Opinion



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Welcome to the Rome-centric version of your weekly international edition of the daily briefing, where we highlight the most recent news out of or about the Vatican.

First, Pope Francis will issue **a new apostolic exhortation on holiness**, the Vatican has announced. The document will carry the title *Gaudete et Exsultate* ("Rejoice and be glad") and the subtitle: "On the call to holiness in the contemporary world."

Second, in what appears to be a landmark case, **a French cardinal and the prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith have been summoned to appear in French court** in early 2019 over the suspected cover-up of a sexual abuse scandal. Victims say Lyon Cardinal Philippe Barbarin sought advice from Archbishop Luis Ladaria about how to handle alleged abuser Fr. Bernard Preynat.

Also, a Vatican tribunal's guilty verdict last month **against a Guam archbishop** appears likely not to have been made in direct relation to allegations of sexual abuse by the prelate, say several prominent canon lawyers.

Moving on, Pope Francis told pilgrims at his weekly audience April 4 that **going to Mass is not about fulfilling an obligation** but letting it change your life and

becoming better than when you entered.

In his Easter homily April 1, Francis spoke about how **God's actions throughout history have been surprises** and asked people to reflect on how God has surprised them in their lives.

It appears that approval of a landmark deal between the Vatican and mainland China **may be more distant than earlier reported**, as the country's religious affairs department signals it is seeking more control than the church may be willing to give.

Late last week, Italy was abuzz over a report that the pope had denied the existence of hell in an interview with the founder of the *La Repubblica* newspaper. In a March 29 statement, the Vatican noted that the interviewer had not taken notes or recorded the conversation. The result was "the fruit of the author's own reconstruction," **said the Vatican**.

After disagreement about a $25-million-grant request, a foundation meant to support the pope's initiatives has said it will not have its usual audience with the pontiff when representatives come to Rome next week. In a March 22 statement, **the U.S.-based Papal Foundation called for a period of reflection** and "a re-evaluation of its mission, its approach to grant giving and its relationship with the Holy See."

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