

Pope Benedict's Retirement: Are Church and Nonprofit Leaders Watching?

I was so impressed by the retirement announcement from Pope Benedict, that for a minute or two, I almost became a Catholic. His courage in facing the reality of declining health, potentially poor decision making and the toll on his psyche was admirable.

In spite of the pressure (no pope has retired in 600 years), he had the integrity to make the right decision. Now contrast that with many pastors, ministry and nonprofit leaders. With media ministries, they stay on the air way past their ability to not embarrass themselves. They fumble around, say inappropriate things and generally make the church look foolish to the world. Longtime pastors aren't much different. They refuse to step down and in the process, completely undermine a transition to a new leader.

I realize it's tough. My own father was a pastor who, even after a debilitating stroke, tried to keep preaching. In his first sermon back after the stroke, he fell at the pulpit, and our family finally made the decision that he had to step down.

But that's what's missing in many of these major churches and ministries: a family or leadership team with enough spine to force them (if necessary) to make the right decision. Whatever reason you have for allowing him or her to keep their leadership role—I would encourage you to reconsider. If they're not advancing the cause of Christ, then what's the point? They've most likely had a great career, and at some point, it's time to step down.

Do the right thing. Don't let a leader who won't deal with reality damage the future of the church, ministry or

nonprofit.

Without naming names, are you at an organization where an aging leader needs to step down? Why do you think he or she is still in a position of influence?

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