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Pope Leo XIV signs his name for a young man after presiding over a prayer vigil with hundreds of thousands of young people in Rome's Tor Vergata neighborhood Aug. 2, 2025. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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Pope Leo XIV visited a Spanish teenager who had to be hospitalized during the Jubilee of Youth and prayed with and spoke to the family.

The pope said that if the teen "had come all the way to Rome, then (the pope) could come all the way to the hospital to see him," Carmen Gloria Gonzálvez, the teen's mother, told Vatican News Aug. 4.

"As a mother, I saw that Jesus Christ came close to me and said, 'You are not alone.' That's what the pope's presence in the hospital meant to me: the confirmation that God has not abandoned us," Carmen Gloria said. Vatican News spoke with the family members over the phone.

During the evening prayer vigil in Rome's Tor Vergata neighborhood Aug. 2, Leo had asked people to pray for "a young Spanish man, Ignacio Gonzálvez," who was admitted to the Vatican-owned Bambino Gesù Pediatric Hospital in Rome. "Let us pray for him and for his health."

The pope had also expressed his condolences during the vigil and the Sunday Angelus Aug. 3 for the deaths of two pilgrims: Pascale Rafic, an 18-year-old pilgrim from Egypt, who died Aug. 1 due to a heart condition, and Maria Cobo Vergara, a 20-year-old pilgrim who had been ill for a few years. She was still able to travel to Rome with her parish for the Jubilee, but then she later felt unwell and returned to Spain, where she died July 30, according to news reports.

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"Both (pilgrims) chose to come to Rome for the Jubilee of Youth, and death has taken them in these days," the pope said at the vigil. "Let us pray together for them."

After the weeklong Jubilee of Youth wrapped up, Leo went to the pediatric hospital for a surprise visit.

The 15-year-old Ignacio was in the intensive care unit and sedated after suffering from an acute attack, causing him to collapse; it turned out he has lymphoma affecting his respiratory system, according to Vatican News. Doctors said if he had not gotten to the hospital when he did, he could have died.

His parents, two siblings and a priest were gathered around the teen's bed, praying when the pope appeared.

Together they prayed the Hail Mary and Our Father, and the pope blessed the family members and spoke about the Gospel, eternal life and God's will, saying "We are made for heaven," Vatican News said.

"He helped us a lot, he shared a word with us. It was incredible," said the father, Pedro Pablo Gonzálvez.

The pope "told us that what matters is doing God's will, that our true place is eternal life in heaven. That comforted us, because we are people who try to live our faith, and we know it's the truth," he said. "When you're suffering so deeply, hearing the pope come and say something like that is ... the best thing that could have happened to us."

The family said they have received numerous messages and expressions of support. Not only did the pope make his very public appeal for prayers, but the family's parish and their Neocatechumenal Way community have been actively organizing prayer vigils and ways to support.

"Seeing that so many people are praying, that so many care, that the pope himself came -- it's a great consolation. We know that God is with us," the mother said.

Ignacio's 24-year-old brother, Pedro Pablo Jr., said, "We don't know how it's going to end, but Pope Leo told us that it helps to accept God's will."

The pope "listened to us the whole time, he was truly concerned. I got the sense that he really understood the situation and the pain we're going through. (There was) a deep empathy," he said.

The teen's 17-year-old sister, Adela, who had also come to Rome for the Jubilee, said that when she first saw the pope at an event in the popemobile, "I got goosebumps. But today, seeing him in person gave me peace and calm."

"I was crying and praying when he entered Ignacio's room. I went in crying and came out laughing," she said.

Leo spent about 30 minutes with the family and then visited other young patients as well as hospital staff, the Vatican press office said.

This story appears in the **2025 Holy Year** feature series. View the full series.