

ON THE DEATH OF POPE EMERITUS BENEDICT XVI (Joseph Aloisius Ratzinger)

This guidance is provided by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference to complement local preparations for relevant commemorations of the life and ministry of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

The Holy See

Funeral rites are celebrated for a deceased pope in accordance with the The Roman Ritual and The Roman Missal, and with the apostolic constitution, *Universi Dominci gregis*. Prior to the death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, the Holy See had not published information about the funeral rites for a pope who had resigned the papacy. The Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff is likely to announce how the funeral rites for Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI will be celebrated and to publish the texts for these rites as booklets (<https://www.vatican.va/content/liturgya/en.html>) .

The apostolic constitution, *Universi Dominci gregis*, issued by Pope Saint John Paul II in 1996, deals with the vacancy of the Apostolic See and the election of the Roman Pontiff. As Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI had resigned the papacy, these provisions will not take effect. Chapter V of *Universi Dominci gregis* deals with the funeral rites of the Roman Pontiff. Some of the provisions of this chapter might apply for the funeral of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI may have asked for certain arrangements to be made for the funeral rites to be celebrated for him, which would be honoured.

The last funeral rites to be celebrated for a deceased pope were for Pope Saint John Paul II, who died in April 2005 while still in office. The arrangements for his funeral can be reviewed at https://www.vatican.va/gpII/documents/index_en.htm#FUNERAL%20MASS%20FOR%20THE%20ROMAN%20PONTIFF%20JOHN%20PAUL%20II .

Dioceses and Parishes

The cathedral church is the appropriate place for the diocesan commemoration of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. Parishes ought also to commemorate Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in parish churches.

The Roman Missal provides, from among the Prayers for the Dead, three sets of Orations ‘For a Pope’, pages 1465-1467. Of these, set B, page 1466, is better suited for a pope emeritus. There are five Prefaces for the Dead, pages 656-665. Eucharistic Prayers I, II and III provide for the deceased to be mentioned by name, and Eucharistic Prayers II and III include a text for use in Masses for the Dead. There is a Solemn Blessing which can be used ‘In Celebrations for the Dead’, pages 720-721.

The **Lectionary**, volume III, provides a selection of readings from Sacred Scripture for ‘Masses for the Dead’, pages 849-890. From among these texts, suitable readings should be chosen for use in a Mass to commemorate Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

In the **Universal Prayer** (Prayer of the Faithful), the following sample intercessions might be used as appropriate:

That God may grant Pope Emeritus Benedict a share in the heavenly liturgy,
for he devoutly exercised the ministry of priest and bishop in the earthly liturgy,
let us pray to the Lord.

For Pope Emeritus Benedict, who governed Christ’s Church with love and fidelity,
that Christ may welcome him to the place prepared for him in the Father’s house,
we pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for Pope Emeritus Benedict,
who united himself with the Lord's Passion and Cross,
that through death he may come to share in the glory of the Lord's Resurrection.
Lord, hear us.

The Divine Office, volume I, provides 'The Office for the Dead'. Morning Prayer (Lauds), pages 471*-479*, and Evening Prayer (Vespers), pages 483*-489*, are well suited for public celebration. In addition to the selection of concluding prayers, a collect from the Orations 'For a Pope' given in The Roman Missal could be used. Hymns for 'The Office for the Dead' are given on pages 573*-574*.

The **Catholic Worship Book II** provides a selection of hymns for funerals, numbers 141-157, and Latin funeral chants, numbers 158a-158e. Other suitable hymns are listed in the Liturgical Index under 'Funerals'.

Biography

A biography of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI is available on the Vatican website at <https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/biography.index.html>

His papal coat of arms was:

