Vatican
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A white man with short dark hair wearing a green jacket speaks at a podium

Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenksyy, speaks during a news conference in Kyiv, Ukraine, in this Feb. 26, 2022, file photo. (CNS photo/Courtesy The Presidential Office of Ukraine)



Justin McLellan

Vatican Correspondent

View Author Profile

jmclellan@ncronline.org
Follow on Twitter at @m/McLellan_Js



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After an adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy suggested that a financial relationship exists between the Vatican and Moscow, the Vatican bank said Sept. 9 that it "does not receive nor invest money from Russia."

"We need to look at the investments that Russia makes in the Vatican bank, and why the position of the country called the Vatican is so strange," Mykhailo Podolyak, a Ukrainian presidential adviser, said in an interview with Ukrainian TV news station Channel 24 released Sept. 8.

In a statement published the next day, the Vatican bank, using its Italian acronym, said it "strongly rejects the adviser's inferences that the IOR is investing Russian money."

"Beyond being untrue, such an activity would be impossible considering the IOR's stringent policies and international sanctions that also apply to the financial sector," it continued.

In addition to accepting as clients only individuals or institutions with a close relationship to the Holy See and the Catholic Church, the Vatican bank specified that it is a "financial intermediary subject to supervision, operating through international correspondent banks of the highest caliber and impeccable reputation held to international standards."

Podolyak also had argued in the interview that the Vatican retains "an absolutely pro-Russian position."

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Discussing the pope's comments to young Russian Catholics in late August that they should be proud heirs of the "great, educated Russian empire," Podolyak said it is "clear that the (pope) is pro-Russian" and that Pope Francis is unconsciously "canceling the reputation of the Holy See" and its ability to act as a mediator to end the war in Ukraine.

"It doesn't make sense to speak of a mediator known as the pope if he takes a pro-Russian position that is obvious to everyone," he said. "If a person clearly promotes Russia's right to kill citizens of another country on another sovereign territory, that is promoting war."

"The Vatican cannot have any mediating role, because that would delude Ukraine and justice," Podolyak said.

On his return flight to Rome from Mongolia Sept. 4 and again during a meeting with Ukrainian bishops Sept. 6, Francis tried to explain his comments to the young Russians saying he meant to praise Russia's cultural, not imperial, legacy.

While Francis has sent his peace envoy, Cardinal Matteo Zuppi, archbishop of Bologna, to Kyiv, Moscow and Washington for meetings with government and church officials, the cardinal has maintained that dialogue, not mediation, was the goal of his mission.