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Pope Francis comforts Miguel Angel after baptizing the baby boy in Rome's Gemelli hospital M

Pope Francis comforts Miguel Angel after baptizing the baby boy in Rome's Gemelli hospital March 31, 2023. The pope spent about half an hour in the hospital's pediatric oncology ward the afternoon before he was scheduled to be released from Gemelli after being treated for bronchitis. (CNS photo/Holy See Press Office)

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Rome — March 31, 2023
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Pope Francis used his third day at Rome's Gemelli hospital to visit children hospitalized in the oncology ward and to confer the sacrament of baptism on a tiny infant named Miguel Angel.

The child, who was just a few weeks old, was sleeping peacefully in a portable hospital bassinet as the pope and the mother prepared for the sacrament and medical staff looked on March 31. The Holy See press office provided a video of the baptism and other images of the pope's visit to the pediatric ward.

The pope was given a small metal emesis basin filled with water. Reciting the baptismal formula in Spanish, he sprinkled the water with his hand on the baby, who

loudly protested the sudden shower. He urged the mother to go ahead and try and comfort the infant while the pope made his own attempts by soothing the child's face and tapping his mouth.

The pope wrote out by hand the baptismal certificate as seen in another image, which also showed the pope's left wrist wrapped in gauze and an elastic bandage.

The pope spent about 30 minutes visiting the ward, bringing the children rosaries, large chocolate Easter eggs and copies of the book "Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea."

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The surprise visit came the day after the pope enjoyed a pizza "party" with staff on his second night at Rome's Gemelli hospital.

In the evening of March 30, "Pope Francis had dinner, eating pizza together with those assisting him throughout the days of his hospital stay," that is, doctors, nurses, assistants and members of the Vatican police, the Vatican press office said March 31.

After breakfast on March 31, "he read some newspapers and resumed work," it said.

Francis was expected to be able to return to his Vatican residence April 1, the press office said, although the final decision would depend on the results of tests carried out early March 31.

Matteo Bruni, head of the press office, later confirmed the 86-year-old pope's "presence" at the Palm Sunday Mass in St. Peter's Square April 2.

Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals, said, "With the pope at each celebration, there will be a cardinal celebrant who will be at the altar," the Italian newspaper, La Repubblica reported March 31.