursday, 14 February 2013

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Page 1541
Questioner
Speaker O'Dwyer, Kelly, MP

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Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (12:22): With a name like O'Dwyer, it probably does not surprise too many people that I would rise to speak on the recent announcement of Pope Benedict XVI's retirement.

It is true that most people do not get the opportunity to retire on their own terms. People in this House should know this better than most. Yet today we speak about a man who has made his own decision to retire on his own terms, putting his congregation of 1.2 billion Catholics throughout the world and his Roman Catholic faith before his personal gratification or aggrandisement.

Born in rural Germany into a modest family, Joseph Ratzinger continued that sense of humility throughout his entire life. Growing up during the Nazi era, the young Joseph was witness to some of the worst crimes against humanity ever committed. He would often see his local parish priest beaten by Nazi troops. Despite this, Joseph still managed to complete his studies in philosophy and theology in the Higher School of Philosophy and Theology of Freising and the University of Munich.

Upon graduation in 1951, he received his priestly ordination, at which point he commenced teaching at the higher school of Freising. In 1953 he obtained his doctorate in theology with a thesis entitled *The People and House of God in St Augustine's Doctrine of the Church*. He continued his academic career with a dissertation entitled *The Theology of History in St Bonaventure*, thus becoming accredited to teach at university. Throughout his teaching career he lectured at the Higher School of Philosophy and Theology of Freising, at Bonn, at Munster and at Tübingen. At the culmination of his teaching, he held the chair of dogmatics and history of dogma at the University of Regensburg, where he was also vice-president of the university.

On 25 March 1977, Pope Paul VI named him Archbishop of Munich and Freising. On 28 May of the same year he received episcopal ordination. His career progressed on 24 June of the same year when Paul VI made him a cardinal under the priestly title of 'Santa Maria Consolatrice al Tiburtino'. In 1978 he was made a member of the conclave that elected John Paul I, at which point he was named special envoy to the Third International Mariological Congress.

Most people know of his progression in the later years when he was, on 6 November 1998, approved by the Holy Father as Cardinal Ratzinger as Vice Dean of the College of Cardinals and was submitted as one of the Cardinals of the Order of Bishops. He was approved as Dean, elected in November 2002, and together with this office he was entrusted with Suburbicarian See of Ostia.

Who can forget that on 19 April 2005 he was elected Pope, to be known as Pope Benedict XVI. He chose the name in respect to Pope Benedict XV who he referred to as a 'courageous prophet of peace'. Pope Benedict XVI dedicated his papacy to the teachings of the church in an attempt to bring people back into the arms of religion. In his address to the Catholic Academy of Bavaria entitled 'Why I am still in the church' he famously said:

... one can only be a Christian in the Church, not beside the Church.

In Australia we hold a very special regard for Pope Benedict as it was he who canonised Mary MacKillop, Australia's only saint. We also feel a special connection with him because he visited us in 2008 when he presided over World Youth Day.

In a statement released by the Pope, he said:

In today's world subject to so many rapid changes and shaken by questions of deep relevance for the life of faith, in order to steer the boat of Saint Peter and proclaim the Gospel, both strength of mind and body are necessary, strength which in the last few months, has deteriorated in me to the extent that I have to recognise my incapacity to adequately fulfil the ministry entrusted to me.

We can, however, in this place celebrate his grand contribution to his faith and to the many Catholics and non-Catholics around the world. I know that in my electorate of Higgins the Catholic Church has been involved in many good works, whether it is in aged care, in educating our young, in caring for our sick in the hospitals that they have set up or in helping the poor.

I know that there are many good Catholics in my local community who volunteer tirelessly each and every week to help hand out food for the homeless and to help provide accommodation for those people. I pay tribute to their good work and I highlight the inspiration Pope Benedict has provided to so many.

As so many have also said in this place, we also stand against sexual abuse, particularly child sexual abuse. I know that the Pope himself has been incredibly concerned about some of the shameful history in the Catholic Church by some who have committed such atrocities. It is important that this be dealt with expeditiously and treated very seriously as we know it will be.

We wish Pope Benedict all the very best in his retirement. We wish him health and happiness in his future years. It is his dedication to his faith and putting the needs of others above his own that have made him such a popular leader of the Roman Catholic faith. We pray for him in his retirement and wish him well.