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Francis drops first hint that reform may be real

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Pope Francis
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In the first clear signal that Pope Francis may be serious about reform, he's decided that the heads of the various Vatican offices will keep their jobs for now, but he's not making any definitive appointments.

It's customary for new popes to swiftly reconfirm the department heads who lose their positions when the previous pontificate ends, then take his time about bringing in his team. The fact that Francis has not followed that path could suggest significant personnel moves will come sooner rather than later.

So far, the storyline about Francis has been mostly about style -- taking the bus with the other cardinals, preferring to walk rather than being driven, packing his own bags and paying his own hotel bill, and setting aside his prepared texts for off-the-cuff personal reflections.

At some point, however, style will have to give way to substance, and Saturday's announcement marks the first indication of what that substance might look like.

Vatican-watchers are paying keen attention to what Francis does about the all-important position of Secretary of State, held under Benedict XVI by Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone. Fairly or not, Bertone shoulders most of the blame for perceived breakdowns in business management over the last eight years, and most people presume Francis will move quickly to bring in his own "prime minister."

That appointment shapes up as the first unmistakable signal of where the new pope wants to go and how much of a break with business as usual he plans to pursue.

In Saturday's statement, the Vatican said Francis has expressed the desire that "all the heads and members of the dicasteries of the Roman Curia, as well as the secretaries and the president of the Pontifical Commission for the Vatican City State, provisionally continue in their respective capacities."

It added that these appointments are *donec aliter provideatur*, "until other provisions are made."

"The Holy Father desires, in fact, to reserve a certain period for reflection, prayer and dialogue before [making] any definitive nomination or confirmation."

Most observers believe new appointments, including the Secretary of State, won't roll out until after Holy Week. Saturday's statement, however, suggests a changing of the guard might not be long in the offing.

During a meeting with journalists Saturday, Francis said some cardinals had suggested he ought to take the name of Adrian, in honor of the reforming pope Adrian VI. Although said with a sense of humor, the insight revealed many cardinals expect the new pontiff to be a reformer, including getting the Roman Curia under control.

During the pre-conclave period, cardinals defined reform of the Vatican in terms of three key points:

- Greater transparency, both internally and externally
- Greater accountability, including consequences for poor performance
- Greater efficiency, as opposed to the traditionally glacial pace at which business is conducted

Saturday was the first real indication Francis might be serious about reform, beginning with who moves the levers of power inside the Vatican.

On Saturday, the Vatican also announced Pope Francis' schedule between now and Holy Week.

On Sunday, he delivered [1] his first Angelus address, which drew about 300,000 people to St. Peter's Square and the surrounding area. Before the Angelus, he celebrated Mass for Vatican personnel in their parish church of Sant'Anna.

On Monday, Francis will meet Argentine President Christina Kirchner, with whom he's had a sometimes contentious relationship. Bergoglio once described a same-sex marriage law backed by Kirchner as "a plan to destroy God's plan," and she fired back that his remarks were "reminiscent of the times of the Inquisition."

The formal inaugural Mass for Pope Francis is set for Tuesday in St. Peter's Square.

On Wednesday, Francis will have an audience with representatives of other Christian churches and other religions, and Thursday he'll meet with the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See.

On Saturday, Francis will fly by helicopter to the pope's summer residence at Castel Gandolfo for lunch with the retired pope, Benedict XVI. The next day, he'll lead the Palm Sunday liturgy in St. Peter's Square, then deliver the Angelus address.

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