

## **Pope Francis says Pope Benedict's conscience told him to resign**

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Pope Benedict XVI's resignation was "a great example" of what it means to follow one's conscience through prayer, Pope Francis said during his Sunday Angelus address to pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square.

Following one's conscience doesn't mean chasing after one's own self-interests; it calls for listening to God, understanding his will and carrying out his plan with determination, Pope Francis said.

Pope Benedict provided a "recent marvelous example" of following one's conscience, Pope Francis said, evidently referring to the retired pope's decision to leave office.

"Pope Benedict XVI gave us this great example when the Lord led him to understand, in prayer, what was the step he should take," Pope Francis said. "He followed, with a great sense of discernment and courage, his conscience, that is, the will of God, who spoke to his heart."

References to the retired pope drew applause from the crowd, which Pope Francis urged on with encouraging gestures.

Jesus provides many examples of how important it is to follow one's conscience by "listening to his father's voice in his heart and following it," he said.

Jesus, who is God-made-man, had free will and wasn't "remote-controlled" by God.

However, Jesus never made his decisions by himself; he was always "in full union" with God and obeyed him after listening carefully and closely to his will, the pope said.

Because he acted after careful consideration "together with his father" and in line with the truth, Jesus was able to be decisive and sure, and "found the strength and light for his journey."

"We, too, have to learn to listen to our conscience more," the pope said.

"But be careful: This doesn't mean following oneself, doing what interests me, what's worthwhile for me, what I like," he said.

The conscience is "listening to the truth, to the good, listening to God" and this is fostered by having a close relationship with God, "who speaks to my heart and helps me to discern, understand the path I have to take."

God also helps people "go forward and be faithful" once they have made their decision, he said.

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