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A sign in St. Peter's Square calls for the consecration of Russia and Ukraine to Mary, before t

A sign in St. Peter's Square calls for the consecration of Russia and Ukraine to Mary, before the start of Pope Francis' Angelus at the Vatican March 13, 2022. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)



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VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis will consecrate Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary during a penitential prayer service in St. Peter's Basilica March 25, the Vatican said.

On the same day, the Vatican said, Cardinal Konrad Krajewski, the papal almoner, will carry out a similar consecration at the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal.

According to the Vatican's translation of the messages of Fatima, when Mary appeared to the three shepherd children in Fatima in 1917, she told them, "God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved, and there will be peace."

Warning of "war, famine, and persecutions of the church and of the Holy Father," Mary told the children, "to prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart."

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Some groups have continued to argue that Mary's wish was never fulfilled or that it was never done properly because the pope consecrated the world and not "Russia." The Vatican, however, has insisted St. John Paul II did so in 1984 when he led the world's bishops in the consecration of Russia and the world. The late Sister Lucia dos Santos, the last surviving visionary and the one who received the instructions for the consecration, had said that it was properly performed.

At his Sunday recitations of the Angelus since Russia invaded Ukraine Feb. 24, people have been showing up in St. Peter's Square with signs asking the pope for the consecration of Russia or of Russia and Ukraine to Mary.

The Fatima message promised: "If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the church. The good will be martyred; the Holy Father will have much to suffer; various nations will be annihilated."

But, the message continued: "In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she shall be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world."