

Pope Francis says churches could be sold to help the poor



Vatican City, December 3 (RHC)-- Pope Francis said it is possible to sell church goods or even unused church buildings "in case of need" by poor people, although that "should not be the first or only solution."

The Vatican has developed guidelines around the sale or reuse of Catholic churches and goods to help ensure the cultural heritage is used for the good of the community rather than commerce.

Such moves "should be welcomed in the church not with anxiety, but as a sign of the times that invites us to reflection and requires us to adapt," Pope Francis said.

The declarations were made by the Pope at a Vatican-backed conference entitled "Doesn't God dwell here anymore?" Sale of places of worship and integrated management of the ecclesiastical cultural property," held at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.

Academics, bishops and church officials from North America, Australia and Europe presented case studies of disused church properties and how to deal with the "problem," which is already common in Europe.

Pope Francis said religious art and churches "are witness to the faith of the community," therefore decisions concerning them should be agreed upon with the community and benefit the community and the

poor.

"We are talking about the faith of the people of God, and as long as there is faith, the people of God will need churches," the pope said.

"This constitutes a constant ecclesiastical teaching that, in addition to inculcating the duty to protect and preserve the Church's goods, and in particular the cultural ones, it declares that these do not have an absolute value but, in case of necessity, must serve the greater good of the human being and especially at the service of the poor."

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