

## Homily New Year 2023 Death of Pope Benedict XVI

**Cardinal Vincent** spoke about Pope Benedict XVI and his visit to England.

**Before Pope Benedict's visit in 2010** the two weeks of criticism, rancour and distress expressed by some, dissipated. And then we saw in the person of Pope Benedict, nothing to do with the name that he'd been given of "*God's Rottweiler*," but at the end of the visit, as one commentator said, he appeared as ***everybody's favourite grandfather***. We saw his courtesy, his gentleness, the perceptiveness of his mind and the openness of his welcome to everybody that he met.

**One of the highlights** was the drive down the road approaching Buckingham Palace, down The Mall, decorated on either side with papal flags and Union Jacks – packed with people on both sides. It was a warm, rapturous welcome to the Pope of Rome in this country, which has for the last 400 years, struggled with the understanding of its relationship to the Catholic Church.

**On that trip** the Holy Father went to Hyde Park and the stage, which a week before had been used for The Proms, for music. The Cardinal said, "*Tonight, it's not music, but it's prayer.*" And Pope Benedict said, "*Music is prayer, you know, music is prayer too.*" And it was that kind of breadth of his understanding of the human spirit that whenever we are moved by music, then we're moved towards God.

**Obviously**, the moment he came to this cathedral was stunning and the celebration of the Mass was most beautiful. And then he walked to the main doors of the cathedral and met the piazza full of young people who were patient, they had waited a long time, but were rapturous in their applause and they're welcome for the Holy Father.

**In Westminster Abbey**, standing with the Archbishop of Canterbury, he echoed the great visit of his predecessor, Pope St John Paul II in Canterbury Cathedral, signalling the great healing of an ancient wound.

**There was also** his visit to St Peter's Home in Vauxhall, where he literally sat among the elderly and didn't shy away from identifying himself as somebody in that same phase of life. He talked about the treasure of the elderly and protecting and nurturing that treasure of elderly people in our lives.

**At his visit to Westminster Hall**, meeting with members of parliament, he called for a proper dialogue between the world of reason, and therefore politics, and the world of religion – of faith. In fact, he explained in that speech how faith needs reason and reason needs faith, echoing that phrase again of his predecessor that faith and reason are the two wings on which the human spirit soars.

**He appealed to the great parliamentary**, democratic tradition of this country which has always been rooted in rational and measured discourse.

Pope Benedict built on the impact of the visit of Pope St John Paul II which shifted the presence of the Catholic Church in this country. That visit, especially the visit to Westminster Hall, still resonates – it still gives Catholic politicians a platform and a continuing respect.

Pope Benedict was through and through a gentleman, through and through a scholar, through and through a pastor, through and through a man of God – close to the Lord and always, always his humble servant.

**Prayer:** *Loving Father, we ask you to welcome Pope Benedict into eternal life, rewarding him for his selfless devotion and service of your Church. May his example live on in our Church in the ambassadors of Christ guiding our daily living. As the family of the Church, we pray in communion that you will forgive any human frailty or transgression and bring him into the light of your presence where, one day, we may celebrate your infinite love and mercy together. May he rest in peace. Amen.*