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Vatican department shares building with Italy's biggest gay sauna

As 115 cardinals prepare to elect a new Pope, the Vatican faced fresh embarrassment over claims that one of its key departments shares a building in Rome that hosts Italy's biggest gay sauna.



Italian carabinieri policemen stand in front of St Peter's square Photo: AFP/GETTY IMAGES

As 115 cardinals prepare to elect a new Pope, the Vatican faced fresh embarrassment over claims that one of its key departments shares a building in Rome that hosts Italy's biggest gay sauna.

The historic palazzo is the headquarters of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, which was founded in 1622 and is responsible for missionary activities. The building provides accommodation for about 15 priests.

But the imposing stone mansion also contains the **Europa Multiclub Sauna and Gym**, which claims on its website that it is "**the number one gay sauna in Italy**".

The Vatican paid a hugely inflated price for around 20 apartments in the building when it was acquired in 2008, La Repubblica newspaper claimed in a front page report on Monday.

The apartments were bought for nine million euros on May 30 2008 by a property company which later that day sold them to the Vatican for 20 million euros, making an instant profit of 11 million euros, the daily claimed.

The newspaper offered no explanation for the hugely inflated price but there was no suggestion that there was anything illegal about the deal.

One of the apartments bought by the Vatican is inhabited by Cardinal Ivan Dias, the prefect emeritus of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of the Peoples.

The cardinal, who is Indian, will take part in the conclave to elect a new Pope. He is the archbishop emeritus of Mumbai and also served as a Vatican diplomat, holding posts in Scandinavia, Madagascar and Mauritius.

Not far from his apartment, and accommodation for around 15 clergy, is the gay sauna club.

The Vatican has declined to comment.

www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/vaticancityandhollysee/9923800/Vatican-department-shares-building-with-Italys-biggest-gay-sauna.html

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Vatican department shares Rome palazzo with gay sauna.

12 March 2013

The screenshot shows the BBC News website interface. At the top, there are navigation links for News, Sport, Weather, Shop, Earth, and Travel. Below that is the 'NEWS' banner with sub-links for Home, Video, World, Asia, UK, Business, Tech, Science, Magazine, and Entertainment. The main article title is 'Vatican department shares Rome palazzo with gay sauna', dated 12 March 2013. The article text reads: 'A historic palazzo in Rome that houses a key Vatican department is also the home of a well-known gay sauna. The Holy See paid 20m euros (£17.5m) in 2008 for around 20 apartments in the building for the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples.' An image of a muscular man in a thong is shown with the caption: 'Europa Multiclub boasts a Turkish bath, Finnish sauna, whirlpools and massages'.

A historic palazzo in Rome that houses a key Vatican department is also the home of a well-known gay sauna.

The Holy See paid 20m euros (£17.5m) in 2008 for around 20 apartments in the building for the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples.

Its Prefect Emeritus, Cardinal Ivan Dias, is one of the priestly residents.

The proximity to Europa Multiclub, billed as Italy's top gay sauna, has drawn comment due to the Vatican's strict stance on gay partnerships.

The facility boasts a Turkish bath, Finnish sauna, whirlpools and massages.

Also on offer are "bear parties", which are advertised on its website with a video of a man stripping down before donning clerical attire.

Bruno, "a hairy, overweight pastor of souls, is free to the music of his clergyman, remaining in a thong, because he wants to expose body and soul", the website says.

The Vatican has declined to comment on the proximity of the sauna to the headquarters of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples - which is responsible for missionary activities - but Cardinal Dias has previously said that gays and lesbians can be cured of their "unnatural tendencies" through the "sacrament of penance".

The 76-year-old cardinal, who is Indian and a former archbishop of Mumbai, will take part in the conclave to elect a successor to Pope Benedict XVI, which will begin later on Tuesday.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-21753860>