

# origins

CNS documentary service

## Extraordinary *Urbi et Orbi* Blessing in the Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic

Pope Francis

*The worldwide coronavirus pandemic is not God's judgment on humanity but God's call on people to judge what is most important to them and resolve to act accordingly from now on, Pope Francis said. Addressing God, the pope said that "it is not the time of your judgment but of our judgment: a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others." Pope*

*"For weeks now it has been evening. Thick darkness has gathered over our squares, our streets and our cities."*

*Francis offered his meditation on the meaning of the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications for humanity March 27 before raising a monstrance with the Blessed Sacrament and giving an extraordinary blessing "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world). Popes usually give their blessing "urbi et orbi" only immediately after their election and on Christmas and Easter. Pope Francis opened the service — in a rain-drenched, empty St. Peter's Square — praying that the "almighty and merciful God" would see how people are suffering and give them comfort. He asked God to care for the sick and dying, for medical workers exhausted by caring for the sick and for political leaders who bear the burden of making decisions to protect their people. The service included the reading of the Gospel of Mark's account of Jesus calming the stormy sea. Then in his message, the pope said, "Let us invite Jesus into the boats of our lives. Let us hand over our fears to him so that he can conquer them." The pope spoke in Italian; a Vatican translation of his message follows, copyright © 2020 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.*

**W**hen evening had come" (Mk 4:35). The Gospel passage we have just heard begins like this. For weeks now it has been evening. Thick darkness has gathered over our squares, our streets and our cities; it has taken over our lives, filling everything with a deafening silence and a distressing void that stops everything as it passes by; we feel it in

*continued on page 722*



### contents

- 721 Extraordinary *Urbi et Orbi* Blessing in the Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic *by Pope Francis*
- 724 Pandemic and Universal Brotherhood: Note on the COVID-19 Emergency *by the Pontifical Academy for Life*
- 728 Apart but Not Alone: Hope and Strength in a Time of Crisis and Fear *by Bishop Dermot Farrell*
- 729 Closeness in the Spirit *by Bishop Steven Biegler*
- 731 National Religious Vocation Conference Study on Recent Vocations to Religious Life: Executive Summary *by Mary L. Gautier and Sister Thu T. Do, LHC*
- 736 Datebook
- 736 On File

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