

CHURCH

Benedict XVI's letter: why now?

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Caro Don Bux,

finalmente trovo un po' di tempo per rispondere al Suo scritto del 19 luglio, consegnato a me in occasione della Sua visita nel *Monastero "Mater Ecclesiae"*. La vera risposta alle domande, ventilate da Lei, si trova nelle prime sei righe di *numero 1* del Suo testo. Tutto il resto – dice Lei stesso – è un problema "non oggettivo ma solo nostro, mentale". Vorrei scrivere perciò solo alcune brevi osservazioni.

Gli "storici autorevoli" e gli "altri teologici" secondo me non sono veri storici neppure teologici. Le speculazioni da loro proposte sono per me assurde. Dire che nella mia rinuncia avrei lasciato "solo l'esercizio del ministero e non anche il *munus*" è contrario alla chiara dottrina dogmatica-canonica, citata da Lei in numero 1. Se alcuni giornalisti parlano

The publication of Benedict XVI's letter to Monsignor Nicola Bux, dated 21 August 2014, in which he reaffirms the full validity of his resignation from the papacy, has attracted considerable interest and raised questions.

We will not address the comments of those who are now prisoners of convictions that have more to do with sectarian logic than adherence to the Catholic

faith. Nor will we address the comments of those who, to paraphrase the judgement of 'Father Abraham' in the parable of the rich man, would not be 'persuaded even if someone rose from the dead'.

Instead, let us turn to a legitimate question that our readers have asked us:

Why publish this letter after 11 years, rather than when the controversy was still ongoing? Firstly, because it was 'private correspondence' and Monsignor Bux wanted to keep it that way. But above all, he wanted to avoid the letter becoming further fuel for the war between opposing factions over Benedict XVI's resignation and Francis's pontificate. The disorderly and surreal reactions of those who have prospered on bizarre theories about Benedict XVI's resignation in recent years justify Monsignor Bux's decision.

W Monsignor Bux explains this in the introduction to the correspondence contained in the appendix to the book *Realtà e utopia nella Chiesa* (ed. Omni Die): 'Because, with the death of Pope Francis and the election of Pope Leo XIV, he considers the emotional phase opened by Benedict XVI's resignation to be over.'

Therefore, the publication of Benedict XVI's letter not only puts an end to much speculation, but also entrusts that resignation to history alongside all the critical assessments that can be made today. In order to fully understand its meaning, it should be remembered that the letter must be read in the context of the questions that Monsignor Bux gave to the Pope Emeritus during an audience on 21 July 2014. At the end of the hour-long conversation, which covered topics including liturgy, the interpretation of Vatican II, and Christian unity, Monsignor Bux gave Benedict XVI a letter, which is also included in the book. Written just over a year after his resignation, it contained the reflections and observations of many authoritative friends on his decision and its aftermath.

The replies written by Benedict XVI a month later are now handed over to history and are open to critical evaluation. In the appendix to the book, Monsignor Bux offers his assessment of the Pope's letter, which only partially answers the questions he was asked concerning the Petrine ministry and the consequences of Benedict XVI's resignation.

The book, of which the correspondence constitutes the appendix, offers an original interpretation of the last sixty years of Church history, providing a backdrop to the story of the renunciation of the papacy by offering a comparison between John Paul II and Benedict XVI on the one hand, and Francis and Monsignor Tonino Bello on the

other.

Therefore, if read without prejudice, the book written in Italian provides an opportunity for reflection and deeper understanding, which may stimulate further evaluation.