A Statement from Bishop Anthony Fisher OP, Bishop of Parramatta on the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI

Bishop Anthony Fisher OP, the Bishop of Parramatta said that the resignation of Pope Benedict is a time of grieving but thanksgiving for Catholics.

"The resignation of Pope Benedict XVI on health grounds is a cause of great sadness for the world's 1.2 billion Catholics, but also of great gratitude. This Pope has given his all," Bishop Anthony Fisher said.

In Pope Benedict's only visit to Australia in 2008 he began his time in the Diocese of Parramatta resting for three days in Kenthurst.

"Australians will remember him first, as the World Youth Day Pope, joining the young people of the world in Sydney in 2008. Here he engaged as a great teacher and spiritual grandfather to half a million young people. He also made his historic apology to victims of clergy child abuse while he was here in Sydney." The NSW Bishops will repeat the apology to victims tomorrow in their Lenten Pastoral letter.

"Secondly, he is the Pope who canonised Australia's first saint, St Mary MacKillop. He recognised in her a woman of great faith who helped to build this country through education for the poor. This great spiritual leader is a holy man himself and therefore readily recognises holiness in others."

Bishop Anthony will be offering Mass 12:30pm today at the Parramatta Cathedral and has asked for other Catholics in the Diocese to join him in prayer for the Holy Father and the Church.

"We thank Pope Benedict for giving himself heart and soul to the task of bringing Successor of Peter despite declining health. We now pray for Australia's elector, Cardinal George Pell, and the other Cardinals who must choose a new Pope, that they will be inspired by the Holy Spirit to find us another great spiritual leader."

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