

Key figure in families meeting investigated for alleged misuse of funds

By Matthew Gambino

Catholic News Service

PHILADELPHIA - Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, the head of the Pontifical Council for the Family and lead Vatican organizer of September's World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, is under investigation by Italian prosecutors for alleged embezzlement.

Published reports in European media outlets say the investigation stems from 2011 when the archbishop led the Diocese of Terni in Italy, and diocesan funds may have been used improperly in a scheme to purchase then resell at a profit a 14th-century Italian castle.

A diocesan financial officer at the time was also the head of an Italian firm that purchased the property, which today remains undeveloped.

Prosecutors named the archbishop as one of the people being investigated. No charges have been filed.

In a statement May 28, Archbishop Paglia said he has not done anything illegal. "Obviously, I remain at the disposition of the investigating authorities, trusting completely in earthly justice."

In Philadelphia, Archbishop Charles J. Chaput said in a statement May 29 that he was saddened to learn the news of Archbishop Paglia, "and will pray for him."

"At the same time," Archbishop Chaput said, "I assure everyone that matters facing him do not impact our plans for September. We continue to work without interruption and joyfully anticipate welcoming our Holy Father and the world to Philadelphia later this year."

The World Meeting of Families will host tens of thousands of people from 150 countries for four days of conferences and activities focusing on the family on Sept. 22-25. Pope Francis will visit Philadelphia Sept. 26-27 to cap the families' congress and his first trip to the United States.

Officials with the World Meeting of Families said through a statement that they found the news about Archbishop Paglia "troubling," but it does not affect planning for the congress because "our partnership is with the Pontifical Council for the Family and not any individual from that office."

The council officially sponsors the World Meeting of Families, which is held every three years in a different city. The meeting in Philadelphia is the eighth such event, and the first in the United States.

"Planning for the event is progressing positively and without interruption," the statement said. "It is important to note that the World Meeting of Families-Philadelphia 2015 is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, separate from both the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the Pontifical Council for the Family."

The Philadelphia organization had set a \$45 million budget to host the historic events this September, and as of last February two-thirds of the money (\$30 million) had already been raised.

"All fundraising ... is done through the World Meeting of Families-Philadelphia 2015 with funds held in separate and distinct accounts from the archdiocese and the Pontifical Council for the Family. We have been - and remain - committed to ensuring that financial best practices are employed at all levels of the organization," the statement said.

Editor's note: An audited financial report for the World Meeting of Families-Philadelphia 2015 as of June 2014 may be viewed [here](#).

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