Vatican
Vatican News
Nuns pray in front of Rome’s Gemelli Hospital Feb. 22, 2025, where Pope Francis is admitted

Nuns pray at Gemelli Hospital. (OSV News/Vincenzo Livieri, Reuters)



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Pope Francis remains in critical condition and he continues to receive supplemental oxygen, but he has not experienced any further respiratory crises.

In a Feb. 23 medical bulletin, released just after 7 p.m local time on Sunday evening, the Vatican said the 88-year-old pontiff received two units of concentrated red blood cells.

"Some blood tests showed an initial, mild, renal insufficiency, which is currently under control," the statement noted.

"The complexity of the clinical picture, and the wait necessary for the pharmacological therapies to give some feedback, require that the prognosis remain reserved," the statement added, meaning that his situation is impossible to predict.

Vatican sources have said that the pope continues to receive high-flow oxygen through a cannula, but that he is not on a ventilator or any other machinery.

While Francis has not received any visitors in hospital since the Feb. 19 visit of Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, today's Vatican statement noted that the pope participated in Sunday Mass with his aides in the 10th floor papal apartment in Rome's Gemelli Hospital. While the pope has regularly received Communion since being in hospital, this marks the first time the Vatican has said the pope participated in Mass.

Tomorrow, Feb. 24, will set a record for the longest hospitalization of Francis' 12-year papacy. In 2021, he spent a 10-day stint at Rome's Gemelli Hospital following intestinal surgery. Even prior to the pope's recent recovery setbacks, doctors warned on Feb. 21 that the octogenarian pontiff would remain hospitalized for at least another week.

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Earlier in the day on Sunday, Feb. 23, the Vatican said the pope had a peaceful night in the hospital following a respiratory scare a day earlier that prompted Catholics worldwide to pray for the pontiff.

Cardinal Baldassare Reina, vicar general of the Diocese of Rome, presided over a Mass for healing at Rome's Basilica of St. John Lateran on Sunday evening. In Bologna, Cardinal Matteo Zuppi, president of the Italian bishops' conference, led a special rosary service.

Despite not being able to lead the Sunday Angelus prayers — this marking the first time in his papacy that he has missed two weeks in a row — Francis released a written text expressing gratitude for the outpouring of prayers and messages of support he has received in recent days.

"On my part, I am confidently continuing my hospitalization at the Gemelli Hospital, carrying on with the necessary treatment; and rest is also part of the therapy!," he wrote. "I entrust you all to the intercession of Mary, and I ask you to pray for me."

A man walks past a mural of Pope Francis in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Feb. 19, 2025, as the A

A man walks past a mural of Pope Francis in Buenos Aires as the archdiocese called on churches in Argentina to hold Masses for the pontiff’s recovery. (OSV News/Pedro Lazaro Fernandez, Reuters)

U.S. bishops over the weekend called on faithful to pray for Francis as he is being treated for a ninth day in Rome's Gemelli Hospital. The pope was admitted to the hospital Feb. 14 due to bronchitis, which then led to pneumonia.

Cardinal Joseph Tobin of Newark, New Jersey, and Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago issued requests for prayers for the pope.

"On this feast of the Chair of Saint Peter let's pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to guide Pope Francis in his ministry of hope. May the Spirit of God grant him good health, courage, wisdom and peace," Tobin said in post on X.

Archbishop Nelson Pérez of Philadelphia urged all to "keep the Holy Father close to our hearts and ask God to strengthen him." The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops posted a prayer for Pope Francis on its website.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has posted a prayer for Pope Francis on its website, asking God to "look favorably on your servant Francis … that by word and example he may be of service to those over whom he presides so that, together with the flock entrusted to his care, he may come to everlasting life."



Dr. Barbara Moscatelli (Courtesy of Barbara Moscatelli)

Despite battling complications, a Vatican statement on Saturday said that Francis was alert and spent time out of bed.

"The Holy Father continues to be vigilant and spent the day in his armchair even if he was more in pain than yesterday," the statement said. "At the moment the prognosis is guarded."

Francis went to the hospital on Feb. 14 after struggling with bronchitis and experiencing difficulty breathing for the previous 10 days. At the time he was admitted, his doctors said he was suffering from a polymicrobial infection that caused pneumonia in both lungs.

At 88 years old, Francis is among the oldest pontiffs to reign in the church's history and has a long history of respiratory illness. He has also intermittently suffered from sciatica, cataracts and chronic knee pain.

Visitors to the Vatican are accustomed to seeing the pope struggle to walk when not seated in a wheelchair. In recent weeks he has allowed others to read his homilies for him at Mass, and he has skipped his public audiences and weekly Angelus prayers.



Pope Francis listens to a young person during a meeting with university students at the Catholic University of Portugal Aug. 3, 2023 in Lisbon. (CNS/Vatican Media)

Francis' partial right lung removal in his 20s is leading to complications now, said Dr. Barbara Moscatelli, a pulmonologist and head of the respiratory pathophysiology and thoracic endoscopy at Rome's Fatebenefratelli Hospital. Francis is susceptible to infections in his lungs and respiratory tract. He was treated at the Gemelli Hospital in 2023 for pneumonia.

"When lung-removal surgery is done at a young age, the lung adapts and settles in good condition in all the space it has in the rib cage," Moscatelli said. "In this condition, if there are scars, they can pull on the bronchial tree and form these bronchiectases, which are the same ones that can lead to these polymicrobial infections later in life."

The pope's prognosis is unclear, said Moscatelli, who has worked with doctors working at Gemelli Hospital.

"This is a very painful question, because cure rates are a purely mathematical calculation, but we are dealing with biology here," Moscatelli said. "This is a completely different problem. Each patient makes his own story, it is hard to say."

Editor's note: *This story was updated following a Vatican medical bulletin that was released 7 p.m. Rome time on Sunday, Feb. 23.*

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