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Start of conclave still uncertain

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Conclave 2013
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Although the Vatican confirmed Friday that the members of the College of Cardinals will begin meeting Monday, it remains unclear when they will enter into the secret meeting at which they will elect Pope Benedict XVI's successor.

Speaking during a press conference, Basilian Fr. Thomas Rosica, who was providing English translation during the event, warned "not to expect the date of the conclave on Monday."

Before setting the date, Rosica said, the cardinals need to determine "the rhythm of the sessions."

"In the course of next week will be able to announce the beginning date of the conclave," Rosica said.

The conference came about 15 hours after Pope Benedict had officially renounced his role at 8 p.m. Rome time Thursday. At that time, he was no longer to wear his symbolic gold fisherman's ring and would no longer receive protection from the Swiss Guards, but rather, Vatican police.

On Friday morning, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, who holds the role of dean of the College of Cardinals, sent a letter to each member of the college, formally informing them of the vacancy of the papacy and asking them to meet 9:30 a.m. Rome time Monday.

The cardinals are expected to hold at least several such general meetings throughout next week before entering into the conclave, at which only cardinals under the age of 80 can vote for the next pontiff.

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