

# Pope's 'Robin Hood' Wired Money For Food To Struggling Transgender Sex Workers

Cardinal Konrad Krajewski, who is responsible for doling out charity in Pope Francis's name, said the act of kindness was "normal" for the church.

Philip Pullella  REUTERS

When the coronavirus lockdown left a group of transgender sex workers in a beach town near Rome without work, they turned to a local Catholic priest for help to buy food.

But his parish's resources were already stretched by the health crisis so the priest turned to the cardinal known as "the Pope's Robin Hood" who runs the Vatican charities. He wired money to the parish for them.

"I don't understand why this is getting so much attention," Cardinal Konrad Krajewski told Reuters by phone on Thursday. "This is ordinary work for the Church, it's normal. This is how the Church is a field hospital."

Krajewski, whose formal title is “papal almoner,” or distributor of alms, said the sex workers most likely were undocumented, making it difficult for them to seek help from Italian state welfare offices.

“Everything is closed. They don’t have any resources. They went to the pastor. They could not have gone to a politician or a parliamentarian. And the pastor came to us.

“They are really in difficulty because sometimes their passports were taken away by the mafia pimps who control them,” he said. “We follow the gospel.”



ANDREAS SOLARO VIA GETTY IMAGES

Cardinal Konrad Krajewski is responsible for carrying out charity in Pope Francis’s name.

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Krajewski, at 56, one of the youngest cardinals in the world, said it was what Jesus would have done. And it was not the first time the Polish cardinal has made the news with his sometimes unorthodox ways of distributing the pope’s charities. Last year, he clambered down a manhole, broke a police seal, and re-connected electrical circuit breakers to restore electricity to hundreds of homeless people, many of them immigrants, living in an occupied building in Rome.

Although Krajewski ran afoul of then-Interior Minister Matteo Salvini and his anti-immigrant policies, an Italian newspaper dubbed him “The Pope’s Robin Hood.”

Although he tries to shun the limelight, Krajewski has become a minor celebrity in Rome. Since Pope Francis named him to the Vatican charity post in 2013, he became known for dressing down into simple layman’s clothes at night and bringing food to the city’s homeless in a white van.

He has also opened shelters near the Vatican where the homeless can wash, get haircuts, and receive medical care.