

“Prayer by the Church was fervently being made to God” (Acts 12:5)

Guided by the Shrines around the world, all the faithful during the month of May unite in the recitation of the Holy Rosary to ask for the end of the pandemic and the resumption of social and work activities.

PRESS RELEASE

In response to the Holy Father's heartfelt wish, the month of May will be dedicated to a "marathon" of prayer, to ask for the end of the pandemic, which has afflicted the world for more than a year now, and to ask for the resumption of social and work activities. Pope Francis wishes to involve all the Shrines around the world in this initiative, so that they may become vehicles of the prayer of the entire Church. The initiative is being conducted in the light of the biblical expression: **"Prayer by the Church was fervently being made to God"** (Acts 12:5).

The Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, entrusted by the Holy Father with the task of organizing the event, has extended this invitation to all the Shrines around the world, in order to promote the diffusion of the initiative in the relevant Regions, so as to reach priests, families, and all the faithful, inviting them to join in this prayer of intercession and hope to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Together with the prayer of the Holy Rosary, each day of the month is characterized by a prayer intention for the various categories of people most affected by the plight of the pandemic: *for those who have not been able to say goodbye to their loved ones, for all health care personnel, for the poor, the homeless and those in economic difficulty and for all the deceased.* These are some of the intentions that will punctuate our prayer to Our Lady.

Every Shrine around the world is invited to pray, in the language and manner used locally, asking for the resumption of social life, work and the many human activities that were suspended during the pandemic. This common appeal seeks to create an unceasing intercession, dispersed over the meridians of the world, which rises continuously from the entire Church to the Father through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. For this reason, the Shrines are called to promote and solicit as much as possible the participation of the faithful, so that everyone can devote a moment to daily prayer, in the car, on the street, and thanks to communication technologies, with the *smartphone*, requesting the end of the pandemic and the resumption of social and work activities.

The Holy Father will open and close the prayer, along with the faithful around the world, from two significant locations within the Vatican City State. On May 1, Pope Francis will pray at Our Lady of Succor (*or Our Lady of Help*), an icon venerated as early as the seventh century depicted in

a fresco above the altar of Saint Leo, near the southern transept of the primitive Vatican Basilica, afterwards placed, where it still stands today, inside the new Saint Peter's Basilica erected by Pope Gregory XIII in 1578, at the Gregorian Chapel, where, the relics of Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, Doctor and Father of the Church, are also kept. In 2013, during the Year of Faith, the icon underwent a new restoration. Since it was the first restoration carried out in the pontificate of Pope Francis, at that time newly elected, the words *SVCCVRRE NOS* and *FRANCISCVS PP. A. I.*, were engraved below the icon, thus entrusting the Pope to Our Lady of Succor.

On this occasion, the Holy Father will bless special Rosaries used particularly for this event, which will then be sent to the thirty Shrines directly involved. A number of families from parishes in Rome and Lazio will take part by reading and leading the recitation of the Holy Rosary, along with young people representing some of the New Evangelization Movements. Instead, on May 31, Pope Francis will conclude this prayer marathon from a significant place in the Vatican Gardens, of which further information will be given. Both of these moments will be accessible to persons with deafness and hearing difficulties through LIS sign language translation.

These thirty representative Shrines, scattered throughout the world, have been chosen to lead the Marian prayer each during one day of the month. These shrines are: Our Lady of Walsingham in England; Jesus the Saviour and Mother Mary in Nigeria; Our Lady of Czestochowa in Poland; Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth; Blessed Virgin of the Rosary in South Korea; Our Lady Aparecida in Brazil; Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage in the Philippines; Our Lady of Lujan in Argentina; Holy House of Loreto in Italy; Our Lady of Knock in Ireland; Virgin of the Poor at Banneux in Belgium; Notre Dame d'Afrique in Algeria; Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima in Portugal; Our Lady of Health in India; Our Lady Queen of Peace at Medjugorje in Bosnia; St. Mary's Cathedral in Australia; Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in the United States; Our Lady of Lourdes in France; Meryem Ana in Turkey; Nuestra Señora de la Caridad del Cobre in Cuba; Our Lady of Nagasaki in Japan; Nuestra Señora de Montserrat in Spain; Notre Dame du Cap in Canada; National Shrine Our Lady Ta' Pinu in Malta; Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe in Mexico; Mother of God in Zarvantsia in Ukraine; Black Madonna of Altötting in Germany; Our Lady of Lebanon – in Lebanon; Blessed Virgin of the Holy Rosary of Pompeii in Italy.

The official channels of the Holy See will broadcast the prayer said each day in each of these thirty Shrines at 6:00 p.m., according to time scheduled in Rome. A short liturgical guide has been prepared that provides some useful suggestions for sharing this moment in one's own community. The guide in Italian, English and Spanish can be downloaded from the website of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization (pcpne.va).