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Pope Francis, wearing a green vestment, stands in front of a reliquary and sculpture of the Ma

Pope Francis prays in front of a reliquary containing liquid from the famous Weeping Madonna of Syracuse, Sicily, after celebrating morning Mass in the Domus Sanctae Marthae at the Vatican in this file photo from May 25, 2018. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

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Commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Weeping Madonna of Syracuse, a plaster image of Mary hung in the bedroom of a newlywed couple in southern Italy that began shedding tears, Pope Francis said the miraculous sign is a reminder of Mary's maternal presence and her desire that all people would know the love and peace of her son.

"Mary's weeping shows her sharing in the compassionate love of the Lord, who suffers for us his children, ardently hopes for our conversion and awaits us as a merciful Father to forgive us everything and always," the pope wrote in a message to the people of the Archdiocese of Syracuse on the island of Sicily.

The image of the Sacred Heart of Mary, a wedding gift for Angelo Iannuso and Antonina Giusto, dripped tears for four days in 1953. After an investigation, local church authorities said there was no natural explanation for what happened, and tests on the liquid determined they had the same composition as human tears do.

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Francis' message, published Dec. 7, said Mary continues to cry "when the weakest are discriminated against and when violence and wars, which claim innocent victims, are rampant."

"In the face of the trials of life and history, especially in the face of today's troubling scenarios of war, let us not tire of invoking the intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace and Mother of Consolation," he said. "May her motherly solicitude stir believers to build and tread paths of peace and forgiveness, and to be close to those who are sick in body and spirit, those who are alone and abandoned."

Francis ended his message with a prayer: "O Virgin Mary, accompany the path of the Church with the gift of your holy tears, give peace to all the world, and guard your children with your maternal protection. Sustain us in fidelity to God, in service to the Church and in love toward all our brothers and sisters. Amen."