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Another hard-liner in charge at Vatican

As pope, we can only assume that Benedict XVI will likely expand the doctrine of papal infallibility.

By **BERNADETTE BROOTEN**

I met the who would become Pope Benedict XVI in 1972. I was a young, nervous Catholic theology student attending a seminar in Germany on papal infallibility. The teacher, Hans Kung, argued that the pope is not infallible, while Joseph Ratzinger, a guest in the seminar, argued that he is. I critiqued Ratzinger's position — to his face — on theological grounds. Papal infallibility severely limits the pope from undoing past mistakes, I insisted.

During his time as a Vatican official, Cardinal Ratzinger extended the doctrine of infallibility to include the ban on the ordination of women and the invalidity of Anglican ordinations. As pope, we can only assume that Benedict XVI will likely expand the doctrine of papal infallibility even further.

Ratzinger has always argued that the church should stand for absolute truth. As prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, he censured and silenced a number of leading theologians, including Charles Curran, who argued for the morality of birth control, and Leonardo Boff, a Latin American liberation theologian.

His 2000 statement *Dominus Jesus* (Lord Jesus), raised grave concerns among both Protestants and non-Christians. In it, he claimed that, because "followers of other religions ... are in a gravely deficient situation," the church must "announce the necessity of conversion to Jesus Christ and of adherence to the

church through baptism and the other sacraments, in order to participate fully in communion with God." Jews and followers of other religions have long asked that they not be made the objects of proselytizing.

He has strictly opposed church acceptance of and civil rights for homosexuals. In addition, when the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops suggested in 1987 that condom use might be a lesser evil that could save lives in the AIDS crisis, Cardinal Ratzinger insisted that even as a lesser evil, condom use is not allowed as a method for preventing deaths from AIDS.

U.S. Catholics, still shaken by the clergy sexual abuse crisis, will wonder how Pope Benedict XVI will respond to its implications. In 2002, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, meeting in Dallas, passed a series of rules to address allegations of sexual abuse by priests, but later that year a commission composed of four Vatican and four U.S. bishops weakened these reforms. The revisions included a narrowed definition of sexual abuse, defined diocesan review boards of lay people as purely consultative and limited the requirement that bishops report allegations of the sexual abuse of minors to the civil authorities.

In Europe and elsewhere, citizens will be looking to see whether Pope Benedict XVI will accept a separation of church and state. He angered many by arguing that Turkey should not be admitted to the European Union because it is an Islamic society and that the new European constitution should have included a reference to Christianity.

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