

# WORLD & NATION

## Vatican seems nonplussed by euro

By Cindy Wooden  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — From the post-Christmas calm of Vatican employees, one would never know big changes were in store, especially for those who deal with money all day long.

The atmosphere outside the thick walls of Vatican City State was different, as shown by a bombardment of Italian government public service ads assuring citizens that "the money is changing; life will not."

The euro, a new currency, became legal tender in Italy and 11 other European nations Jan. 1.

Pope John Paul marked the event during his midday Angelus Jan. 1 by offering "special wishes for peace and prosperity to the countries of the European Union, which today with a single currency have reached a historic goal."

"May justice and solidarity grow throughout Europe for the benefit of the whole human family," he said.

The pope's positive reaction to the euro seemed to be shared by Vatican officials, who did not see a need to duplicate the Italian government's information and hand-holding campaign.

"The Vatican has not given us much information," a non-Italian employee of the Vatican said. "I suppose they figure that if Italy can survive, they will."

She and a co-worker agreed the only detailed information they received about anything euro-related regarded using old Vatican stamps.

Stamps printed with values only in lire will continue to be valid, but they cannot be combined with newer stamps bearing a euro value, according to the Vatican post office.

Until Feb. 28, Italians can spend their



Reuters/CNS

An Italian vendor shows a new euro and the corresponding lira in the Tuscany region of Italy. The euro became the currency of 11 countries of the European Union this year.

lire, Spaniards can spend their pesetas and Greeks can spend their drachmas — but as of Jan. 1, storekeepers were supposed to give change back in euros.

By treaty, the Vatican's currency is tied to Italy's currency, which was the lira until Dec. 31.

The Vatican does not issue paper money, but Vatican coins are in circulation and are popular among collectors.

Vatican coins will continue to be produced by the Italian mint, but since the mint was a bit busy the last few months of 2001 rolling out Italian euros, the Vatican euros are not expected to enter circulation until sometime in February.

"Euro converters" — pre-programmed calculators that translate a lire sum to its equivalent in euros and vice versa — were a hot Christmas gift throughout Italy as people worried about how they would know what they really were spending in the new currency.

Under the fixed exchange rate, one euro equals just over 1,936 lire.

As 2001 ended, Italian newspaper articles and television programs on the euro were dominated by concerns that a wave of "rounding up" prices would hit the country.

But, at the Vatican, it seems only the Vatican museums bit into that temptation.

The 2001 admission price, 18,000 lire, would equal almost 9.30 euros. But the

museums decided the 2002 entrance fee would be a nice round 10 euros.

A Vatican employee, who doesn't work in the museum, thought that was a justified round-up: "The museums make money and help pay our salaries," she said.

Vatican postage rates will remain the same, however. In fact, every stamp issued in 2001 was marked with a value in both lire and euros.

The stamp with both 1,500 lire and 77 euro cents written on it still will get a first-class letter to North America.

At one of the post offices just off St. Peter's Square Dec. 27, postcards and collectible envelopes still were displayed with price tags only in lire.

"We're going to have to change all of these prices, but it will take only 20 minutes or so," a postal clerk said.

The Vatican bank, whose formal name is the Institute for the Works of Religion, has been prepared for the change even longer than the post office has.

Since mid-1998, monthly bank statements have provided balances in both lire and euros. In 1999, receipts for each individual transaction included the equivalent.

In early December, the bank began asking account holders to turn in unused lire checks and began issuing euro checks — valid before the actual currency entered circulation.

The daily editions of L'Osservatore Romano, the Vatican newspaper, and books published by the Vatican have carried dual lira-euro prices for months.

The combination souvenir-news stand just outside St. Peter's Square was ready by Dec. 27 — everything had a dual price tag.

A water-filled globe with snow falling on St. Peter's Basilica was marked 20,000 lire and 10.32 euros. A small calendar for the new year was selling for 5,000 lire before Dec. 31 or 2.58 euro after.

Unlike Italian post offices and banks, the Vatican was not authorized to distribute euro "starter kits" in mid-December. The well-intentioned government plan to get people familiar with the money ended up creating endless lines of customers and frustration when the supply of kits ran out.

But most Vatican employees did not seem worried about entering the euro era without a euro in their pockets.

"As long as we have lentils in the house for New Year's Eve, what's the problem," said an Italian who maintains the tradition of eating the small legumes Dec. 31 to bring good luck and riches in the New Year.

### Bishops can't require female altar servers

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — In an English-language document, the Vatican said bishops cannot require their priests to use female altar servers.

While upholding bishops' authority to permit use of female servers in their dioceses, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments said the use of male servers should be especially encouraged, in part because altar boys are a potential source of priestly vocations.

The document, a July 27 letter responding to a query from an unidentified bishop, was published in late December in the congregation's *Notitiae*, a periodical that frequently contains liturgical rulings. The bishop, who was considering whether to authorize the use of female altar servers in his diocese, had asked whether a bishop "would be able to oblige his priests to admit women and girls to service at the altar."

The congregation said, "Such an authorization may not in any way, exclude men or, in particular, boys from the service of the altar, nor require that priests of the diocese would make use of female altar servers."

It said it considered its letter "normative," meaning that ruling would apply in all such cases.

Quoting the 1994 Vatican document that first permitted female altar servers, the congregation said it continued to be "very appropriate to follow the noble tradition of having boys serve at the altar."

The congregation underscored the bishop's freedom to decide whether he would allow female altar servers in his diocese.

## Trouble Hearing? The Future Has Arrived

New Technology

the  
**Direct**  
system<sup>™</sup>  
by **SOUNDTEC**, inc.

A Whole  
New Way  
Of Hearing

The Direct System eliminates feedback.  
Improves sound quality, reduces occlusion  
effect, and reduces distortion...resulting in  
improved natural sound quality.

If you would like to hear more natural sound, call:

**Jules Musinger, M.D., F.A.C.S.**

Suite 115  
1561 Long Pond Road  
Rochester, N.Y. 14626  
225-5900

Suite 508  
220 Alexander St.  
Rochester, N.Y. 14607  
442-4220

Connect with Direct: A new way of helping the world to hear. [www.soundtecinc.com](http://www.soundtecinc.com)



Leo M. Bean

Bryan S. Bean

Stephen D. Bean

David M. Bean

"A Tradition of Family Service"  
Family Owned and Operated

**LEO M. BEAN**

FUNERAL HOME, INC.

2771 Chili Avenue • 426-7830