

Pope asks cardinal to lead financially troubled religious order

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Pope Benedict XVI has entrusted the leadership of the financially troubled Sons of the Immaculate Conception to Cardinal Giuseppe Versaldi, president of the Prefecture for the Economic Affairs of the Holy See.

The religious order, which has about 400 priests and brothers, runs a major hospital in Rome specializing in diseases and cancers of the skin. Its members also work in North and South America, Africa, Europe and Asia.

After an apostolic visitation of the order, Pope Benedict "decided to entrust the governance" of the order to Versaldi, said a statement Monday from the Vatican.

The cardinal "will have the task of guiding the religious institute and leading the health care structures it operates toward economic renewal if possible."

The statement added that Vatican funds would not be used to rescue the order's Italian hospital group, IDI Healthcare.

An Italian court has been investigating the financial operations of IDI Healthcare and its suspected budget deficit of \$800 million. Several times since late 2011, employees of IDI Healthcare have held public demonstrations to protest the company's failure to pay their salaries on time. News reports also claim the hospitals have been unable to pay for repairs to important equipment, so they are sending patients to other facilities.

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