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Don't leave home without them: Credit cards welcome again at Vatican

by Cindy Wooden by Catholic News Service

Vatican City — After more than six weeks of not being able to accept credit- and debit-card payments in the Vatican Museums and shops, the Vatican announced Wednesday that it had begun accepting plastic again.

Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, also told reporters Wednesday that it was likely that the Institute for the Works of Religion, commonly known as the Vatican bank, would have a new president "in a few days."

The Vatican has been seeking a new president since May when the institute's board of supervisors unanimously passed a vote of "no confidence" in the leadership of Ettore Gotti Tedeschi, citing "progressively erratic personal behavior" and the release of confidential documents last known to have been in his possession.

The credit card halt was a separate incident.

The Vatican said Wednesday it had signed an agreement with the Switzerland-based Aduno Group, a company that issues credit cards and handles online payments, as well as offering point-of-sale services to businesses wanting to accept credit- and debit-cards.

The Vatican was forced to stop accepting cards Jan. 1 after Italy's central bank denied permission to Deutsche Bank Italia to continue offering the service. The central bank claimed the Vatican's banking and financial laws were not stringent enough to prevent money laundering.

Rene Brulhart, the Swiss finance lawyer hired to monitor the legality and transparency of Vatican

financial activity, had said the Italian central bank's action was surprising, particularly because no other European country or agency shared Italy's concerns about the Vatican's supposed vulnerability to money laundering.

Several Italian newspapers estimated that the Vatican lost tens of thousands of dollars in income in the six weeks it was unable to accept credit and debit cards to pay for tickets to the Vatican Museums, to buy items at Vatican souvenir stands and to shop in the Vatican bookstore, pharmacy, supermarket and duty-free store.

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