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**Statement of The Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano
Bishop of Rochester
Upon the death of His Holiness, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI
December 31, 2022
Vigil of the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God**

Today's announcement that Our Holy Father Emeritus, Benedict XVI, has died, causes great sadness in our hearts as we have truly come to know, love and admire deeply this Successor to Saint Peter for the guidance that this Vicar of Christ gave not only to Catholics but to all people of good will. We unite with our Holy Father, Pope Francis, and the entire Church Universal and all people of faith in mourning the death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

In his resignation from the Chair of Peter on February 28, 2013, Benedict XVI again demonstrated his extraordinary love for the Church and her cornerstone, Jesus Christ. Placing the proclamation of the Gospel and the salvation of souls above all else, His Holiness accepted in humility that his age and health did not permit him to fulfill the duties of his office as he would wish. Therefore, Our Holy Father Emeritus, humbly acknowledging that his health had deteriorated, asked that his successor soon be elected in solemn conclave in order to provide for the spiritual and pastoral needs of God's people.

Yet, the profound humility that shone forth in the announcement of Benedict XVI made him even stronger and more powerful by his personal act of faith. He had carved out a place in our hearts and there he shall ever remain. In living a life of solitude these last several years, he continued to pray fervently for us and for his successor, Pope Francis. At the time of his resignation, Benedict XVI said, in his own words, that he would continue devotedly to "serve the Holy Church of God in the future through a life dedicated to prayer."

Over these years, Benedict XVI, no doubt, had contemplated his departure from this life and was well prepared to meet the Eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ, whom he served with an undivided heart and whose face he longed to see. We now accompany our Holy Father Emeritus as he crosses over the threshold of this earthly life into that place the Lord has prepared for him from the beginning of time. Like the first pope, Saint Peter, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI had answered again and again the question that Jesus addressed to Simon Peter by the Sea of Tiberias: "Simon, Son of John, do you love me more than these others?" with the words, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you!" (John 21:15-17).

On this day, while there is sadness in our hearts, we do in faith rejoice with grateful hearts that this Successor to Saint Peter now comes into the presence of the

Eternal Father to live forever in His presence. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, in union with our Holy Father, Pope Francis, and the Universal Church and all people who know and cherish goodness, gives thanks to God for the life of His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, and for his burning desire and Petrine tenacity to serve Christ's Bride, the Church, and her Founder, Christ the Lord, in charity and in faith, with little concern for the glory of this world, but rather fixing his eyes upon the glory of eternity! We will continue to be inspired by his teachings so brilliantly presented by one who spent his entire life in pursuit of the Truth according to his motto, "*Cooperatores Veritatis*," "*Cooperators of the Truth*."

We also continue to pray for His Holiness, Pope Francis, who shared that special bond with Benedict XVI as brothers in the Petrine Office. May the Lord sustain Pope Francis as he continues to serve the People of God with love, fidelity and devotion to Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

On a more personal note, approximately one hour after the announcement of the election of Pope Benedict XVI to the Chair of Peter on April 19, 2005, I entered the Co-Cathedral of Saint Joseph in Burlington, Vermont, to be ordained a Bishop. I spoke of this memorable occasion at my first visit with His Holiness in September 2005. It is a moment that I will never forget as he seemed genuinely pleased that we shared such joyous occasions on the same day.

I ask all our parishes, schools and diocesan agencies to join in prayer for the repose of the soul of Benedict XVI with special Masses and including his name in all the prayers of the faithful during this time of mourning. I will offer a Solemn Mass for our deceased Holy Father Emeritus on **Wednesday, January 4, 2023, at 7:00 p.m., at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Rochester**. I pray that all our parishes, schools and diocesan agencies will be represented at this Solemn Mass.

Begging the intercession of Our Mother, Mary, whose Solemnity we are soon to celebrate honoring her as the Mother of God, we commend the soul of Benedict XVI to the mercy of God. May his noble soul and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God rest in peace.

Given from the aula of the Chancery Offices of the Diocese of Rochester on this thirty-first day of December, in the Year of Our Lord two thousand and twenty-two, and to which I herewith affix my signature and place upon it the seal of the Diocese of Rochester.

+ Salvatore R. Matano

 The Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano
 Bishop of Rochester

