Vatican



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The group of cardinals advising Pope Francis on reforming the Vatican bureaucracy used its latest meeting to reflect on what the pope has said about reform in the church before continuing on with its work.

In a Sept. 13 briefing about the Council of Cardinals' Sept. 11-13 meeting, Vatican spokesman Greg Burke said the group's reflection material included Francis' December 2016 address to the Roman Curia and his October 2015 address on the role of the Synod of Bishops in the church.

Burke called the latest meeting of the council, the group's 21st since its creation in 2013, a "pause for reflection" led by Honduran Cardinal Óscar Rodríguez Maradiaga, its coordinator.

Among themes the spokesman said were discussed in the reflection: decentralization; the role of Vatican embassies around the world; "the curia as an instrument of evangelization and service to the pope and the local churches;" and "the selection and competence of personnel" for the Vatican's bureaucracy.

On the last point, the spokesman said the cardinals spoke about having "less clerical, more international" staff at the Vatican.

In the December 2016 address, Francis criticized Catholic prelates who have been opposing his efforts to reform the Vatican, saying that while some cardinals and archbishops are offering questions in a spirit of goodwill others are practicing a "malevolent resistance."

Such sinister opposition, the pontiff said then, "sprouts from twisted minds and presents itself when the devil inspires bad intentions." The pope also said it "finds refuge in tradition, in appearances, in formality, in the known, or in the desire to make everything personal without distinguishing between act, actor and action."

In the October 2015 address on the Synod, Francis outlined his vision for a church that is "synodal" at every level, with everyone listening to each other, learning from each other and taking responsibility for proclaiming the Gospel.

Burke said two members were not present for the latest council meeting: Kinshasa Archbishop Laurent Monsengwo and Australian Cardinal George Pell, who has returned to his country to answer charges of historical sexual abuse.

As is usual for the council meetings, Burke said the group also received an update from Boston Cardinal Seán O'Malley, who is a member of the council and the head of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors.

The Vatican said Sept. 13 that O'Malley is also to meet with Francis privately that afternoon. Asked if that meeting was about the pontifical commission, Burke responded: "I don't think O'Malley will speak only about this theme but has other things" to talk about.

The next meeting of the Council of Cardinals is set for Dec. 11-13.

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