



News Release

1,200 gather for Mass of Thanksgiving to honour the ministry of Pope Benedict XVI

Edmonton, February 28, 2013 — Catholics in the Archdiocese of Edmonton joined their brothers and sisters around the world Thursday in paying a prayerful tribute to Pope Benedict XVI as his pontificate officially ended at 12 noon Mountain time.

At a special Mass of Thanksgiving for the Gift of Benedict XVI, Archbishop Richard Smith wore the white and gold chasuble that was worn by Pope John Paul II when he celebrated Mass at St. Joseph's Basilica during his visit to Edmonton in 1984. Twenty bishops from across Western Canada joined in the celebration, along with priests from the Archdiocese and the Ukrainian Eparchy of Edmonton, and about 1,200 faithful in the pews.

In his homily, Archbishop Smith paid tribute to the Holy Father, who is retiring due to weakening health.

"In Pope Benedict XVI we have been blessed with an extraordinarily gifted teacher, who in every letter, speech, message and homily of his Petrine ministry has explained the faith in a manner at once intelligible and attractive," Archbishop Smith said. "This wonderful servant of the truth has taught us, time and again, that the truth is beautiful, and that we must allow ourselves to be embraced by it if we are to be truly free."

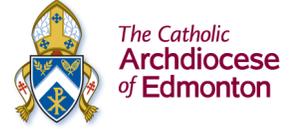
Archbishop Smith said Benedict XVI was dedicated to the truth and not afraid to speak it.

"In the halls of government he challenged political leaders not to sever civil legislation from natural law, nor politics from ethics, called on them to uphold freedom of conscience and religion, and invited them to make space in the public square for voices of reason informed by faith. When the world economy entered a crisis in 2008, he was the sole world leader clearly to identify the root of the problem as a crisis of morality, and called for a complete reshaping of the economic order based on love, gratuitousness and human solidarity.

"In an era when many are sensitive to the need to protect and care for the environment, he agreed but went much farther than most, reminding us that genuine ecological concern must be grounded in the truth of the ecology of man himself."

He also called the pope a great teacher for the Church and the world, and noted that he made substantive overtures to people of other faiths.

"Within his corpus of extraordinary teaching is a human heart beating with a profound love for Jesus Christ, his Lord and friend. With his resignation, this Successor of Saint Peter has demonstrated that he, too, is ready to acknowledge his weakness, trusting that Jesus is at work in and through it for the good of the Church.



“Today we testify that, yes, the Lord has, indeed, done wondrous things through the man we have grown to love and admire as our Holy Father for these past eight years. We are profoundly grateful to God for the blessing that has been given to us in Pope Benedict XVI, and ask the Lord now to fill his heart with the assurance of the love and appreciation of all cooperators of the truth.”

As president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Archbishop Smith will be travelling to Rome to attend the inaugural Mass of the next pope.

[Backgrounder: Electing a New Pope](#)

[Backgrounder: Assembly of Western Catholic Bishops](#)

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