Vatican
Vatican News
Pope Francis sits in a wheelchair between two sections of seated people in business attire

Pope Francis poses for a photo with the staff of the Vatican Secretariat for the Economy in the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican Nov. 13, 2023. He later sent a letter to the staff emphasizing their work as being focused on ensuring resources for the mission of the church. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Cindy Wooden

View Author Profile

Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Vatican City — December 13, 2023
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

The Vatican's financial planning, budgeting, auditing, investing and saving are essential for carrying out the Catholic Church's mission and must be handled with the highest sense of responsibility and prudence, Pope Francis wrote in a letter to the staff of the Secretariat for the Economy.

"The proper management of assets and their use is a testimony given to all of how much can be done with little," the pope wrote in the letter dated Nov. 24 and posted on the secretariat's website Dec. 12.

Francis had met with the staff in early November and, according to Vatican News, had promised to send some reflections in writing.

The pope's letter was published as the Vatican trial of Cardinal Angelo Becciu and nine other people on charges of financial malfeasance was ending; the charges against the 10 defendants are related to a property investment deal in London in which the Vatican lost as much as $200 million. A verdict in the trial was expected as early as Dec. 16.

In his letter to the Secretariat of the Economy, which was established after the London deal was underway, Francis praised the "courage" of the secretariat's first prefect, the late Australian Cardinal George Pell, who "understood the path that needed to be taken."

The Vatican and the Holy See run "a major deficit every year," the pope said, and that means "that a part of the patrimony is eroded, which compromises the future. This is the reason why a turnaround is needed."

"This awareness must be acquired at every level of our community: we are all responsible for preserving the patrimony to ensure the resources needed to continue the journey for those who will come after us," he said.

Advertisement

Because all Vatican resources ultimately are intended to support the mission of preaching the Gospel, the pope said, the church must safeguard its assets and "invest them carefully, ethically."

"Investments," he said, "should have neither the goal of speculation nor the goal of accumulation."

In their support of the mission of the church, the staff of the secretariat cannot focus on what they have achieved in reforming the economic system of the Vatican, Francis said. Rather, they must continue the reform process.

Focusing on the responsible use of the church's resources does not mean saving money simply for the sake of saving money, the pope said. The goal always must be using resources "so that the mission grows and flourishes," never "forgetting that the church is poor because everything it possesses is not for itself but is to use where there is a need."

Secretariat staff must have the strength "to say no when what is presented to you or what you find in your monitoring betrays the mission, when the individual interest of some prevails over the collective interest, when rules are violated or artificially circumvented to pursue ends unrelated to those of the Holy See and the church, and when choices have nothing or little to do with the mission or do it harm," the pope wrote.

"Loyalty means never being complicit, even if only by pretending not to see [or] by not wanting to disappoint" another Vatican employee, he wrote.