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Around the globe, Catholics hope papal Mass online will continue



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Pope Francis offers Mass in Casa Santa Marta on March 11, 2020. Credit: Vatican Media/CNA.



By Courtney Mares



Rome Newsroom, May 21, 2020 / 10:45 am MT (CNA).- After the Vatican stopped livestreaming Pope Francis' daily Masses this week, Catholics from around the world have urged the pope to resume the broadcast.

The pope's Mass livestream ended May 18, the day dioceses throughout Italy were able to resume public Masses. But many Catholics in other countries remain without access to the Mass.

This is the case for the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Nairobi, Kenya, where a lockdown has been extended until June 6 closing all places of public worship.

Sister Mary Anne Williamson wrote a letter on behalf of her religious community, asking if the Pope Francis' live Mass broadcast could be reinstated. She told CNA that the sisters were "dismayed" when they learned that the broadcast of the pope's Mass would be discontinued.

"When our churches closed about eight weeks ago, we began to have a Liturgy of the Word in our chapel. But then we heard that our sisters in our general house in Rome, also locked down, were celebrating with the Mass of the Holy Father from their house. We found EWTN on our TV channel server Zuku and began to join at 8 a.m. Nairobi time," she said.

The sisters gathered together to watch the pope's Mass after morning prayer in their chapel. Williamson said the missionary sisters found it meaningful to pray in this way in union with the pope and Christians throughout the world.

"We really appreciated the Holy Father's homily and the translations done by Sister Bernadette," she said. "We also appreciated the moments of Eucharistic adoration at the end of the morning Mass at Santa Marta."

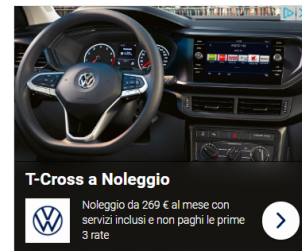
"We know that the Mass of Pope Francis was appreciated by others and probably many around the world. We will continue to hope that Vatican Media will be able to broadcast again."

While some countries in Europe are easing their lockdowns, Catholics in India, Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, England, Switzerland, and other countries remain without access to public Mass. In Ireland, churches are not expected to reopen until July.

Pope Francis first began streaming his morning Mass from the chapel of Casa Santa Marta, his Vatican City residence, on March 9, the day after dioceses across Italy suspended public Masses following a government ordinance. The Vatican spokesman said the livestream was being offered to "to allow those who wish to follow the celebrations in union of prayer with the Bishop of Rome."



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follow the celebrations in union or prayer with the bishop of Rome.

At the beginning of Mass each day, the pope offered a different prayer intention, often related to the suffering inflicted by the coronavirus pandemic.

Announcing the end of the pope's Mass livestreams, the Vatican spokesman said: "The Pope wishes that the People of God could thus return to communal familiarity with the Lord in the sacraments, participating in the Sunday liturgy and resuming, also in churches, the daily visitation of the Lord and his Word."

An ACI Prensa article reporting on the conclusion of the daily Mass broadcast from the Vatican received more than 1,900 comments on social media, with people expressing gratitude for the livestream and asking why it was being canceled when dioceses in parts of Latin America are still under lockdown.

"Thank you very much, Holy Father, but I hope you consider it for the countries of Mexico and America that we remain quarantined and it is very valuable to vibrate with your presence and guidance. May the Lord bless you and be with you always," Carmen Vazquez wrote in Spanish.

From Costa Rica, Sandra Fernandez Es wrote: "It is a great loss, how sad. I had already become used to watching it in the very early morning, and it was very good for me."

"I came to think I was the only one who would miss Mass with the Pope. In Puerto Rico, we are still quarantined," said Iris Lugo.

Mary Grenada wrote from Argentina: "Too bad!!! It was very important for us every day to have mass at home. I hope they send our request to continue to the Pope. Thank you!!! From Argentina."

Catherine Addington wrote on Twitter on May 19: "I miss the @Pontifex daily Mass livestream."



Vatican News reported May 20 that thousands of people in China had watched a translated livestream of the pope's Mass via WeChat and that the news that the live broadcast would be ending was "greeted with some suffering and also with some tears."

Vatican News said that it had received messages from thousands of people expressing appreciation for the pope's Mass livestream during the pandemic.

Sister Mary Anne told CNA that she believes that even in places where churches are reopened, like Italy, the homebound and other Catholics would likely appreciate the opportunity to view the pope's Masses and hear his homilies.

She said that during quarantine the sisters in Kenya had been teaching students using Zoom, but internet and electricity cuts to some students' homes made it challenging.

"We know we are among the fortunate ones with a chapel, internet access, food and shelter. Our life of prayer and work can continue, although in new ways," she said. "Our days, especially our Eucharistic adoration in turns, are offered for our suffering world and the end of this pandemic."

As public Masses resume in some parts of the world, parishes will also be deciding whether to continue the Mass livestreams that they offered during the pandemic.

Fr. Gregory Apparcel, rector of St. Patrick's Church, Rome's English-speaking parish, told CNA that the parish livestream had gained a much wider audience than he had expected.

"We also have many, many people participating in these Masses from the U.S. and other countries where public Masses are not yet available. And, also from many people who are homebound for many other reasons," he said.

The priest said he had received requests to continue the Masses despite the lockdown's end.

"They hope that we will continue to do this, which we will try to do throughout the summer, and beyond if necessary," he said.

"We have enjoyed our community during the pandemic, and we hope to be able to do so again."

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