

Young Catholics define their hopes for the next papacy

Kate Childs Graham | Feb. 12, 2013 NCR Today
Benedict Resigns

At 6 a.m. yesterday, when National Public Radio reported the news that Pope Benedict XVI would be resigning in a matter of days, my first thought was, "Wow." My second was, "Why?" And my third was, "What qualities do we need in our next pope?"

I took the third to a group of young progressive Catholics, and here are some of their thoughts:

- Openness to dialogue with other religions, with dissenting voices within the church and with non-Catholic Christians
- An active prayer life filled with devotion
- Willingness to open Vatican decision-making positions up to new voices and new ideas
- Commitment to the principles of Vatican II, not just with lip service, but genuine awareness of the greatness of spirit and life that were present at that council
- Pastoral competencies, not simply intellectual prowess
- Apolitical; someone who encourages spiritual leaders, especially in the U.S., not to use their positions for explicit and overt political influence
- Humble and modest; someone who understands that he has much to learn still despite his teaching and authoritative role
- Someone who is more concerned with restoring the church's integrity than its orthodoxy
- Someone who is committed to accountability in the church
- Someone from Africa, Asia, Latin America or the Middle East. Not because, as a lot of commenters out suggest, such a person would necessarily reflect the concerns of the world's needy any better than anyone else who dedicates his life to moving up in the church hierarchy, but because it would be a needed challenge for North American and European Catholics to have someone from a part of the world our privilege allows us to ignore as our most visible leader.
- Someone whose only concern for obedience is obedience to the Spirit
- Transparency, especially around issues of child abuse and cover-ups
- Someone committed to open dialogue rather than rote condemnation, especially regarding controversial and complex issues like sexuality, gender equality and church governance
- A very, very, VERY good listener, and then other good things will follow

Now, I'll leave the question to you, the trusted commenters of the *National Catholic Reporter*: What qualities do you think we need in our next pope?

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