

Pope asks Curia to find ways to implement 'Joy of Gospel' in its work

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Pope Francis called together the heads of all Vatican offices to discuss how they could integrate into their work the teaching of his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* ("The Joy of the Gospel").

The Vatican said the meeting, held Tuesday inside the Apostolic Palace, lasted two and a half hours.

The subject of the meeting was "a reflection on *Evangelii Gaudium*," said Passionist Fr. Ciro Benedettini, vice director of the Vatican press office. He said the pope wanted the group to talk about how the papal document, which calls on Catholics to be living examples of joy, love and charity, "can influence the work of the Curia."

Those attending the meeting discussed their "reflections on and reactions" to the pope's apostolic exhortation and "the prospects that are open for its implementation," the Vatican said in a brief statement issued at the end of the discussion.

Pope Francis held a similar meeting in September, when he called together top Vatican officials to hear their questions and suggestions about his ongoing reform of the Vatican bureaucracy.

Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, had said the September meeting lasted nearly three hours and, except for a brief greeting by the pope, was devoted to remarks by the other participants.

In "The Joy of the Gospel," released in November, Pope Francis laid out his hopes for a truly missionary church -- driven by "a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation."

The document was meant as a stimulus for Catholics, parishes, organizations and the church hierarchy itself to follow a path of deepening conversion and to recognize it "cannot leave things as they presently are. 'Mere administration' can no longer be enough," the pope wrote, and "excessive centralization, rather than proving helpful, complicates the church's life and her missionary outreach."

In an effort to help the church and her ministers be more faithful to Jesus and his teachings, "I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities," the pope wrote.

"A proposal of goals without an adequate communal search for the means of achieving them will inevitably prove illusory," he wrote. "I encourage everyone to apply the guidelines found in this document generously and courageously, without inhibitions or fear. The important thing is to not walk alone, but to rely on each other as brothers and sisters, and especially under the leadership of the bishops, in a wise and realistic pastoral discernment."

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