

Pope Benedict XVI

January 2, 2023

In news— Former Pope Benedict XVI passed away on December 31, aged 95, at Vatican's Mater Ecclesiae Monastery.

A brief note on him-

- **Born Joseph Ratzinger in Germany, he was an uncompromising theological conservative.**
- He **earned the moniker of "God's Rottweiler"** for his disciplining of Latin American priests who promoted "Liberation Theology," a socialist reading of Christian principles.
- Ratzinger had risen through the ranks of the Catholic Church, becoming the **archbishop of Munich in 1977.**
- In 1982, he left Germany to work directly for the Vatican, leading the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF).
- The CDF is one of Vatican's oldest and most important departments, founded in the 16th century to defend the Catholic Church from heresy and promulgate Roman Catholic doctrine.
- In 2005, **Ratzinger was elected as the first German Pope in a millennium,** succeeding the beloved John Paul II, who had reigned for 27 years.
- Taking the name Benedict, he was considered among Vatican insiders as a "safe pair of hands."
- However, Benedict's reign was a far cry from his predecessor. His words antagonised large sections of the world population.
- For instance, **he angered Muslims when he seemed to suggest that Islam is inherently violent.** Further, he caused massive outrage when he seemed to suggest that the use of condoms to prevent the transmission of AIDS "only made matters worse."
- The 2012 "Vatileaks" scandal was crucial in unravelling his papacy. Paolo Gabriele, Benedict's butler, leaked

secret documents that revealed corruption and feuding within the Vatican.

- In 2013, he became the first pontiff to resign in 600 years on the back of an eight-year tenure filled with scandal and allegations of corruption.
- While Benedict claimed he resigned due to his worsening health, scandals were piling up in his reign, with observers suggesting his resignation arrived to take heat off the papacy.
- He was succeeded by Pope Francis, a self-professed liberal, who was put in charge of bringing the Church in line with 21st century society.
- However, Benedict continued to enjoy vehement support from the conservative fringes of the Catholic Church with some ultra-traditionalists even denying to acknowledge Francis as the legitimate pontiff.