

1927



2022

Pope Benedict XVI
19 April 2005 - 28 February 2013

Joseph Aloysius Ratzinger was born on Holy Saturday 16 April 1927 in Marktl, Bavaria, Weimar Republic. He was the youngest child of Joseph Ratzinger Snr. and Maria Ratzinger (nee: Peintner) He attended the elementary school in Aschau am Inn, and in 1939, aged 12, he enrolled in the junior seminary in Traunstein. This period lasted until the seminary was closed for military use in 1942, and the students were all sent home. The Ratzinger family, especially Joseph's father, bitterly resented the Nazis, and his father's opposition to Nazism resulted in demotions and harassment of the family. Following his 14th birthday in 1941, Joseph was conscripted into the Hitler Youth - as membership was required by law for all 14-year-old German boys after March 1939 - he refused to attend the meetings. In 1941, one of Joseph's cousins, a 14-year-old boy with Down syndrome, was taken away by the Nazi regime and murdered during the Action T4 campaign of Nazi eugenics. In 1943, while still in seminary, he was drafted into the German anti-aircraft corps as Luftwaffenhelfer and then trained in the German infantry. As the Allied front drew closer to his post in 1945, he deserted back to his family's home in Traunstein after his unit had ceased to exist, just as American troops established a headquarters in the Ratzinger family home. As a German soldier, he was interned in a prisoner of war camp, but released a few months later at the end of the war in May 1945. After the war Joseph and his brother George continued their formation for priesthood and were both ordained in Freising on 29 June 1951 by Cardinal Michael von Faulhaber of Munich. After a brief time at the parish of St Martin in Munich Joseph began his academic ministry first at the University of Bonn, then at the University of Munster, and then at the University of Tübingen. In 1969, before being appointed Archbishop of Munich in 1977, Joseph returned to Bavaria, to the University of Regensburg.

Archbishop of Munich and Freising 1977-1982

Cardinal Priest of Santa Maria Consolatrice al Tiburtino 1977-1993

President of the Biblical Commission 1982-2005

President of the international Theological Commission 1982-2005

Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 1982-2005

Cardinal Bishop of Velletri-Segni 1993-2005

Cardinal Bishop of Ostia 2002-2005

Dean of the College of Cardinals 2002-2005

Pope Benedict's last words: 'LORD, I LOVE YOU'