Vatican
Vatican News
Young people and members of the House of Mary, groups associated with the Pontifical Acade

Young people and members of the House of Mary, groups associated with the Pontifical Academy of the Immaculate Conception, pray around a statue of St. John Paul II outside Rome's Gemelli hospital March 2. Pope Francis is receiving treatment there for double pneumonia. (CNS/Lola Gomez)



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Rome — March 3, 2025
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Pope Francis experienced two episodes of acute respiratory failure on March 3 and had to resume receiving oxygen through a ventilator as he continues his battle with double pneumonia.

"Today, the Holy Father presented two episodes of acute respiratory failure, caused by significant accumulation of endobronchial mucus and consequent bronchospasm," said a Vatican bulletin released at almost 7 p.m. local time on Monday.

During the course of his treatment, the pope's medical team performed two broncoscopies to examine the pontiff's airways in order to treat the mucus and other secretions from his lungs.

"The Holy Father has always remained vigilant, oriented and collaborative," said the statement, which noted that the pope's prognosis "remains reserved."



A woman and a young girl pray at the base of a statue of St. John Paul II outside Rome’s Gemelli hospital on March 2. (CNS/Lola Gomez)

While the pope's blood test values remain stable, his condition remains fragile, Vatican sources told the National Catholic Reporter.

"This is the suffering of a person who is out of breath. The doctors have always talked about a complex picture, which has its own criticalities," one of the sources said after the release of tonight's bulletin.

"The doctors had a reason to be cautious. The crises lasted part of the afternoon." A source said they were two separate episodes. "The blood test values remain unchanged, there was no growth of white blood cells, the infection is not growing but they are the consequences of the ongoing infection."

Despite some signs of stability, Vatican sources acknowledged the ongoing risks associated with the 88-year-old pontiff's health.

"The picture was complex and remains complex. It takes time to overcome pneumonia and they are open to difficulties," one of the sources explained. "This is not a situation where you can declare him out of danger."

Regarding the possibility of setting up a medical station within Casa Santa Marta, where the pope resides, Vatican sources indicated that discussions are not even in early stages. "It’s a bit premature for now," one of the sources said.

Today's respiratory failure is the third reported such episode since the pontiff entered hospital on Feb. 14. The most recent one occurred on Feb. 28 and was considered a serious setback for his ongoing recovery efforts, although reports since then had trended in a positive direction. On Sunday, March 2, the doctors stopped using the mechanical ventilation, which has now resumed to treat the latest episode.

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Earlier today (March 3), the Vatican released a letter to the members of the Pontifical Academy of Life who are meeting in Rome and would typically have an audience with the pope during their plenary. While the letter did not acknowledge his absence or hospitalization, it was dated Feb. 26 and signed from Rome's Gemelli Hospital.

The Vatican's nightly rosary service for Francis' health and recovery will continue in St. Peter's Square this evening for a seventh night in a row. American-born Cardinal Robert Prevost, the head of the Vatican's Dicastery for Bishops, will lead the Rome-based cardinals, curial officials and hundreds of lay faithful in prayer for the ailing pope.



Chicago-born Cardinal Robert Prevost, prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, speaks at a press briefing on the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican Oct. 23, 2024. (CNS/Lola Gomez)

As the pope continues to recover — he has now spent 18 days in hospital — some Italian medics predict a further stay of two more weeks before he is able to return to the Vatican.

Meanwhile, the Italian press continues to be full of unsubstantiated reports of an imminent papal resignation or that Francis intends to dramatically overhaul the rules that govern a conclave to elect a new pope.

On Sunday, March 2, the Hollywood hit "Conclave" failed to take home the Academy Award for best picture, though its screenwriter, Peter Straughan, won an Oscar for best adapted screenplay.

Speaking to reporters afterwards, he said it was bad taste to speculate about a possible conclave being on the horizon.

"We're all wishing him well," said Straughan of Francis, "and hoping for a speedy recovery."

This breaking news story has been updated.

The National Catholic Reporter's Rome Bureau is made possible in part by the generosity of Joan and Bob McGrath.

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