

Pope gives cardinals power to change conclave date

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Conclave 2013

Rome

Pope Benedict XVI has given the college of cardinals authority to change the date of the upcoming conclave to elect his successor, the Vatican announced Monday.

The pope has signed a *motu proprio* on the issue, setting aside parts of a previous mandate from Pope John Paul II governing the working of a conclave, said Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi, the Vatican spokesperson, at a press conference.

With a potential date for the conclave now in the cardinals' hands, it is unknown when they will choose to meet to elect Benedict's successor.

Lombardi said the earliest a date for the conclave might be known is March 1, when the cardinals will first meet following Benedict's resignation.

Lombardi also confirmed that the pope met Monday with the three cardinals tasked with giving him a report on the Vatican's investigation of its document leaks last year.

"The Holy Father has decided that the acts of this investigation, known only to himself, remain solely at the disposition of the new pope," said Lombardi.

The three cardinals, however, will be free to share information about the investigation with the full college of cardinals, Lombardi said.

According to John Paul II's 1996 constitution *Universi Dominici gregis*, the earliest the cardinals could have met to elect Benedict's successor was March 15. Some have raised the question of whether, given the difference in this case that the sitting pope has decided to resign, the cardinals could elect Benedict's successor more quickly.

At the press conference, Vatican officials said the pope had not ordered the cardinals to change the date, but merely given them the power to do so.

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