February 20, 2013

His Holiness Benedict XVI
Vatican City 00120

Most Holy Father:

Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ!

Presently assembled for our annual winter meeting, we, the National Board of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men in the United States, extend to you our affection, esteem and prayerful support as you make final preparations to resign from the Petrine Ministry in which you have served most faithfully. We take this occasion also to express our deep gratitude for your life of faithful service to the Kingdom of God and to the Church through your dedicated scholarship and teaching, through your priestly and episcopal ministry, and through your humble devotion and witness to the love of Jesus Christ at work in our world.

We are thankful for your tireless work as a theologian in an age so torn between the forces of rationalism and religious fundamentalism. As a teacher and author you not only have guided the Catholic community but also have influenced many other audiences. You have demonstrated the rightful harmony between faith and reason and have emphasized that neither is complete without engaging the other. What is more, through your encyclical letters and recent books on the life of Jesus, you have reminded all Christians that true religious practice and sound theological study must be connected to a relationship of love with the person of Jesus.

We are thankful, Holy Father, that you have embodied the qualities of a true shepherd of souls. You often have reached out with particular solicitude for members of the flock who have been injured in some way or who have become lost in our rapidly changing world. Your expression of pastoral sensitivity and concern in meeting personally with victims of abuse during your visit to the United States provided an experience of healing for many and a model for all leaders in the Church.

We are perhaps most thankful, Holy Father, for your own personal search for holiness throughout the course of your life. Your witness to holiness is manifested in your profound love of sacred scripture, in your devotion to the sacred liturgy, and in the humility that underlies your obedience to the call that God has given you through the Church. We believe that you now express the gift of humility in a most profound way through your resignation from the ministry of Supreme Pontiff.
Trusting that your resignation expresses your own humble discernment of God’s will, we believe that this courageous action will be understood as a great gift to the Church. We see in it an admirable culmination of what you have embodied throughout your life: theological reflection, pastoral concern, and humility.

With gratitude in our hearts for these many gifts, we assure you of our continued prayers and our ongoing commitment as men serving the Church in consecrated life. May our loving God grant you every consolation as you continue your journey in this life, and one day welcome you as a “good and faithful servant” into fullness of life in the Kingdom of Heaven!

Sincerely yours in the Most Holy Trinity,

President  Executive Director

Original letter sent through the good offices of

His Excellency Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò
Apostolic Nuncio to the United States