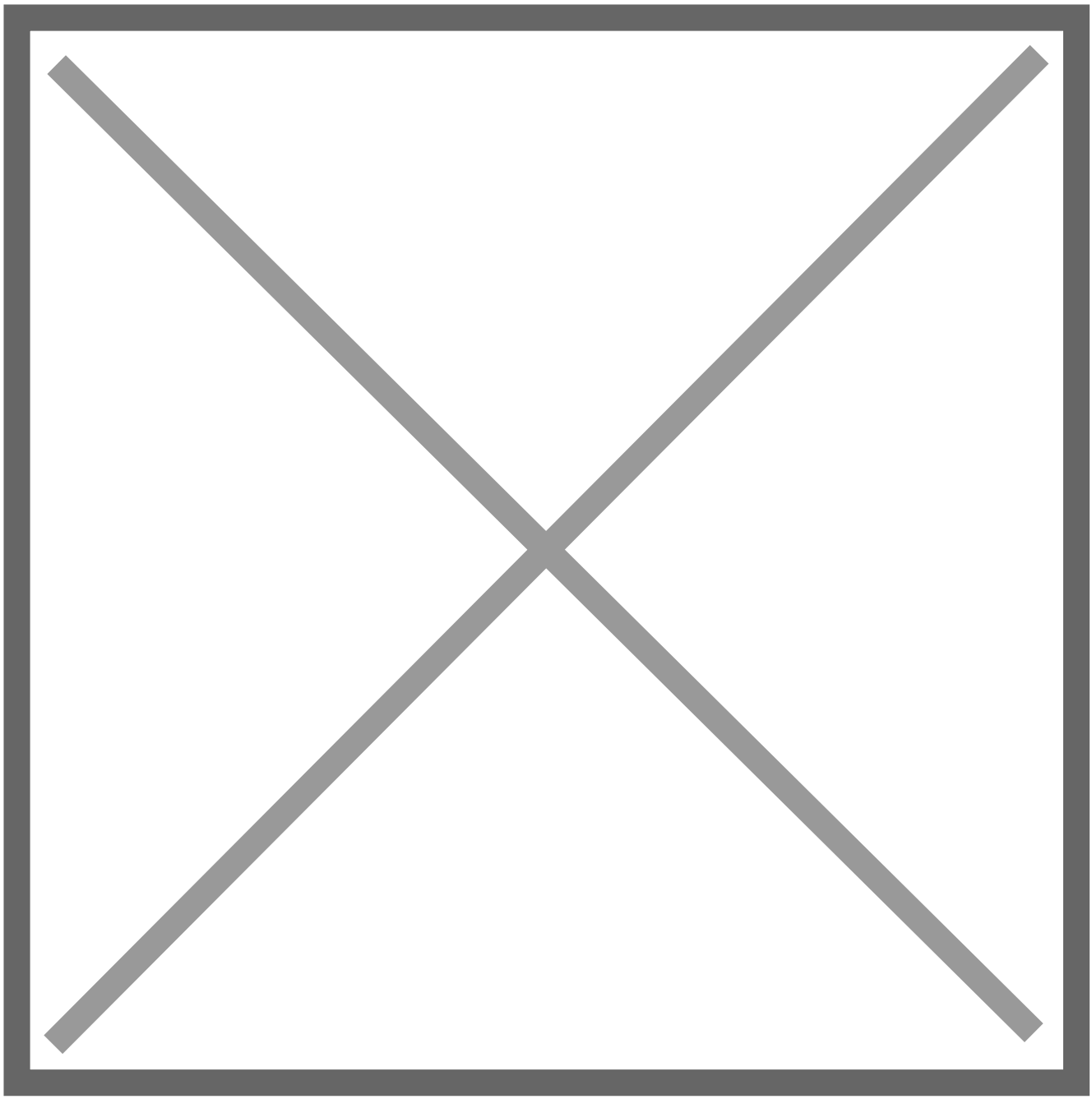
News



The mosaics on the doors of the facade of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes in southwestern France, are being covered in an undated photograph provided by the sanctuary. The doors showcase the artwork of Fr. Marko Rupnik, a priest and former Jesuit, who is currently under investigation after accusations of spiritual, psychological and sexual abuse by multiple adult women. Bishop Jean-Marc Micas of Lourdes and Tarbes said March 31, 2025, that the sanctuary will cover the mosaics on the door of the facade of the basilica, citing a

need for a symbolic step to help those unable to cross its threshold. (OSV News/Courtesy of Lourdes Sanctuary)

Federica Tourn

View Author Profile



OSV News

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Lourdes, France — March 31, 2025
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Bishop Jean-Marc Micas of Tarbes and Lourdes has decided to cover mosaics by Fr. Marko Rupnik at the entrance of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, a move aimed at making the basilica more welcoming for all, particularly victims of abuse.

The bishop explained his decision in an interview released by the sanctuary March 31.

"I felt, along with my colleagues, that a new symbolic step had to be taken to facilitate entry into the basilica for all those who are currently unable to cross the threshold. As a result, all the doors to the Basilica of (Our Lady of) the Rosary have been modified," Micas said.

Whether or not the rest of the mosaics on the facade of the basilica will be covered has not been announced. The sanctuary posted a photograph of staff covering the doors March 31 on their X account.

"Holy doors have been opened in Rome in the four major basilicas" during the Jubilee Year, and the bishop had issued a decree declaring that the Lourdes shrine is

one of two places in the diocese (along with Tarbes cathedral) "to live the Jubilee Year and receive a plenary indulgence."

"Passing through the entrance gates of the basilica had to be as symbolic as the moment," he explained.

Micas also noted that March 28, the fourth Friday of Lent "was for the whole Church of France the Memorial Day of Prayer for victims of sexual abuse committed in the church."

"The two side doors were covered this Monday (March 31), and the two large central doors will be covered in a few days' time, before the start of the pilgrimage season to Lourdes," the bishop said.

Sr. Samuelle, an alleged victim of Rupnik, said in a comment to OSV News: "I am happy with these clear, constructive words, and leading to a concrete act. Not just words, but a clear and explained act."

Reacting to the news, the religious sister — a mosaic artist herself — praised the bishop of Lourdes and Tarbes for making it clear that "this is for Rupnik's victims, for the church and for all victims coming to Lourdes."

In a March 31 statement shared with OSV News, Laura Sgro, lawyer of five alleged victims of Rupnik, said she and the women she represents welcomed the news "with joy in our hearts," and expressed "heartfelt thanks" to Micas.

"We know well that his decision to cover the doors of the Basilica of Lourdes, where Marko Ivan Rupnik's mosaics are located, was long reasoned, carefully researched and strongly opposed," they said.

Advertisement

"The question is not, in fact, that of separating the artist from the work — as has been wrongly implied so far," they said, but "whether it is possible to separate the art ... from the abuse itself, and this is in no way possible, because precisely during the making of the works and with reference to them ... Rupnik abused some of the victims."

Sgro said on behalf of the alleged victims that not only every victim of abuse but every believer "must have a free heart when approaching prayer, and this cannot happen if he or she has to kneel before a work that was probably the place where abuse took place."

The sanctuary announced July 2 that "it will eventually be necessary" to remove the mosaics created by Rupnik, who is accused of committing spiritual and sexual abuse against some 20 to 40 women. The accusations were made public in 2022, and the canonical process is ongoing at the Vatican.

In France, Micas established a commission on Rupnik's artwork in 2023 that included a prosecutor, a lawyer, experts in sacred art, victims, and "people with different vocations and diverse opinions," the bishop told the French Catholic daily La Croix in 2024.

Rupnik's Lourdes mosaics were commissioned in 2008 to mark the 150th anniversary of Mary's apparitions to St. Bernadette Soubirous.

The bishop said March 31 that removing the mosaics during the Lenten season was "not a first step, but a second! The first step was to stop lighting them up at night during processions back in July."

Subsequently, the bishop said he plans to establish "a working group to help me make decisions. We prefer to move forward calmly rather than under fire from various pressures. We're working for the long term, for the victims, for the church, for Lourdes and its message for all."

On various occasions, Micas has acknowledged the pain felt by victims due to the display of Rupnik's artwork.

"For my part, my personal opinion is now clear: this situation has nothing to do with other works whose author and victims are deceased, sometimes for several centuries. Here, the victims are alive and so is the author," the bishop wrote in a July 2, 2024 statement.

"My role is to ensure that the Sanctuary welcomes everyone, especially those who are suffering; among them, victims of abuse and sexual assault, children and adults. In Lourdes, the suffering and wounded who need consolation and reparation must hold first place. This is the grace of this Sanctuary: nothing should prevent them

from responding to Our Lady's message inviting them to come on pilgrimage. Because this has become impossible for many, my personal opinion is that it would be preferable to remove these mosaics."

In their March 31 statement the lawyer Sgro and the victims she represents asked that "the other bishops in whose dioceses there are works by the famous mosaicist also make the same strong and unequivocal gesture of support for all victims of abuse."