

# POPE IS FAILING

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When we went to press, Pope Francis was being hospitalized for double pneumonia and was not doing well. All scheduled events were cancelled. At 88, he appears to be failing.

He has long had respiratory problems. As a young man he had part of one lung removed due to an infection, leaving him susceptible to respiratory illnesses. More recently, he has appeared breathless in public.

Already there is wide speculation about his successor, but from what we learned when Pope Benedict XVI resigned, much of it is idle chatter. Those who will vote in the conclave are cardinals under the age of 80. There are 253 cardinals and 138 will partake in the voting process. Francis has appointed approximately 80 percent of them.

We looked at media reports on who was likely to succeed Benedict and only one credible source mentioned the eventual winner, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio. But even then, it was said that "His 'moment' seems to be over." Most Vatican observers mentioned Cardinal Angelo Scola as the most likely to succeed Benedict.

There are those Catholics who say we need to continue the legacy of Pope Francis and select another pope just like him. Others say we need to push the pendulum the other way, correcting the "progressive" drift that Francis espoused. Either way, there is only a limited amount of change that the Holy Father can deliver.

Our prayers are with the pope. We also pray for his successor.