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As Pope Francis prays the Angelus at the conclusion of Mass for the Jubilee of the Armed Serv

As Pope Francis prays the Angelus at the conclusion of Mass for the Jubilee of the Armed Services, Police and Security Personnel in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican Feb. 9, 2025, a strong gust of wind blows his zucchetto off his head. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)



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Pope Francis is in stable condition and his blood tests indicate a slight improvement, as the 88-year-old pontiff continues to battle pneumonia in hospital.

"The Holy Father's clinical conditions appear to be stable," said a Vatican statement released at just after 7p.m. local time on Wednesday evening, Feb 19. "Blood tests, evaluated by the medical staff, show a slight improvement, particularly in inflammatory markers."

The statement also noted that the pope read newspapers and did some work with some of closest advisers. He also received the Eucharist prior to lunch.

While Francis has undergone four hospitalizations — two related to intestinal surgeries and two for respiratory complications — this marks the most serious health crisis of his 12-year papacy. The pope has been hospitalized for six days for a respiratory infection that has developed into pneumonia in both lungs.

Vatican sources say the pope does not need supplemental oxygen and that he is getting out of bed to sit in an arm chair from time to time. They also note that the pontiff's heart remains in good condition.

On Wednesday afternoon, the Italian Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni, visited the pope to offer him well wishes for a speedy recovery.

"I am very happy to have found him alert and responsive," she said in a statement. "We joked as always. He has not lost his legendary sense of humor."

With the exception of a few close papal aides, Meloni is the first known outside visitor to call on the pope since his hospitalization began six days ago. According to a Vatican statement, the two spent 20 minutes together meeting in private.

On social media, U.S. Vice President JD Vance also issued a Feb. 18 appeal on behalf of the pontiff.

"Let's all say a prayer for Pope Francis, who appears to have some serious health issues," he wrote.

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This story appears in the **Pope Francis' health crisis** feature series. View the full series.