

Nate's Mission: Time has run out for Pope Benedict, but it's not too late for Pope Francis

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This week, Pope Francis and the Vatican will orchestrate a global celebration, honoring the life and legacy of the late Pope Benedict. Heads of state, religious leaders, and prominent Catholics will travel to Vatican City acknowledging the historical, political, and social power of the Catholic Church. Meanwhile millions of clergy abuse victims around the world will be forced to witness the rewriting of history concerning the legacy and actions of a man who may have been directly responsible for allowing their abuse.

Throughout most of his professional life, Pope Benedict was one the chief architects of the systematic cover-up of the rape and sexual abuse of children in the Catholic Church. As Archbishop of Munich, he [concealed and transferred known abusive clergy](#) and lied about it. As head of the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith under John Paul II, he acted as the Pope's chief global fixer, shielding bishops from criminal, civil, and moral accountability for conducting themselves the same way he did as Archbishop of Munich. As Pope, his history finally caught up with him, and he resigned before the full extent of his role in these crimes had emerged.

The Vatican will seize this opportunity to falsify history, exonerate themselves, and redirect the public spotlight away from investigation into the widespread and continued human rights violations against children by members of the Catholic hierarchy, including Pope Francis when he was in Argentina.

The Vatican will be the center of the world's attention on Thursday. As he presides over Pope Benedict's funeral, Pope Francis will be defining the life and legacy of his predecessor and holding him up as a great moral figure and world leader. Among

his global audience will be three generations of clergy sexual abuse survivors and their families.

Pope Francis can either use this opportunity to continue the coverup of clergy sexual abuse through his silence regarding Pope Benedict's record and responsibility or he can initiate a new era of truth-telling. That new era would begin when Pope Francis finally makes zero tolerance for clergy sexual abuse a universal Church law. Secondly, Pope Francis must open up the Vatican's clergy abuse archives, which will likely include direct evidence of thousands of cases of abuse mishandled by Pope Benedict. Finally, Pope Francis should order his bishops to cooperate fully with all governmental investigations into clergy sexual abuse, including that of the United Nations, which so far, they have delayed or refused to do.

After his resignation, Pope Benedict had almost ten years to make amends for his actions. He failed to do so. Pope Francis must not endorse that failure on Thursday.