

Pope will lead world shrines in rosary prayer for pandemic

Pope Francis will lead the major shrines around the world in praying the rosary to implore Mary's intercession and protection amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The pope will pray at the replica of the Lourdes Grotto in the Vatican Gardens May 30, the eve of Pentecost, and will also be joined by several "men and women representing various categories of people particularly affected by the virus," the Vatican said May 26.

The service will be at 5:30 p.m. in Rome (9:30 a.m. Alberta time).

"At the feet of Mary, the Holy Father will place the many troubles and sorrows of humanity, further worsened by the spread of COVID-19," said a statement released by the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization.

According to the statement, the prayer, which coincides with the end of the Marian month of May, "is another sign of closeness and consolation for those who, in different ways, have been struck by the coronavirus, in the certainty that the Heavenly Mother will not disregard the requests for protection."

Among those who will accompany the pope in praying the rosary will be a doctor and a nurse, a recovered patient as well as a person who lost a family member to COVID-19.

Also taking part in the rosary will be a hospital chaplain, a pharmacist, a journalist, a Civil Defence volunteer and his family and a family that welcomed a new baby, "a sign of hope and the victory of life over death," the pontifical council said.

Shrines around the world will connect to the event and take part in the prayer, including the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C