

# The New Pope: Benedict XVI



## FRAME 4

The papal conclave chose Joseph Ratzinger to become the new pope.

## BASIC LEVEL

The man you see here is now the most important person in the Catholic Church. **From the words you see here, what is his title?** (*Pope Benedict XVI.*) On April 2,

Pope John Paul II died. He was a very popular leader of the Church for 26 years. During that time, the man shown here was known by his given name — Joseph Ratzinger. He was born in Germany. **Where is Germany?** (*Europe.*) He became a Catholic priest and later a cardinal, which is an important leader in the Church. As a cardinal, he was a close friend of Pope John Paul II. After John Paul died, a group of cardinals met and voted for 78-year-old Cardinal Ratzinger to be the next pope. After his election, Cardinal Ratzinger took the name Benedict XVI. Experts say the new pope will have a hard time following in the footsteps of John Paul. **Why do you think this is true?** (*John Paul was very popular around the world.*) **What kind of pope do you think Benedict XVI will be?** END OF STORY

## GENERAL LEVEL

This man became the leader of the world's 1 billion Roman Catholics. Before John Paul's death, this man was known as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. Cardinals are important leaders in the Catholic Church, and one of their jobs is to help choose the next pope after the previous pope dies. After John Paul's death, a group of cardinals met in the Vatican. **Where is the Vatican?** (*Rome, Italy.*) This special, highly secret meeting is called a conclave. A cardinal needs at least 77 of the 115 voting cardinals to become pope. If no one gets at least 77 votes, the cardinals meet and vote again. The cardinals voted four times before Cardinal Ratzinger was elected. This might seem like a lot, but it is actually one of the fastest conclave elections in the past 100 years. **Why do you think the cardinals take this much care to elect a pope?** All popes choose new titles for themselves after they are elected, and Cardinal Ratzinger chose Benedict XVI.

Joseph Ratzinger was born in Germany. He is 78 years old, and is known for his strict enforcement of Catholic rules. Many people are wondering in what direction he will take the Church. Most experts say that following John Paul will be a big challenge for the new pope. **Who can guess why?** (*John Paul II was pope for 26 years, starting out as pope when he was 56. He was hugely popular, and traveled all around the world. It will be tough for Benedict XVI, who is 78, to keep up that kind of schedule.*) **What kind of pope do you think Benedict XVI will be? Why?** END OF STORY

## ADVANCED LEVEL

This man recently became the leader of the world's 1.1 billion Roman Catholics. **Who knows what his name was before choosing the name Benedict XVI?** (*Joseph Ratzinger.*) After John Paul's death, the papal conclave met to choose the new pope. A cardinal must get at least two-thirds, or 77, of the votes of the 115 voting cardinals. On the fourth vote, Cardinal Ratzinger was elected. It was one of the fastest conclaves in the past century. Cardinals are sworn to secrecy about what transpires in the papal conclave, on threat of excommunication from the Church. **What kinds of discussions or debates do you think go on at these meetings? Why do you think Cardinal Ratzinger was chosen?**

Joseph Ratzinger was born in Germany in 1927. He is the first German pope in 1,000 years. He began studying for the priesthood at age 12. He has written openly of his compulsory service in the Hitler Youth under the Nazi regime. He was drafted into the German military during World War Two, but deserted in 1945, an action that at the time was punishable by death. **Do you think this part of his past will have an effect on his papacy? If so, how?** As a cardinal, his recent role has been that of a guardian of orthodox Roman Catholic doctrine. He has expressed strong opposition to homosexuality, women priests, and stem-cell research. But he has also pledged to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor by reaching out to other religions. **What do you think the new pope's biggest challenges will be? Why? Do you think he will be an effective leader of the Catholic Church? Why or why not?** END OF STORY