News
Francis, the comic strip

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The constant temptation and cancer of corruption is one of the most devastating illnesses to befall society, Pope Francis said.

Corruption causes considerable damage both ethically and economically, he said in an audience March 18 with judges, administrators and staff from Italy's court of audit, a kind of government accountability office with judicial powers.

The pope told his audience that corruption, with its "illusion of fast and easy gains, in reality impoverishes everyone, erasing trust, transparency and integrity from the entire system. Corruption disheartens individual dignity and shatters all good and beautiful ideals."

Public assets, he said, must be safeguarded for the benefit of everyone, especially the poor.

Whenever such assets have been used irresponsibly, he added, "the state is called to carry out an indispensable function of vigilance, duly sanctioning illegal behavior."

"The meticulous inspection of budgets puts the brakes on the temptation – recurrent in those holding political or administrative office – to manage resources with an eye on patronage or mere electoral consensus rather than with prudence," he said.

The auditing office's judicial powers play a very important role, he said, "particularly in the incessant fight against corruption," which is "one of the most decimating plagues" in society.

But everyone, including individual administrators, is called to be responsible and operate with transparency and honesty, strengthening a sense of trust between citizens and the government – a trust whose unravelling "is one of the gravest signs of the crisis of democracy," he said.

Christians believe Jesus himself "is urging us to openly face this evil and to go to the roots of problems," the pope said. "He teaches us to personally pay the price in this fight, not out of pursuing an unrealistic heroism and undisguised attention-seeking, but with the humble tenacity of a person who does his or her job, often hidden, resisting the pressures of the world."

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