News
Vatican



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Pope Francis blesses a rosary presented by a woman as he arrives to pray the rosary at the Shrine of Our Lady of Divine Love in Rome May 1. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

As the Vatican and the Catholic Church's leadership deal with a continuing crisis of accountability for clergy sexual abuse, Pope Francis is asking the faith's 1.3 billion members worldwide to pray the rosary each day in October to "protect the church from the Devil."

A Sept. 29 note from the Vatican press office said the pontiff was inviting the faithful to pray especially to Mary and St. Michael the Archangel to "preserve the church from the attacks of the evil one, the Great Accuser."

The Vatican said Francis was hoping that the intercession of the saints would also make the church "more aware of its mistakes, its errors, its abuses -- committed in the present and the past -- and more dedicated to fight, without any hesitation, so that evil may not prevail."

Although the press office note announcing the papal initiative did not mention clergy sexual abuse, Francis called the Devil the "Great Accuser" in a Sept. 11 homily that was seen by some as his tacit response to a former Vatican ambassador accusing him and the Catholic hierarchy of covering up for ex-cardinal Theodore McCarrick.

That former ambassador, Italian Archbishop Carlo Viganò, released a document in August alleging a systemic cover-up of allegations against the retired Washington archbishop.

In his only remarks on the matter to date, Francis said the document, which contains a host of unsubstantiated and ideological claims and has now been revealed to have been drafted with the help of several ultra-right-wing Catholic figures, "speaks for itself."

The Vatican said the idea to call on the entire Catholic Church to pray the rosary each day in October had been suggested to Francis by Jesuit Fr. Fréderic Fornos, director of the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network.

The pope is asking Catholics to conclude their rosaries with two special prayers: the 4th century *Sub Tuum Praesidium*, and Pope Leo XIII's 1886 prayer to St. Michael the

Archangel.

The *Sub Tuum Praesidium* asks that Mary "deliver us always from all dangers." Leo XIII's prayer asks that St. Michael "be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil."

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