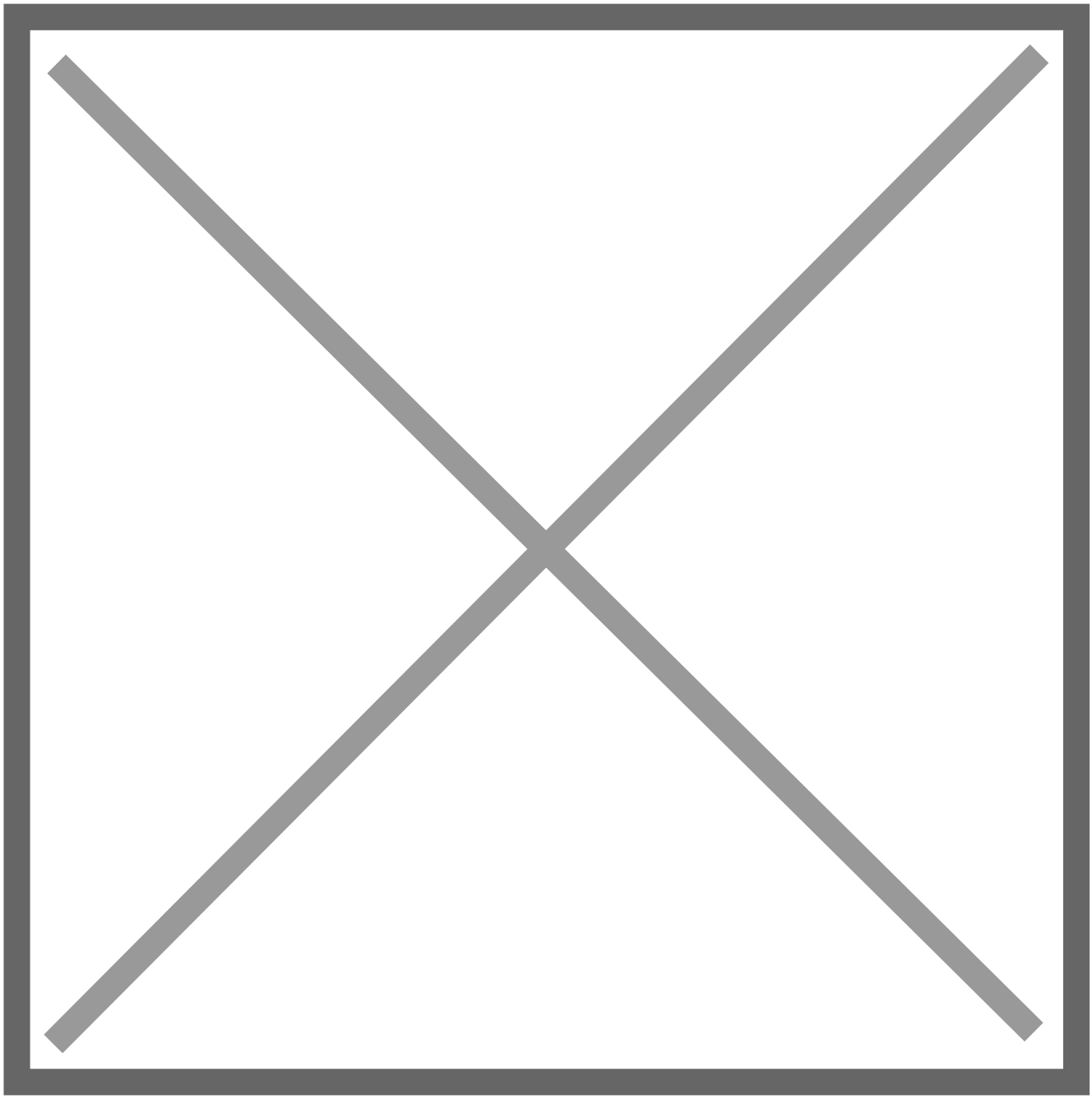
Vatican
News



Twin sisters Ervina and Prefina, who had been joined from the back of the head since birth, are pictured with their mother, Ermine, at the Bambino Gesu hospital in Rome in this photo released July 8, 2020. The twins were baptized by Pope Francis Aug. 6 in the chapel of his residence. (CNS/Reuters/courtesy Ospedale Pediatrico Bambino Gesu)

Cindy Wooden

View Author Profile



Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Vatican City — August 11, 2020
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Their heads encased in white bandages covering the wounds where they had been conjoined, 2-year-old twins named Ervina and Prefina were baptized by Pope Francis Aug. 6 in the chapel of his residence.

The babies from the Central Africa Republic are still hospitalized at the Vatican-owned Bambino Gesu pediatric hospital in Rome, a spokesman said Aug. 10. But their mother, identified only as Ermine, "really wanted the pope to baptize them."

A team of doctors, led by Dr. Carlo Marras, chief of neurosurgery at the hospital, performed the final separation surgery June 5. The hospital held a news conference a month later to announce the successful separation of the conjoined twins and their progressive recovery.

Marras attended the baptism, according to a photograph tweeted by Antoinette Montaigne, a former government official in the Central African Republic and lawyer specializing in children's rights.

Francis visited a hospital when he went to the Central African Republic in 2015; returning to Rome, he asked the Bambino Gesu Hospital in Rome to begin a project there.

Mariella Enoc, president of the Rome hospital, met Ermine and her newborn twins during a visit to Bangui in July 2018 as part of the project to establish a pediatric medical center there, the hospital said. The twins and their mother arrived in Rome two months later.

After more than a year of tests and studies, particularly given how many veins the babies shared, they underwent their first surgery in May 2019; a second operation followed a month later. New veins and grafts were allowed to grow for a year before the final surgery to separate the girls, who had been joined at the back of the head.

A news release from the hospital July 7 said, "June 29 they celebrated their second birthday looking in each other's eyes."

Advertisement