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Press release

At the heart of the Holy Father's desire, the month of May will be dedicated to a "marathon" of prayer to invoke the end of the pandemic, which has afflicted the world for more than a year now and for the resumption of social and work activities. Pope Francis wanted to involve all the shrines of the world in this initiative, so that they become instruments for a prayer of the whole Church. The initiative takes place in the light of the biblical expression: "**Prayer to God went up incessantly from the whole Church**" (Acts 12,5).

The Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, commissioned by the Pope to organize the event, has extended the invitation to all the Shrines of the world, in order to promote the dissemination 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. With the prayer of the Rosary,

every day of the month is characterized by an intention of prayer for the various categories of people most affected by the tragedy of the pandemic: for those who have not been able to greet their loved ones, for health personnel, for the poor, the homeless and people in economic difficulty and for all the dead... these are some of the intentions that will mark the prayer to Our Lady.

Every Shrine in the world is invited to pray in the way and in the language in which the local tradition is usually expressed, to invoke the resumption of social life, work and the many human activities that remained suspended during the pandemic. This community call wants to try to realize a continuous prayer, distributed on the meridians of the world, which rises incessantly from the whole Church to the Father through the intercession of the Virgin Mary. For this reason, the Sanctuaries are called to promote and solicit the participation of the people as much as possible, so that

everyone can dedicate a moment to daily prayer, in the car, on the street, with the *smartphone* and thanks to communication technologies, for the end of the pandemic. and the resumption of social and work activities.

The Holy Father will open and close the prayer, together with the faithful around the world, from two significant places within the Vatican City State. On 1 May Pope Francis will pray at the Madonna del Soccorso, an icon venerated as early as the seventh century depicted in a fresco above the altar of San Leone, at the southern transept of the primitive Vatican Basilica, later placed, where everything is located. now, inside the new Basilica of San Pietro under construction, by Pope Gregory XIII in 1578, in the Gregorian Chapel, where, moreover, the relics of San Gregorio di Nazianzo, Doctor and Father of the Church, are kept. In 2013, during the Year of Faith, the icon underwent a new restoration. Having been the first restoration carried out in the pontificate of Pope Francis, recently elected at that time, the words *SVCCVRRE NOS* and *FRANCISCVS PP. AI*, thus entrusting the Pope to the Virgin of Help.

On this occasion the Holy Father will bless special rosaries used specifically for this event, which will then be sent to the thirty shrines directly involved. Some families from the parishes of Rome and Lazio will take turns in prayer and reading, together with the young representatives of the New Evangelization Movements. On May 31, however, Pope Francis will conclude the prayer from a significant place in the Vatican Gardens, of which further information will be given. Both of these moments will be available to deaf and hard-of-hearing people through translation into LIS sign language.

These thirty representative shrines, scattered all over the world, have been chosen to lead the Marian prayer on a day of the month. These Shrines are: Our Lady of Walsingham in England; Jesus the Savior and Mother Mary in Nigeria; Our Lady of Częstochowa 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 in Banneux in Belgium; Notre Dame d'Afrique in Algeria; Blessed Virgin of the Rosary of Fatima in Portugal; Our Lady of Health in India; Our Lady Queen of Peace in Medjugorje in Bosnia; St. Mary's Cathedral in Australia; 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 of 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; Blessed Virgin of the Holy Rosary of Pompeii in Italy.

The prayer in each of these shrines will be broadcast through the official channels of the Holy See, according to the Rome timetable, at 18:00. A short liturgical aid was designed to provide some useful information to share this moment by participating with one's community. The aid in Italian, English and Spanish can be downloaded on the website of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization.