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Pope Francis waves to a crowd of well-wishers at Rome's Gemelli hospital before returning to the Vatican March 23, 2025, after 38 days of treatment at the hospital. (CNS/Pablo Esparza)

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Vatican City — April 4, 2025

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During his second week back at the Vatican after a long hospitalization, Pope Francis continued to follow his doctors' orders to stay home, avoid visitors and keep up with respiratory and physical therapy, the Vatican press office said.

The 88-year-old pope prayed as he watched the memorial Mass celebrated in St. Peter's Basilica on the 20th anniversary of the death of St. John Paul II April 2, the press office told reporters April 4. And he watched the livestream that morning of the Lenten meditation offered to the Roman Curia by Capuchin Fr. Roberto Pasolini, preacher of the papal household.

Francis was released from Rome's Gemelli hospital March 23 after more than five weeks of treatment for breathing difficulties, double pneumonia and a polymicrobial infection in his airways. His doctors had said he would need two months to convalesce following his release.

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New blood tests indicated a "slight improvement" in the infection, the press office said. Just before releasing the pope, his doctors had said that the fungal infection would take time to clear up.

Each day the pope was increasing the amount of time he spent on respiratory therapy, which has led to some improvement in the strength of his voice, and on physical therapy, the press office said. Appearing in public just before leaving the hospital March 23, the pope's voice was weak, and he seemed to have a limited range of motion in his arms.

Francis also was dedicating more time to work each day, according to the press office, although that involved mainly handling paperwork with his secretaries and not meeting with Vatican officials.

The press office insisted it was "premature" to discuss whether the pope would attend any of the Holy Week and Easter liturgies. Palm Sunday is April 13.