

Vatican convicts second man in 'Vatileaks' scandal

by [Alessandro Speciale](#)

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VATICAN CITY (RNS) A Vatican computer expert on Saturday (Nov. 10) was convicted of aiding and abetting the pope's former butler in stealing the pontiff's papers and leaking them to the press.

Claudio Sciarpelletti, 48, was given a two-month suspended prison sentence by a Vatican tribunal for "having helped in eluding the investigation."

His lawyer, Gianluca Benedetti, said he would appeal the sentence since Sciarpelletti now risks losing his job. His duties included maintenance of the computers in the office of the pope's closest aides.

The Vatican hopes that the end of the second trial on the so-called Vatileaks affairs will mark the end of a scandal that has rocked the top echelons of the Catholic Church in recent months. But the Vatican's chief spokesman, the Rev. Federico Lombardi, warned that the probe into the document leak "isn't closed."

Sciarpelletti was indicted last August with Paolo Gabriele, Pope Benedict XVI's former butler, who is currently serving an 18-month jail term for theft.

He had been arrested quietly on May 25, two days after the butler, but was released after one night in prison and continued working at the Vatican.

During the trial, it emerged that Vatican investigators were initially alerted to Gabriele's frequent contacts with the computer expert by an anonymous tipoff.

Vatican police found an envelope addressed to Gabriele in Sciarpelletti's desk. The envelope contained printed emails and an anonymous text related to one of the chapters of journalist Gianluigi Nuzzi's book "Sua Santita," or "His Holiness," that contained most of the documents leaked by Gabriele.

At the final hearing of the trial on Saturday, Gabriele testified that he had given Sciarpelletti the incriminating file but stressed he didn't give him any confidential papal documents.