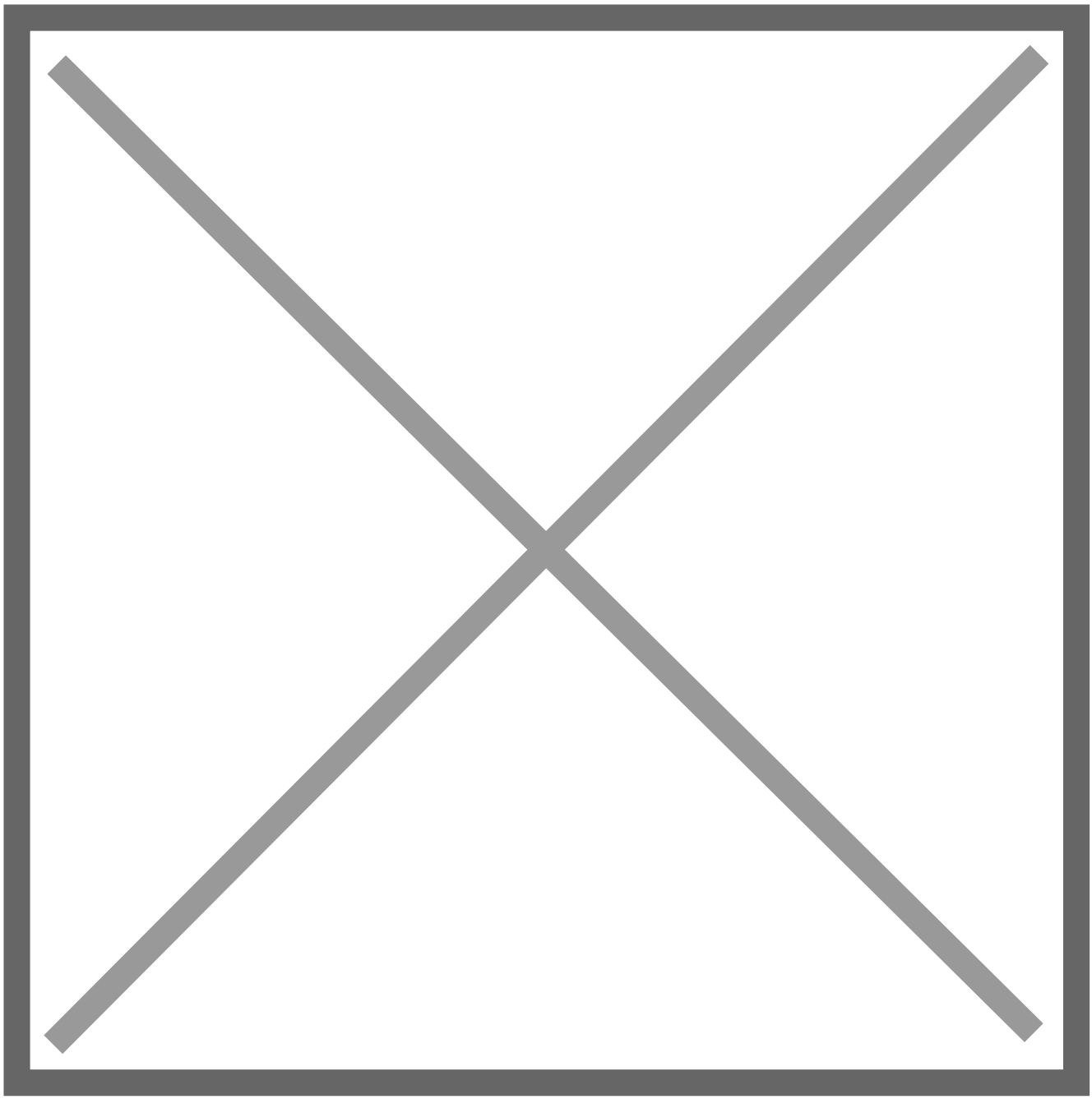
News



Archbishop Jean-Pierre Cattenoz of Avignon, France, is pictured in an undated photo. Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Archbishop Cattenoz, a month after the archbishop celebrated his 75th birthday, amid ongoing questions about his management style and handling of archdiocesan finances. (CNS photo/courtesy Archdiocese of Avignon)



by Catholic News Service

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Pope Francis accepted the resignation of Archbishop Jean-Pierre Cattenoz of Avignon, a month after the archbishop celebrated his 75th birthday, amid ongoing questions about his management style and handling of archdiocesan finances.

Cattenoz was named to Avignon in 2002 by St. John Paul II. As required by church law, he submitted his resignation on his 75th birthday Dec. 17.

As early as 2019, about 200 faithful belonging to a group called Christians in Vaucluse had requested the archbishop's early retirement because of what they saw as a style of governance that created "real suffering" for local Catholics. Among the contentious issues were that of personnel management, concern for the poor, people feeling unwelcomed, the lack of ecumenical and interreligious initiatives and diocesan finances.

Vaucluse refers to the French department where the Archdiocese of Avignon is located.

The issue of diocesan finances became more urgent last year.

"The archdiocese needs 300,000 euros (US$364,000) quickly in order to be able to meet its expenses by the end of 2020, but it has no financial reserves left," the archdiocese said last May.

Over the past decade, an annual deficit of about 1 million euros was covered by bequests. However, these are becoming more rare, and the deficit has been

growing. The archdiocese has said the biggest category of expenses is for personnel.

Efforts have been made to try to correct the situation, notably by soliciting the generosity of the faithful, including to ensure the ongoing availability of priests.

The Christians in Vaucluse group has asked that an independent audit be carried out after the archbishop's departure.

Neither the official communique announcing the departure of Cattenoz, nor Vatican News mentioned the situation of the diocese. The French newspaper La Croix reported the news, referring to a "diocese with a tense climate."

Cattenoz told his flock he would retire to the Diocese of Bayonne, near Lourdes.

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