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Could the apostolic visitation report be coming soon?

Maureen Fiedler | Oct. 22, 2012 NCR Today

NCR reported last week [1] that Archbishop Joseph Tobin, reportedly an ally of American nuns, is moving from the Congregation for Religious in Rome to become archbishop of Indianapolis.

But buried in an analysis [2] of that move by John Allen is the most interesting sentence of all: "One test of whether Tobin's departure signals a sea change should come when the Congregation for Religious releases its final report on the apostolic visitation, which is expected soon."

Report on the apostolic visitation? Due soon? When the Vatican issued its "assessment" of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, there was speculation that either the apostolic visitation report could not be far behind, that reports might be issued only to the congregations visited, or even that there might be no report at all.

Personally, I expected a report to be issued, but I'm not holding my breath that it will be positive, either in its message or its impact. It will be interesting to see if any "Tobin effect" is evident.

But all of this points to a larger problem: the secrecy of the Vatican and its bureaucracy. Since there is no elected body at the Vatican, the offices there might offer more transparency about their inner workings and decision-making processes.

Yes, I know the current secretive system goes back centuries, and yes, I know that the papal butler somehow got entangled in those intrigues, but one can hope. After all, no one expected Vatican II 50 years ago.

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