

Vatican: Not delaying Pius beatification

June 21, 2009

ROME (JTA) -- The Vatican rejected suggestions that Pope Benedict XVI may be delaying beatification of Pope Pius XII in order to maintain good relations with the Jewish world.

The Vatican's chief spokesman, the Rev. Federico Lombardi, released a statement Friday reiterating that the signing of beatification orders for the controversial wartime pope "is exclusively the responsibility of the pope, who must be left completely free in his evaluations and decisions."

"If the pope thinks that the study and the reflection on the cause of Pius XII must be further prolonged, this position must be respected without interfering with unjustified and inopportune interventions," Lombardi said.

Lombardi was responding to Italian news reports Friday that quoted Jesuit Rev. Peter Gumpel, a key promoter of Pius' cause, as implying that the pope may be hesitating to sign the beatification decree for fear of offending Jews.

Jews and other critics have accused Pius of having turned a blind eye to Jewish suffering in World War II.

Gumpel was quoted by the news agency ANSA as saying that in recent meetings, Jewish leaders had told Benedict that beatifying Pius would "definitively and permanently" compromise "relations between the Catholic Church and Jews."

Rome's chief rabbi, Riccardo De Segni, criticized Gumpel's suggestion and disassociated Jewish criticism of Pius with the process of the beatification. The beatification of Pius, he told ANSA, "is first of all an internal problem of the Church. It is clearly a complex matter that divides the Church itself."

<http://jta.org/news/article/2009/06/21/1006024/vatican-not-delaying-pius-beatification>