

Pope changes responsibility of worship congregation, tribunal

VATICAN CITY - Pope Benedict XVI has transferred responsibility for two very precise administrative procedures from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments to the Roman Rota, a church court.

The Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, published the papal directive Sept. 27 giving the Rota responsibility for handling procedures involving a marriage that was celebrated validly but not consummated and for cases involving the nullity of an ordination.

Pope Benedict said he made the change so that the congregation for worship could "dedicate itself principally to giving a new impulse to the promotion of the sacred liturgy in the church, according to the renewal willed by the Second Vatican Council."

In the document, dated Aug. 30, the pope said a new office would be established within the Roman Rota to handle the two specific types of cases. He also said the new norms would go into effect Oct. 1.

The change was reported as a rumor in February and, at the time, Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, the Vatican spokesman, said the change would give the Roman Rota responsibility for technical administrative procedures such as those involved in releasing a couple from the obligations of marriage when they have not consummated their bond.

Canon law also allows for a declaration of the nullity of an ordination to the priesthood when it can be demonstrated that there was a defect in the rite used or that the person being ordained did not or could not understand what ordination meant.