



## Pope concludes Month of Prayer with Rosary in Vatican Gardens



Pope Francis leads the Holy Rosary in the Vatican Gardens at the conclusion of the “Marathon of Prayer” for an end to the Covid-19 pandemic and the resumption of work and social activities.

By Christopher Wells

Pope Francis was joined by first communicants and young people who have recently been confirmed, as well as by newlyweds and expecting couples, scouts, families, and religious, as he prayed the concluding Rosary for the month-long Marathon of Prayer.

### Month of Prayer

At the end of April, Pope Francis asked all Catholics throughout the world to pray throughout the month of May – traditionally dedicated to devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary – for an end to the Covid-19 pandemic and for a resumption of everyday work and social activities. Each day of the month, a different Marian shrine led the faithful in a Rosary that was broadcast around the world.

Pope Francis himself kicked off the Month of Prayer by leading the Rosary from St Peter’s Basilica on 1 May, praying before the image of the *Madonna del Soccorso* (Our Lady of Help). On Monday, 31 May, the Holy Father chose the Vatican Gardens for the prayer, where an open-air Shrine was prepared for the image of Our Lady Untier of Knots, to whom the Pope has a special devotion.

### Mary, Untier of Knots

For the ceremony, a new copy of the image was brought from Augsburg, Germany, the home of the original painting. The Bishop of Augsburg, Bertram Joannes Meier, led a procession bearing the image to the outdoor sanctuary, attended by children and young people who had recently received first communion or been confirmed, a group of scouts from Rome, and some families and religious sisters representing the People of God.

A group of young people carried the image, accompanied by an honour guard of Swiss Guards and Vatican gendarmes.

After the Holy Father began the prayer, the various decades of the Rosary were led by young people from Catholic Action, some families composed of newlyweds or expecting parents, and a family of deaf people who recently welcomed a religious vocation.

Each of the decades was introduced with a special intention: that Mary might “untie the knots” of wounded relationships; of unemployment; of violence; of sickness and uncertainty; and of all that stands in the way of regular pastoral ministry.

#### Worldwide Prayer

To represent the worldwide character of Monday’s prayer, shrines from around the world were connected live to the Rosary in the Vatican.

Sanctuaries from France, Germany, Rwanda, Chile, Spain, Scotland, Paraguay and Italy all joined together to pray with the Pope and Catholics around the world for an end to the pandemic.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the Holy Father crowned the image of the Virgin Mary, praying that, like Mary, “we too might consecrate ourselves” to God’s service, “and make ourselves available to one another in charity.”

After giving his Apostolic Blessing, the Holy Father thanked those who participated in the Marathon of Prayer, “who with one voice have raised their prayer to the Holy Mother of God.”

And, he added, “we continue to ask the Lord to protect the whole world from the pandemic, and that everyone, without exception, will soon be given the opportunity to protect themselves through vaccination.”

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