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Massimiliano Strappetti, the nurse who is Pope Francis' primary medical caregiver at the Vati

Massimiliano Strappetti, the nurse who is Pope Francis' primary medical caregiver at the Vatican, adjusts a microphone for the pope as he greets a crowd of well-wishers at Rome's Gemelli hospital before returning to the Vatican March 23, 2025. (CNS/Pablo Esparza)



by Catholic News Service

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Pope Francis' final moments were peaceful, and he managed to give one last farewell to his nurse, Massimiliano Strappetti, before slipping into a coma early April 21, Vatican News reported.

Among his last words were his thanks to Strappetti late April 20 when he said, "Thank you for bringing me back to the square," referring to the pope's surprise appearance after giving his Easter blessing from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica.

The 88-year-old pope, who was still recovering from pneumonia, did not attend the Easter Mass April 20, but he did appear shortly after noon to give the solemn blessing.

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Pope Francis, in the popemobile, greets people in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican after givin

Pope Francis, in the popemobile, greets people in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican after giving his Easter blessing April 20, 2025. (CNS/Pablo Esparza)

"The pope wanted to make one last significant surprise by going to St. Peter's Square for a ride in the popemobile," Vatican News said in a report April 22. However, the pope was a little unsure and asked Strappetti, "Do you think I can do it?"

The nurse reassured him that he could, Vatican News reported.

For 15 minutes, Pope Francis rode around St. Peter's Square and a portion of the wide boulevard leading to the square, filled with about 50,000 people. He blessed a few babies and tried to wave; the crowds were thrilled, waving and running where possible to get a closer view.

This story appears in the **The Legacy of Pope Francis** feature series. View the full series.