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Vatican official: 'If someone needs aid, the pope is close to him'

by Joshua J. McElwee

The Francis Chronicles

The newly appointed archbishop to a traditionally ceremonial Vatican office has reportedly said Pope Francis wants him to redirect the office to show the pontiff's personal care for those experiencing poverty.

Archbishop Konrad Krajewski, a Poland native who was appointed to be the "Almoner of His Holiness" in August, says the pope told him upon his appointment he "will not stay behind a desk signing parchments."

Instead, says Krajewski, Francis told him: "I want you always among the people. In Buenos Aires I often went out in the evening to go find the poor. Now I no longer can: it is difficult for me to leave the Vatican. You will do it for me.?"

Krajewski made his comments in the Oct. 4 edition of *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican's semi-official Italian-language newspaper. They were reported in English Friday by veteran Italian journalist Sandro Magister.

Traditionally, the papal almoner was largely responsible for distributing official papal blessings to those making requests. He would then allocate a portion of the proceeds from those requests to charitable causes in the pope's name.

From now on, Krajewski says, the donations to charity will be a bit more personal.

"I will give an example," says the archbishop, according to Magister's translation. "If someone asks for aid to pay a bill [electricity or gas], it is good that I should go, if possible, to the home to bring the aid

materially, in order to make him understand that the pope, through the almoner, is close to him."

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