Did Pope Benedict XVI Signal His Intention To Abdicate Last Week In Sunny California?

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Official Windsor Castle portrait of King Richard III, circa 1484[/caption]

Michael Matthew Bloomer, filing this story from the Vatican Papal Suite, Vatican City, Italy. February 12, 2013.

Pope Benedict XVI may have signaled His intention to abdicate four days before His February 11th announcement. Today, dumbfounded Vatican officials were presented with pictorial and video confirmation that the leader of the world's Catholics had participated in the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am on February 7th and 8th. The Pope had been paired with iconic actor-comedian Bill Murray, until PGA officials disqualified His Eminence after the second of four rounds for what they labeled "His Eminence's extravagant and unapologetic cheating and interfering with other players golf swings." (See image below for more details.)

> "We did not even know His Holiness was missing from his Vatican apartment! I will reveal one thing: *someone* was in his apartment. Twice, I myself personally scrubbed this individual's back. The resemblance to His Eminence was simply amazing. I'd be upset, but God has His purposes, and we can only marvel at this miracle."

During His announcement on Monday, Pope Benedict cited his failing health as the most significant factor in his decision to abdicate as of February 28th. Yet, He played two rounds of competitive golf, without a golf cart, and despite the fact that He had never played golf. Vatican officials and medical staff were unanimous in their thanks to "Heavenly Father" for this dramatic miracle which restored Pope Benedict's health.

Also, the Vatican's Chief Protocol Director, Monseigneur Vincenzo Alberto, opined:

> "His Holiness's travel is an enormous undertaking, rife with opportunities for difficulties. That an infirm Pope Benedict was able to literally sneak away from the Vatican state, cross international borders, board taxicabs, trains, boats, and airplanes in order to reach California is a miracle of miracles. One must bow before the power of the Lord. Oh, and remember too, our Pope was carrying His golf clubs, golf clubs which we here at the Vatican did not know His Holiness even owned! God's miracles are great, they are profound. Are they not?"

This reporter could not disagree. More as this story develops.

Pope Benedict XVI, who shocked the world by announcing his February 28th abdication, may have signaled his intentions earlier than Monday's surprise statement. Today, the Golf Channel released this photo taken during last week's PGA Pebble Beach tournament. Pictured is His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI (on the left, in vestments) and comedian and movie superstar Bill Murray (on the right). Ironically, Murray, raised a Catholic, is often mistaken for another Bill Murray, the son of atheist leader Madalyn Murray O'Hair.

The two were paired together in the Pro Am portion of the famous tournament. His Holiness had never played golf, and insisted on "do overs," and was granted more than 250 of them. As well, He cheated openly on his scorecard, with careless abandon,reporting rounds of 71 and 69, four under par, which briefly catapaulted His Eminence into the lead. PGA officials, however, after reviewing tapes of His Holiness's rounds, revealed that Pope Benedict had taken 328 shots, not the 140 He reported, and summarily disqualified Him. The Papal state has filed an appeal.