Vatican

Vatican News



Worshippers attend Mass at Immaculate Virgin church in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Feb. 18, 2025, to pray for Pope Francis' health. Matteo Bruni, director of the Vatican press office, told reporters early Feb. 19 that the pope slept peacefully, woke up and had breakfast. (OSV News/Reuters/Pedro Lazaro Fernandez)

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Rome — February 20, 2025
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As Pope Francis continues to recover at Rome's Gemelli Hospital, Catholics in the pope's Diocese of Rome and around the world joined in prayer for his health.

In a statement on the diocesan website posted Feb. 19, Cardinal Baldassare Reina, vicar general of the Diocese of Rome, said the faithful were following "the health condition of our bishop, Pope Francis, with attention and confidence.

"Aware of how precious community prayer is, we ask all parishes and communities of religious life to hold an hour of silent adoration before" the celebration of Mass, Reina said. "As one big family we ask that the Lord give our bishop the strength he needs to face this delicate moment."

In the pope's native Argentina, Catholics flocked to the Metropolitan Cathedral in Buenos Aires, the diocese then-Archbishop Jorge Mario Bergoglio led before his 2013 election, and other parishes to pray for the pontiff's health.

In a letter sent to Francis Feb. 17, on behalf of the archdiocese's Catholics, Archbishop Jorge García Cuerva prayed for his recovery "so that strengthened, you can continue to serve the church throughout the world in the exercise of the ministry that God himself has entrusted to you and that you carry out with such love and dedication."

Cuerva said that while the pope continues his recovery at Gemelli, prayers for the pope's health and intentions would be said "in all the celebrations of the Eucharist during these days."

"We entrust you to the Blessed Virgin, in the indelible memory of the days when you were the bishop of the flock that lives in this city," he wrote.

Catholics in Argentina's Villa 31, a slum Francis would often visit to celebrate Mass

when he led the archdiocese, also joined in prayer for their former bishop. Speaking with the Associated Press, Claudia Doldan, a resident of the slum, said she was saddened because of his "delicate health."

"I know the pope. In that time, Bergoglio would wash the feet (of people) here in the neighborhood. The whole neighborhood is united in prayer; the pope is in our prayers."

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Prayers also came in from Canada, with Bishop William McGrattan of Calgary, Alberta, president of the Canadian bishops' conference, assuring in a Feb. 19 message that the country's faithful and the bishops are "praying for the full recovery of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, as he continues to lead the Church with courage and a generosity of spirit."

Catholics in Asia, including China, have rallied to pray for the pope. Catholic news site xinde.org in mainland China urged readers to "pray for the pope through the Holy Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, the Rosary, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, and other devotions."

"Let us also accompany the pope by observing fasting and penance, praying that the Lord may assist and bless him with a swift recovery," the site read.

While the fragile ceasefire in Gaza continues, Catholics in the region joined in prayer for the pope's health. In a video posted by DRM News, an online news outlet, an unnamed Palestinian in Gaza expressed gratitude to the pope who "communicated with us amid the war and the conflicts that Gaza has endured."

"And now, from his sickbed, from his hospital bed, he continues to reach out to check on his children in Gaza," he said. "This gives us reassurance and confidence that we are well, that we are in his thoughts. We pray for him and wish him a full recovery."

Despite the seriousness of his condition, which has forced him to cancel all events and meetings, the pope did not want to miss his daily call with Fr. Gabriel Romanelli,

pastor of Holy Family Church in Gaza.

In an interview with Vatican News published Feb. 17, Romanelli said Francis called "during the first two days of his hospitalization."

"He asked how we were, how the situation was, and he sent us his blessing. People expressed their closeness to him; he thanked them and gave his blessing."

"We heard his voice. It’s true, he is more tired," the parish priest continued. "He himself said: 'I need to take care of myself.' But his voice was clear, and he listened to us well."

However, on the evening of Feb. 16, as the complexity of the pope's condition became more serious, parishioners in Gaza had "no expectation of communication with the pope."

Nevertheless, Romanelli said, "he sent me a short message saying he was grateful for the closeness and prayers and reciprocated with his blessing."

"We hope that his recovery happens soon and that he can return to St. Peter's to continue his mission and his work," he added.

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