

Worshippers carry an image of the Holy Christ of the Blood while it rains, during a procession through the streets of downtown Barcelona, Spain, Saturday, March 9, 2024. Preceded by nine days of prayers and emulating a documented historical tradition dating back five hundred years, worshippers requested rain as Catalonia last month declared drought emergency for the area of around 6 million people including the city of Barcelona. (AP/Emilio Morenatti)

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Barcelona, Spain — March 13, 2024
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A religious procession in downtown Barcelona celebrated the appearance of long-awaited rain, after nine days of praying for relief from a severe drought.

Around 100 local people took part in the Catholic ceremony on a rainy Saturday evening.

They carried the figure of the Holy Christ of the Blood, winding their way through the city's old town for two hours led by Archbishop Joan Josep Omella.

"There are few of us, but it's OK," Omella said inside the Santa Maria del Pi, a 15th-century Gothic church, just before leaving, while outside the rain poured down.

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Last month, officials in Spain's northeast region of Catalonia, whose main city is Barcelona, declared a drought emergency. Reservoirs serving 6 million people were at less than 16% of their capacity, a historic low that sowed alarm among local people.

The last time the figure of the Holy Christ, depicting Jesus on the cross, had left the chapel of Sant Miquel to help fight drought was in 1945.

At one point during the procession, the figure was draped in transparent plastic to keep the rain off.