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Vatican begins preparations for upcoming conclave

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NCR Today

Conclave 2013

Rome — While the cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church have not yet decided when they will pick the next pope, preparations are now under way for the conclave, the secret vote at which they will cast their ballots, the Vatican announced Tuesday.

A date for the opening of the conclave has not yet been discussed, and there has been no proposal for a date, said Vatican spokesman Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi said at a press conference Tuesday afternoon, shortly after the cardinals ended their third general congregation.

"There is no desire to rush things but to take time for discussion and discernment," Lombardi said. This is evident in the meetings, he added.

The Sistine Chapel, where the cardinals will gather to vote, has been closed and will soon be prepared to prevent electronic surveillance, Lombardi said.

Lombardi said 148 cardinals have gathered, among them, 110 of the 115 expected to vote in the conclave.

The cardinals are hosting general meetings this week as they prepare for the vote.

One of the cardinals' decisions was to send a telegram to now-retired Pope Benedict XVI at Castel Gandolfo, where he is staying.

"The cardinals fathers gathered ... send you united together a devoted greeting and expression of their gratitude," the telegram reads, according to an English translation provided by Basilian Fr. Thomas Rosica.

The cardinals also said they wished to "represent the recognition of all of the church for your untiring work in the vineyard of the Lord."

Thirty-three cardinals have spoken during the meetings held thus far on topics ranging from the activities of Holy See, renewal of church in light of Vatican II, and relationship of church and culture, Rosica said.

Cardinals are free to sign up to speak at the meetings and are not given a time limit. All proceedings are secret and the cardinals are under oath to keep the secrecy.

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