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Vatican trial date set for two men indicted in VatiLeaks scandal

Carol Glatz Catholic News Service | Sep. 17, 2012

VATICAN CITY -- A Vatican magistrate has set a trial date for two men formally indicted in connection with the so-called "VatiLeaks" scandal.

The first day of the public trial, which will be held in a Vatican courtroom, is set for Sept. 29, the Vatican announced Sept. 17.

Paolo Gabriele, Pope Benedict XVI's former personal assistant, was indicted in mid-August on charges of aggravated theft; Claudio Sciarpelletti, a computer technician from the Vatican Secretariat of State, was indicted on minor charges of aiding Gabriele after he stole Vatican correspondence.

Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi, the Vatican spokesman, said a small pool of print reporters will be permitted to attend the proceedings, but still and television cameras will not be allowed access.

Gabriele and Sciarpelleti will face a panel of three Vatican judges, all of whom are laymen and professors at Italian universities. Vatican law, like Italian law, does not foresee the use of juries in criminal trials.

Gabriele, 46, faces a sentence of one to six years in prison. Under the terms of the Vatican's 1929 treaty with Italy, a person found guilty and sentenced to jail time by a Vatican court would serve his term in an Italian prison.

Lombardi had said in August that the charge against Sciarpelletti carried a "very light" sentence, which is unlikely to include jail time.

Gabriele was arrested May 23 after confidential letters and documents addressed to the pope and other Vatican officials were found in his Vatican apartment. Many of the documents were the same as those featured in a January television program by Italian journalist Gianluigi Nuzzi and later published in a book by him. Most of the documents dealt with allegations of corruption, abuse of power and a lack of financial transparency at the Vatican.

A report released after a Vatican-led investigation of the affair said Gabriele told Vatican investigators he acted after seeing "evil and corruption everywhere in the church." He said he had discussed with a spiritual adviser his concerns about the church and what he was thinking when he took the documents.

Gabriele was questioned repeatedly over the two-month period he spent detained in a 12-foot-by-12-foot room in the Vatican police barracks. He was allowed to return, under house arrest, to his Vatican apartment with his wife and family July 21 and was to remain under house arrest until his trial ends.

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