

Pope seeks advice from top cardinals on credibility crisis

Sarah Delaney Catholic News Service | Jun. 25, 2012

VATICAN CITY -- Pope Benedict XVI asked some of his closest advisers for guidance on how to restore trust and confidence in the Catholic church's leadership amid a scandal over leaks of confidential Vatican papers.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, said the pope called two extraordinary meetings June 23 to "deepen his reflections" over the leaks and their consequences.

Paolo Gabriele, the pope's personal butler, was arrested May 23 after confidential letters and documents addressed to the pope and others within the Vatican administration were allegedly found in his Vatican apartment. Many of the documents were published in Italian media over the past several months and in a recently released best-selling book by an Italian journalist.

Gabriele is being held in a cell on Vatican grounds on charges of aggravated theft. He is the only person charged so far in the scandal the Italian media has called "VatiLeaks."

The first of the pope's meetings was with cardinals heading the various congregations and councils that make up the Roman Curia, the central government of the church. Although the pope meets these men periodically, the morning encounter was "particularly important and urgent to effectively demonstrate the unity of spirit that guides it," Father Lombardi said.

The second meeting was with five cardinals who Father Lombardi said had been chosen for their experience both in Rome and in the worldwide church. They were Cardinal George Pell of Sydney; Cardinal Marc Ouellet, prefect of the Congregation for Bishops; Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue; Cardinal Camillo Ruini, vicar general emeritus of Rome; and Cardinal Jozef Tomko, prefect emeritus of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

Father Lombardi said the five were chosen to give counsel to the pope on how to "restore a climate of serenity and trust in the work of the Roman Curia."

An investigation by a Vatican court is proceeding and Gabriele was cooperating with Vatican prosecutors, Father Lombardi has told journalists.

A parallel, wide-ranging inquiry of the leaks conducted by three cardinals is also under way and is headed by Cardinal Julian Herranz. Those cardinals report directly to the pope, who, Father Lombardi has said, wants to understand fully the reasons behind the leaks and the problems they appear to indicate.

The pope "wants to be fully informed on the progress of the investigations," Father Lombardi said.

He also said that the pope will consult some of the many prelates from around the world who will be in Rome for the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, June 29. On that occasion, the pope will give more than 40 archbishops the pallium, a stole made out of lamb's wool that symbolizes their office.

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