

Pope Francis explains small beginnings of Vatican's doctrinal office

Joshua J. McElwee | Apr. 23, 2013 | The Francis Chronicles
Pope Francis

During his homily Tuesday at daily Mass, Pope Francis emphasized that those who wish to follow Jesus should do so from inside the church.

After meditating on the persecution of early Christian communities by Roman authorities, the pope also mentioned those communities' missionary activities.

He then said that even then, there were divisions among some on how to teach the faith -- joking that those divisions effectively began the role of the Vatican's powerful Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the sometimes controversial modern Vatican office responsible for keeping grips on the church's faith, morals, and doctrine.

From the report by [Cindy Wooden at Catholic News Service](#) [1]:

When the first Christians began sharing the Gospel with "the Greeks," and not just other Jews, it was something completely new and made some of the Apostles "a bit nervous," the pope said. They sent Barnabas to Antioch to check on the situation, a kind of "apostolic visitation," he said. "With a bit of a sense of humor, we can say this was the theological beginning of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith."

An apostolic visitation, of course, is the modern term for a Vatican investigation into a particular group of Catholics for their adherence to church doctrine.

In recent times, one was launched into the individual orders of U.S. women religious [in 2009](#) [2] by the Vatican congregation responsible for religious life. Another was launched by Pope Benedict XVI [in 2010](#) [3] to the Irish church following widespread of issues of sexual abuse by clergy.

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