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"Continue to pray for me"

At the beginning of Lent, Benedict XVI explains why he has renounced the Petrine ministry and asks everyone to keep praying for him and for the future Pope.

02/13/2013

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As you know, I have decided--thank you for your kindness--to renounce the ministry which the Lord entrusted to me on 19 April 2005.

I have done this in full freedom for the good of the Church, after much prayer and having examined my conscience before God, knowing full well the seriousness of this act, but also realizing that I am no longer able to carry out the Petrine ministry with the strength which it demands.

I am strengthened and reassured by the certainty that the Church is Christ's, who will never leave her without his guidance and care. I thank all of you for the love and for the prayers with which you have accompanied me.

Thank you; in these days which have not been easy for me, I have felt almost physically the power of prayer--your prayers--which the love of the Church has given me. Continue to pray for me, for the Church and for the future Pope. The Lord will guide us.

Today, Ash Wednesday, we begin the liturgical time of Lent, forty days that prepare us for the celebration of Easter.

It is a time of special effort in our spiritual journey. Forty days is the time Jesus spent in the desert before beginning his public life, where he was tempted by the devil.

In reflecting on the tempting of Jesus in the desert we are invited to consider a key question: What is the most important thing in my life? What place does God have in our existence?

The temptations faced by Jesus show us the risk of “instrumentalizing” God, of using him for our own interests, for our own glory. Giving God first place in the face of temptation requires “converting,” following Christ and making his Gospel the real guide of our life. It means recognizing we are creatures,

that we depend totally on him, on his love; that only by “losing” our life for his sake can we gain it.

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