Vatican

Francis, the comic strip



Pope Francis celebrates the Eucharist during morning Mass in the chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae at the Vatican Nov. 12. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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A bishop must be "blameless" and at the service of God, not of cliques, assets and power, especially if he is ever to "set right" what needs to be done for the church, Pope Francis said.

A bishop must always "correct himself and ask himself, 'Am I a steward of God or a businessman?'" the pope said in his homily during Mass in the Domus Sanctae Marthae Nov. 12, the feast of St. Josaphat, 17th-century bishop and martyr.

The pope's homily looked at the day's first reading from St. Paul's Letter to Titus (1:1-9) describing the qualities and role of a bishop.

The apostle underlines how a bishop must be a steward or "administrator of God, not of assets, power and cliques," the pope said.

Most of all, he said, a bishop must be "blameless," the same quality God asked of Abraham when he said, "walk in my presence and be blameless." It is a quality that is the cornerstone of every leader, he added.

According to the apostle, a bishop must not be licentious, rebellious, arrogant, irritable, a drunkard, greedy or obsessed with money. A bishop with even just one of these defects, the pope said, is "a calamity for the church."

A bishop must be hospitable, temperate, just and holy; he must have self-control, love the good and be faithful to the Word, to the true message as it was taught, the apostle says.

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If this is what a bishop should be, the pope said, then "would it be wonderful to ask these questions at the beginning, when inquiries are made to elect bishops? To

know whether one may keep going with other inquiries?"

Above all, the pope said, a bishop "must be humble, meek and a servant, not a prince."

This is "the word of God" that comes from the time of St. Paul and isn't something recent from the Second Vatican Council, the pope added.

The church can only "set right" what needs corrected when it has bishops who have these qualities, he said.

What matters to God, he said, is a bishop's humility and his service, not how nice he is or how well he preaches.