

Pope Laments 'Gay Lobby,' Corruption in Vatican

Pope Francis has acknowledged the existence of a "gay lobby" and a "stream of corruption" in the Vatican, according to reports in Catholic media not denied by the Vatican.

The pope made the remarks last week in Spanish during a private meeting with representatives of the Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Religious (CLAR), according to the Chilean Catholic website "Reflection and Liberation."

On Tuesday it published what it said was a summary of the conversation written by participants after the June 6 meeting in the Vatican. CLAR, which is based in Colombia, confirmed that a summary had been written but regretted that it had been published.

In the conversation, the pope is quoted as talking about various subjects of concern, including the problems of the Curia, the Church's central administration which was at the center of a corruption scandal last year.

"In the Curia, there are also holy people, really, there are holy people. But there also is a stream of corruption, there is that as well, it is true... The 'gay lobby' is mentioned, and it is true, it is there... We need to see what we can do," the synthesis by CLAR officials said.

In its own statement, the presidency of CLAR said it "deeply regretted the publication of a text which refers to the conversation with the Holy Father." It did not confirm the precise quotes attributed to the pope but acknowledged the summary reflected the "general feeling" of the meeting.

After the initial report was picked up and translated by a number of other Catholic websites, Vatican spokesman Father

Federico Lombardi said: "It was a private meeting, therefore I have no comment to make on the contents of the conversation."

Earlier this year, in the period immediately after Pope Benedict announced his resignation, Italian media published unsourced reports of a powerful "gay lobby" in the Vatican that left the Holy See open to blackmail.

Before resigning on February 28, Benedict left Francis a top secret report about the leaks scandal that rocked the Catholic Church last year.

The report concerned the so-called Vatileaks affair in which internal documents alleging corruption, mismanagement and infighting in the Curia were leaked to the media.

The report was prepared for Benedict, who is now "Pope Emeritus," by three elderly cardinals who investigated the leaks.

Paolo Gabriele, the pope's butler, was convicted last year of stealing personal papal documents and leaking them to the media. He was pardoned by Benedict after being briefly jailed.

The documents alleged corruption and rivalry between different factions inside the Curia and was one of the major concerns of cardinals choosing a new pope to run the Church at a time of crisis.

Anger over the dysfunctional state of the Vatican bureaucracy, which includes many Italians, is said to have been one factor in the cardinal electors' decision to choose a non-European pope for the first time in nearly 1,300 years.