I was surprised, as I’m sure you all were, by the Pope’s announcement that he would be stepping down from his office at the end of this month.

Pope Benedict XVI has truly been a Holy Father to the family of God, his Catholic Church. His decision to resign is a beautiful, Christ-like act of humility and love for the Church.

This is the act of a saint.

This is the act of one who thinks not about himself but only about the will of God and the good of God’s people. May we all be given to focus our attention on God?

I am concerned about a kind of “cultural Catholicism.” I’m concerned about people going to church on Sundays without really understanding why they are going or what they are doing. I’m concerned about people not really understanding the relationship between what we believe and how we should live.

Our faith is beautiful! There is richness to Catholicism. I’m concerned about people not really understanding the relationship between what we believe and how we should live.

Our faith should make all the difference in our lives. And that should be the aim of all our religious education and catechesis — to change people’s lives by bringing them into contact with the love of Jesus Christ and the truth of his Gospel.

Our religious education and catechesis should inspire a more intense practice of the faith. It should inspire people to want to know their faith better so that they can live it more fully — with greater love and devotion.

So let us ask God’s blessing on our Religious Education Congress — and all those who are teachers of the faith. And let us pray for one another this week — and for our universal Church.

Let us thank God today for the love and witness of Pope Benedict XVI. Let us entrust him to our Blessed Mother Mary and pray that he will continue to have joy and peace and many more years for prayer and reflection.