Vatican
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Dean of the College of Cardinals Giovanni Battista Re leads the Easter vigil inside St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, Saturday, April 19, 2025. (AP/Alessandra Tarantino)

by NCR Staff

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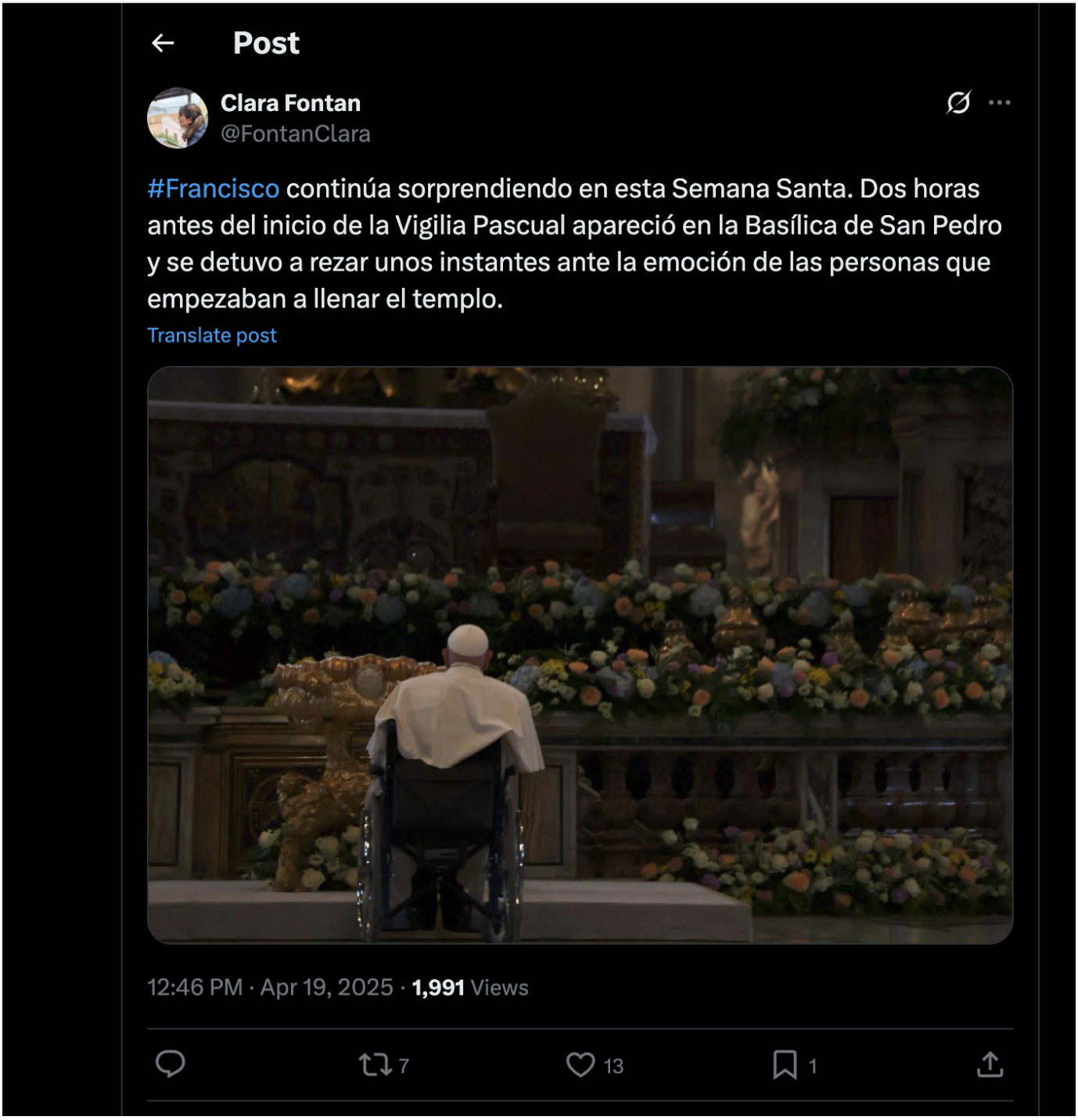
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Rome — April 19, 2025

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Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals, presided over the Easter vigil Mass in St. Peter's Basilica April 19 in place of Pope Francis, who is recovering from pneumonia.

The Pope made a brief visit to St. Peter's Basilica a couple of hours before the vigil, Vatican News said on social media. The pontiff arrived using a wheelchair to pray and express closeness to the faithful who were there to celebrate the Easter Vigil on Saturday night.



Argentinian freelance journalist Clara Fontan posted on X a photo of Pope Francis on Holy Saturday.

In the pope's homily for the Easter Vigil read by Cardinal Re, Francis said the celebration of Easter "reminds us that the light of the Resurrection illumines our path" and our hearts, Vatican News said.

Cardinal Angelo Comastri, retired archpriest of St. Peter's Basilica, is set to be the main celebrant of the Easter morning Mass in St. Peter's Square April 20, the Vatican media office said.

As of last week, the Vatican had not said how the traditional Easter blessing "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world) would be handled.



Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re baptizes a man at the Easter Vigil. (AP/Alessandra Tarantino)

The 88-year-old pope, who was released from Rome's Gemelli hospital last month after 38 days of treatment, spent two weeks in Casa Santa Marta before his first public appearance. He has made brief appearances in Vatican City -- at the end of Masses in St. Peter's Square on April 6 and 13, at St. Peter's Basilica on April 10 and at the Basilica of St. Mary Major on April 12.

Also still not known is whether the pontiff will greet visiting U.S. Vice President JD Vance, a Catholic, before the vice president departs Italy for India on Easter Sunday.

Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals, processes into St. Peter's Bas

Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals, processes into St. Peter's Basilica at the beginning of the Easter Vigil Mass at the Vatican April 19, 2025. (CNS/Lola Gomez)