Vatican



by Joshua J. McElwee

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Vatican City — June 13, 2018
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

The group of cardinals advising Pope Francis on reforming the Vatican bureaucracy says it will soon deliver for consideration by the pope the "first systematic text" for a possible new structure of the city-state's institutions.

In a seven-page statement June 13 outlining its work since its creation in April 2013, the Council of Cardinals says its "guiding principle" has been Francis' call for the global Catholic Church to take on a more missionary attitude.

The council, which has been in Rome for its 25th meeting June 11-13, also says that it has focused on three "particular criteria" in its work: tradition, updating (in Italian, *aggiornamento*), and coordination.

Vatican spokesman Greg Burke released the cardinals' statement during a short briefing with reporters. Burke said the provisional title of the document being considered by Francis, which will likely take the form of an apostolic constitution, is *Praedicate Evangelium* ("Proclaim the Gospel").

Burke said release of the text is not imminent, as the pope may decide to ask others outside the council to consider it and offer suggestions.

While Francis has implemented a number of changes to the Vatican bureaucracy in the last five years, the institution's overall shape is still being governed by Pope John Paul II's 1988 apostolic constitution *Pastor Bonus*. The new document, once approved by Francis, would replace the older one.

The Council of Cardinals' statement begins by referencing some of the speeches Francis has given outlining his vision for reform in the church, including his five Christmas addresses to members of the Vatican bureaucracy and his 2015 speech commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops.

Advertisement

The statement then lists 25 particular steps in the reform process, starting with the June 2013 creation of a new commission to oversee the so-called Vatican Bank and ending with the April 2018 approval of new statutes for the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life.

The group says it took its "guiding principle" from Francis' 2013 exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, where the pope said he dreamed of a church that had "a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything."

The Council of Cardinals is made up of nine prelates chosen by Francis to advise him in the process of reforming the Vatican. The only American in the group is Boston Cardinal Sean O'Malley.

Burke was asked during the briefing about recent reports asking whether the terms of the members of the council might be expiring soon. The spokesman said he had recently asked Bishop Marcello Semeraro, the secretary of the group, that question and was told: "Everything is in the pope's hands."

The only member of the council not to attend this week's meetings was Australian Cardinal George Pell, who took a leave of absence from his post as the Vatican's economic minister in June 2017 to return to Australia to fight charges of historic sexual abuse, which he denies.

Burke said the next meeting of the Council of Cardinals is set for Sept. 10-12.

[Joshua J. McElwee is NCR Vatican correspondent. His email address is jmcelwee@ncronline.org. Follow him on Twitter: @joshjmac.]

A version of this story appeared in the **June 29-July 12, 2018** print issue under the headline: Cardinals to deliver new outline of Vatican bureaucracy.