News

Cardinal Mario Poli of Buenos Aires, Argentina, distributes Communion during a Mass outside

Cardinal Mario Poli of Buenos Aires, Argentina, distributes Communion during a Mass outside the Basilica of Our Lady of Lujan in Buenos Aires March 8, 2020. (CNS photo/Agustin Marcarian, Reuters)



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MEXICO CITY — An audit ordered by the Vatican into the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires has revealed irregularities in the sales of church assets, with properties being disposed of controversially. The audit said no crimes were committed.

The audit by the Congregation for Clergy did not outline specific transactions, but said two archdiocesan commissions for overseeing financial matters were either inoperative or not fully formed at the time of some sales. It also said Cardinal Mario Poli of Buenos Aires "is limited to only carrying out economic transactions that are

currently strictly necessary."

The letter, dated Oct. 28 and signed by Archbishops Lazarus You Heung-sik and Andrés Ferrada Moreira, perfect and secretary respectively of the Congregation for Clergy, requested Cardinal Poli, "to the extent possible, not to dispose of any more assets belonging to the archdiocese or parishes, which seems to have happened often of late."

A copy of the five-page letter was published by the Buenos Aires newspaper La Nación. News of the audit received enormous attention in the Argentine capital, where Pope Francis was archbishop from 1998 until his election as pope in 2013. Observers say Pope Francis was known for personal austerity and acting as a strict administrator.

The Archdiocese of Buenos Aires has confirmed Vatican officials visited the city last October. It said in a May 3 statement, "During the visit, the archdiocesan administration made all accounting documentation available, and in no cases were crimes or negotiations detected."

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The statement continued: "There are many charitable works that are carried out, particularly in recent years due to the pandemic, which require resources to sustain them over time. For this reason, for many years, the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires has pursued a path for better administration and use of its assets, placed at the service of the church's evangelizing and charitable works."

Cardinal Poli traveled to the Vatican for a May 5 audience with Pope Francis. The Archdiocese of Buenos Aires said the visit was routine and overdue to travel restrictions during the pandemic.

A letter signed by more than 250 priests in the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires expressed support for Cardinal Poli. The letter read: "The priests of Buenos Aires have always known you as a brother, a seminary instructor and as a bishop and pastor. We are witnesses to your honesty and moral integrity, as well as of your humility, simplicity and austerity. Many of us could provide countless anecdotes to prove it."