



## TAMIL WRITERS GUILD

### **The Vatican and the Tamil Holocaust**

Whilst the aftershocks of the Pope's resignation is still being felt in every part of the world especially in the Vatican itself, it is important to briefly compare this development with the suffering of the Sri Lankan Tamils, especially during the final stages of the Sri Lankan government's slaughter of innocent Tamils in the early months of 2009.

The recent '[The Economist](#)' article makes no bones in highlighting the behind the scene true turmoil in the Vatican as one of the last remaining bastions of unbiased reporters of the world affairs including Sri Lanka.

The Vatican's attitude towards the suffering of the Tamils of Sri Lanka especially since 2009 has been of great concern to Tamil Catholics. Sri Lanka's President Rajapaksa had an audience with the Pope before he embarked on the killing of over 40,000 (UN estimate) Tamil civilians in 2009, despite Tamil protests to the Holy See.

Whilst many Western world leaders refused to meet him, President Rajapaksa's audience with the Pope in Vatican sent tremors among the Catholic world, especially to the over 85 million Tamils in both Tamil Nadu (South India) and Sri Lanka.

This distasteful event raised questions about the Pope's credibility towards human rights and human dignity which are fundamentals of Christianity. However, it was quickly recognised as bad advice to the Pope by his bureaucrats in the Vatican, as well as the seemingly influential Sri Lankan Sinhalese Cardinal Malcom Ranjith.

The efforts of the Tamil Writers Guild in requesting (by registered post) an explanation over three years to this blatant Vatican connivance in the Tamil's holocaust in 2009 by accepting the visit of President Rajapaksa to the Vatican went unanswered. This raised serious questions about the mechanism around the Holy See and how he was being informed of the world events in the spirit of the teachings of Jesus Christ. TWG gave up writing to the Vatican after recognising that Vatican bureaucrats were not too concerned about the Tamil killings, human rights or human dignity, in contrast to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Incidentally, the last Pope John Paul II ardently and fearlessly raised his voice for the suffering people in all parts of the world.

Our suspicion and the bad deeds of Vatican bureaucrats have now culminated in the momentous resignation of the Good Pope Benedict XVI, with the latter having failed to assert his authority to steer the ship of the Catholic church on the teachings of Jesus Christ. It is recognised that it was no easy decision for Pope Benedict and he must have sweat blood in his own garden of Gethsemane, as Jesus prayed before his crucifixion.

As exclaimed by [The Economist](#), it may be that wolves have won this time, but these wolves including Cardinal Malcom Ranjith of Sri Lanka better prepare for a long term permanent hibernation in their respective holes to avoid the inevitable cull by the new Pope.

In the meantime, we must all join to pray for the brave Pope Benedict XVI and for over 40,000 innocent Tamils of Sri Lanka who sacrificed their lives in 2009 as unknown martyrs for the freedom and dignity of mankind.

**Tamil Writers Guild Editorial Board**, London, UK. 17 Feb 2013.

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A Cogent and Effective Response from a Tamil Perspective



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The Economist Article: Pope Benedict's resignation - See you later

<http://www.economist.com/news/international/21571864-papal-resignation-ecclesiastical-earthquake-how-church-interprets-it-will>

## Pope Benedict's resignation

See you later

The papal resignation is an ecclesiastical earthquake. How the church interprets it will shape its future

Feb 16th 2013 | VATICAN CITY | From the print edition

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LOOKING as ever on the bright side, the Vatican's habitually good-humoured spokesman, Father Federico Lombardi, averred: "Before Easter, we'll have the new pope." But no amount of breezy optimism, nor any amount of praise for the integrity and achievements of Pope Benedict XVI, can detract from the momentous historical significance of his announcement on February 11th—or from the fact that the conclave to elect his successor will be one of the oddest in the papacy's two millennia. Benedict is one of only a handful of popes ever to resign (see article), and the first for almost six centuries. Father Lombardi could not say what Benedict's title would be, nor how Christ's vicar on earth should be addressed in retirement.

Though stubbornly conservative in many respects, Benedict is also a radical (as displayed in his encyclical of 2005 on the theology of love). But he kept his most radical utterance till the end. Speaking in Latin at a routine event, he said: "After having repeatedly examined my conscience before God, I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry." That

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several of the cardinals present failed to understand must have highlighted for Benedict, an ardent Latinist, how his church has lost touch with its traditions.

How his resignation is construed will have great effects on his flock and the choice of its next shepherd. Some Catholics will see it as a betrayal of his divine mission. Marco Ventura, professor of law and religion at Siena University, wrote in his blog: "The theologian who held relativism as the worst foe of the church will be the pope who relativised the papacy." Popes have always suffered to the end, notably Benedict's predecessor, John Paul II. In a comment the Vatican said had been taken out of context, the late pontiff's secretary, Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, said: "one doesn't come down from the cross."

### **Sacrifice on the altar**

Yet even the iron-willed Polish pope twice prepared letters of resignation in case he became incapable. Some wonder if the 85-year-old Benedict had received bad news about his health. Vittorio Messori, co-author of a book with him when he was merely Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, noted that the resignation came on the anniversary of the first apparition of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes, commemorated by Catholics as the World Day of the Sick.

No visible evidence suggests that the pope was suffering from more than old age. Since 2011 he has used a mobile platform to cover the vast spaces within St Peter's Basilica. It emerged on February 12th that he had an operation to replace the battery in his pacemaker a few months ago. It was, the Vatican said, "absolutely routine".

Benedict had been toying with resignation for almost four years. Visiting the earthquake-stricken Italian city of L'Aquila in 2009, he left his pallium, the woollen band that is a symbol of the papal office, at the tomb of Celestine V, a reluctant pope who resigned to pray. In 2010 he said that a pope who became unable to do his job properly "has the right, and in some circumstances even the duty, to resign".

The Vatican daily, *L'Osservatore Romano*, said he reached his decision after an exhausting visit last March to Mexico and Cuba. The impending rigours of the Easter celebrations may have played a role too. Father Lombardi said it was the outcome of a continuous process of reflection. Benedict "didn't take the decision and then fix a calendar". Yet it is striking that shortly before Christmas the last nuns left the cloistered convent to which Benedict intends to retire, because of works on a new chapel and library. Benedict said in his resignation address that "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 govern the barque of St Peter and proclaim the gospel, both strength of mind and body are necessary. Strength which has in the past few months deteriorated in me to the extent that I have had to recognise my incapacity adequately to fulfil the ministry entrusted to me."



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By that account, he was giving the papacy a reality check: in the 21st century a vast global organisation is not best entrusted to an octogenarian in failing health. The pope is also a bishop (of Rome); members of the Catholic episcopate normally retire at 75.

If so, the lesson for the 117 cardinal-electors when they meet, probably in mid-March, is to find someone young and vigorous. Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the archbishop of New York, is a feisty 63. Cardinal Peter Erdo, of Budapest, is only 60. Cardinal Odilo Pedro Scherer, who heads the archdiocese of São Paulo, and Cardinal Peter Appiah Turkson, a Ghanaian who runs the Vatican's development department, are 63 and 64 respectively.

But other interpretations of Benedict's departure will weigh heavily on the conclave. He was not just tired, but worn out by the conflicts and machinations that have beset the Vatican during his reign. He is to retire to the Mater Ecclesiae convent, founded in 1992 by John Paul II specifically to create a prayerful counterweight to the worldliness of the Roman Curia, the church's central administration.

In Benedict's first sermon as pope, he asked the faithful to pray for their new shepherd "that I may not flee for fear of the wolves". His fans feel the wolves won. A toxic row between his secretary of state, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, and other Vatican factions lay behind the so-called Vatileaks scandal last year. The pope's own butler was found to have leaked documents clearly damaging to Cardinal Bertone. According to the journalist who received them, the butler was part of a broader network of Vatican employees and officials bent on exposing corruption and cronyism beyond the Leonine Walls.

### **Wolves and weaklings**

To his critics Benedict is not a victim, but a weak pope who gave free rein to an ill-prepared and unsuitable secretary of state. The Vatileaks documents cast a bad light on him, too. A report (said to be explosive) by three cardinals on a tendering scandal has yet to be released. The Vatican has also struggled to convince international bodies that its in-house bank is no longer used for money-laundering and tax evasion. The feuds within the Curia will also be central to the selection of Benedict's successor. Cardinal Bertone will prepare the conclave and be the Vatican's head of state in the period between February 28th when Benedict steps down and the proclamation of his successor. His arch-rival and predecessor, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, is Dean of the College of Cardinals, which will elect him.

It will require a pope of towering stature to heal the wounds and overcome the divisions that have been opened in the past eight years. Will the new man feel intimidated or reassured by the knowledge that just across the Vatican gardens is his unseen predecessor, praying fervently for the recovery from its many ills of the Church to which he devoted his life?

From the print edition: International