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Financial reform group says Francis visit lends credibility

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A U.S.-based faith organization that presses for reform of the global financial system said a meeting in Rome Wednesday between its leaders and Pope Francis will lend credibility to its efforts.

The pontiff met Wednesday morning with the leaders of Jubilee USA, a Washington-based alliance of some 75 organizations, 400 faith communities, and 50 global partners that works for issues like debt relief for developing countries and reform of international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund.

Eric LeCompte, the group's executive director, said in a phone interview following the meeting that the pope took several minutes during the audience to listen to specific concerns the organization has regarding the global financial system.

The pope, LeCompte said, has "an astute sense of the issues of debt and taxes, corruption and trade and how it all comes together."

The meeting, the executive director said, "gives us a level of credibility when we speak on behalf of churches."

"Having this meeting with Pope Francis gives us credibility, it raises the profile of our efforts, and it will ultimately allow us to move forward legislation on the policies that we're trying to win," he said.

Leaders from the Jubilee group also met this week in Rome with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican's Secretary of State, and Cardinal Peter Turkson, the president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

LeCompte said Parolin spent 45 minutes with the group last night, and assured them that the Vatican was "in solidarity" with their efforts to push for global financial reforms.

Parolin, LeCompte said, specifically mentioned "how important Jubilee is because we're bringing together Muslims, Jews, and Christians to work on these issues."

"We're bringing together all the faiths because this is something we all agree upon -- we need to end extreme poverty ... and we can only be successful if we all work together," LeCompte quoted the Vatican official.

Jubilee USA takes its name from the church's jubilee year in 2000, when Pope John Paul II called for ameliorating the public debt of developing nations.

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