The Pope's resignation is a courageous act, says POLSIS academic

Posted on Wednesday 13th February 2013

Dr Gëzim Alpion (/staff/profiles/government-society/alpion-gëzim.aspx) , Lecturer in Sociology in the Department of Political Science and International Studies, who specializes in the Sociology of Religion, was interviewed on the significance of Pope Benedict XVI's sudden resignation by the BBC WM's Pete Morgan on his Breakfast Show on Tuesday, 12 February 2013.

Dr Alpion, who has published on Mother Teresa's relationship with the Vatican and is currently working on a new book addressing this issue, praised the Pope's decision to step down as a courageous act. This reveals that, unlike his predecessor, John Paul II, who was literally incapacitated in the final years of his papacy, the current Pontiff understands that the Church needs not just a figurehead but an active leader.

Asked if the appointment of a new pope will result in a changed Catholic Church, Alpion said that the Church is inherently conservative and as such no single pontiff, irrespective of his authority, can do much on his own to radically change such a long established traditional institution. On the other hand, the resignation should not worry the Church or Catholic believers because this will not result in any schism. The new pope will have the support of Benedict XVI.

On the question of the selection of the new pope, Alpion argued that, although Benedict XVI will not cast a vote himself, he will have a say, although indirectly, in the appointment of his successor. After all, the Pope has appointed a significant number of cardinals who owe him a debt of gratitude and share his conservative views.

Alpion concluded that Benedict XVI has never been conformable with publicity which is explained partly by his scholarly disposition, making one wonder why he agreed to take the helm of the Church in the first place.

Dr Alpion's interview is available until 18 February on **http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p014chwg (http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p014chwg)** (2.34.00 – 2.39.55)

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