

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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### PRESS RELEASE

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Pope Francis announced he will be giving an extraordinary blessing “urbi et orbi,” which translates to “to the city and to the world” at 6 p.m. local time in Rome on Friday, March 27 or noon Central Standard Time (CST). It will be broadcast on the Vatican news website at vaticannews.va.

The formal blessing – usually given only immediately after a new pope’s election and on Christmas and Easter – carries with it a plenary indulgence for all who follow by television, Internet or radio, are sorry for their sins, recite a few prescribed prayers and promise to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation and to receive the Eucharist as soon as possible.

After reciting the Angelus prayer March 22 from the library of the Apostolic Palace, Pope Francis announced his plans for the special blessing, which he said would be given in an empty St. Peter’s Square because all of Italy is on lockdown to prevent further spread of the virus.

“We will listen to the word of God, raise our prayer (and) adore the Blessed Sacrament,” the pontiff said. “At the end, I will give the benediction ‘urbi et orbi,’ to which will be connected the possibility of receiving a plenary indulgence.”

An indulgence is an ancient practice in the Catholic Church of prayer and penance for the remission of the temporal punishment a person is due for sins that have been forgiven. In Catholic teaching, a person can draw on the merits of Jesus and the saints to claim the indulgence for themselves or offer it on behalf of someone who has died.

During this critical time of spread of the COVID-19, the Diocese of Sioux City has created a webpage: <https://scdiocese.org/coronavirus> with several resources for parishioners, pastors, and anyone who will find the information useful. Many of the online Masses being offered throughout the diocese are listed, as well as other resources for prayer, and messages in English and Spanish from Bishop Nickless.

The mandates issued by Bishop Nickless are also available on the website in English and Spanish. The page will be updated periodically in this rapidly changing environment.

*Note: Excerpts from Catholic News Service by Cindy Wooden.*

**Cutline:** Pope Francis looks over an empty St. Peter's Square after leading a livestream of the recitation of the Angelus from the library of the Apostolic Palace March 22, 2020. The pope announced he will offer an extraordinary blessing "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world) at 6 p.m. Rome time March 27 in an "empty" St. Peter's Square because all of Italy is on lockdown to prevent further spread of the coronavirus. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

