

Pope Francis has revealed in a new interview that he has already signed his resignation letter to be used in the event of him becoming “impaired.”

The Pope made the comment in an interview with Spanish news outlet ABC, published Sunday, when asked what would happen if a pope is suddenly rendered unable to perform his duties due to health issues or an accident.

Francis said he wrote the letter several years ago and gave it to then-Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, who resigned in 2013.

“I have already signed my renunciation. The Secretary of State at the time was Tarcisio Bertone. I signed it and said: ‘If I should become impaired for medical reasons or whatever, here is my renunciation,’” Francis was quoted as saying.

“I don’t know who Cardinal Bertone has given that letter to, but I handed it to him when he was the Secretary of State,” Francis said, adding that this was the first time he had spoken publicly about the letter’s existence.

Francis said past pontiffs Paul VI and Pious XII had also drafted their letters of renunciation in the event of a permanent impairment.

Francis, 86, appears to be in good health apart from knee problems. He has often been seen with a walking stick and sometimes uses a wheelchair due to pain in his right knee.

Earlier this year, he canceled a trip to Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan after doctors said he might also have to miss a later trip to Canada unless he agreed to have 20 more days of therapy and rest for his right knee.

Last year, he had surgery to remove part of his colon due to diverticulitis, a common condition.

In 2013, Francis’ immediate predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, made the almost unprecedented decision to resign from his position, citing “advanced age” as the reason and startling the Catholic world.

It marked the first time a pope had stepped down in nearly 600 years. The last pope to step down before his death was Gregory XII, who in 1415 quit to end a civil war within the church in which more than one man claimed to be pope.