

Vatican reform process ‘nearly complete,’ C9 member says

VATICAN CITY —Pope Francis’ international Council of Cardinals —the so-called C9 — is nearly done with its work of advising the pope on a major reform of the Vatican bureaucracy, the secretary of the council said.

Bishop Marcello Semeraro of Albano, secretary of Pope Francis’ Council of Cardinals, told Vatican Radio Sept. 11 that “as far as the reform process of the Roman Curia is concerned, it is even more than three-quarters of the way there — it is almost complete.”

“It is nearly complete at the level of proposals made to the pope,” he said.

The Council of Cardinals met at the Vatican Sept. 11-13. Pope Francis, who returned from his visit to Colombia Sept. 11, did not attend the first day’s meeting.

Greg Burke, Vatican spokesman, told journalists Sept. 13 that “among the themes of the discussion (were) the curia as an instrument of evangelization and service for the pope and the local churches; decentralization; the role of apostolic nunciatures; the selection and competence of personnel, less clerical and more international, with an increase in young people and women.”

The cardinals also discussed the pope’s recent document, “Magnum Principium” (“The Great Principle”), which made several changes to the Code of Canon Law regarding translations of the Mass and other liturgical texts.

The document, which applies only to the Latin rite of the Catholic Church, changes two clauses in Canon 838 of the Code of Canon Law. The Vatican no longer will “review” translations submitted by bishops’ conferences, but will “recognize” them.

The council also met with the heads of several dicasteries, including Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization, and Cardinal Fernando Filoni, prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley of Boston, head of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, updated the council on the commission's work, Burke said.

Bishop Semeraro told Vatican Radio of the council's work in advising the pope on the reform of the Vatican's organization and church governance, describing it as a three-step process of "listening" to the contributions from the bishops, the Roman Curia and "many people who have written," reflecting on those proposals and checking them over.

"Listening, reflecting, checking and then making a proposal to the pope" because the Council of Cardinals does not issue a decree; "the Council of Cardinals proposes to the pope," he said.

Throughout their meetings, he continued, Pope Francis takes part "primarily by listening" and "intervenes when he recounts his personal experiences when he was archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina, or of current situations in the life of the church."

The work of the council is not only dedicated to reforming the Roman Curia but to informing, advising and collaborating with Pope Francis concerning various situations in the church, Bishop Semeraro said.

One example, he added, was to discuss "the very painful reality of the abuse of minors."

"This, in itself, is not part of the reform of the Roman Curia. Yet, the pope has decided to listen to the council, too, about these steps. And, when it comes to clarifying or intervening, the pope intervenes but with great discretion. He mostly listens," Bishops Semeraro said.

Regarding the time frame of the reform, the Italian prelate said the final proposals dealing with all the dicasteries "will be more or less complete in a few months" and that it will be up to the pope "to decide how and when to implement them."

"Right now the pope has preferred a gradual implementation, as well as a sort of breaking-in period. In some cases, the pope has already intervened to make corrections because in passing from theory to practice, needs for correction have

emerged," Bishop Semeraro said.

The Council of Cardinals will meet again Dec. 11-13. Its members are: Cardinals Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state; Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, Honduras; Sean P. O'Malley of Boston; Francisco Javier Errazuriz Ossa, retired archbishop of Santiago, Chile; Oswald Gracias of Mumbai, India; Reinhard Marx of Munich and Freising, Germany; Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya of Kinshasa, Congo; George Pell, head of the Secretariat of the Economy; and Giuseppe Bertello, president of the commission governing Vatican City State.

Cardinal Pell, who is on a leave of absence to fight charges of sexual abuse filed against him in Australia, was not in attendance. Cardinal Monsengwo Pasinya was also unable to attend the September meeting.