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Kirstin Noreen

## *Salus populi*: Icons and the Protection of the People

### Abstract

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 global pandemic, Pope Francis prayed before an icon of the Virgin and Child in Santa Maria Maggiore and a crucifix in San Marcello, two images associated with miraculous healing and intercessory power. He subsequently had the icon and crucifix moved to St. Peter's where they flanked the pope as he offered a special *Urbi et Orbi* blessing on March 27, 2020. To contextualize Francis's use of an icon during the coronavirus outbreak, this article will trace the role of cult images in Rome during occurrences of disease and will briefly discuss the specific importance of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon for the early Jesuit order.

**Keywords:** Rome, Icon, Gregory, Plague, *Salus Populi Romani*, Jesuits, Pope Francis

On Sunday, March 15, 2020, Pope Francis defied the imposed coronavirus lockdown in Italy and left the Vatican to make a private visit to two holy images in Rome: an icon of the Virgin and Child in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore and a large wooden crucifix in the church of San Marcello (fig. 1, fig. 2).<sup>1</sup> These images have been associated with the protection of the Roman people during times of war, plague, and famine. The Marian icon was credited with saving the city from plague during the late sixth-century pontificate of Gregory I, while the crucifix was miraculously preserved during a fire in 1519 and was associated with eradicating the plague from Rome in 1522.<sup>2</sup> Announced not only in local newspapers, but also around the world, the pope's prayers for a "coronavirus miracle" were timely and a comfort to many during the uncertain early days of the worldwide COVID-19 outbreak. According to the Vatican, Francis "prayed for an end to the pandemic and also for the sick, their families and health providers and workers keeping pharmacies and food stores open amid a national lockdown."<sup>3</sup>



Fig. 1 Pope Francis praying before the Icon of the Virgin and Child in Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, Italy, March 15, 2020 (photo: Getty Images) Pope Francis praying.jpg



Fig. 2 Pope Francis on the Via del Corso approaching the church of San Marcello, Rome, Italy, March 15, 2020

Francis's willingness to venture outside the confines of the Vatican and break with the national Italian lockdown to pray before the venerable icon and crucifix illustrates the power of cult images during times of distress. In the medieval and early modern periods, icons were particularly associated with apotropaic powers because of their perceived success during earlier, difficult times, as detailed in legendary accounts. This article will discuss how specific images in Rome came to be associated with the power to protect and heal; although icons were used in a variety of ways—to gain protection from invaders, to celebrate annual liturgical feasts such as that of the Assumption, or to demonstrate personal devotion—this article will focus on times of illness as a way to understand Francis's noteworthy visits to Santa Maria Maggiore and San Marcello.<sup>4</sup> Francis's special devotion to the Marian icon in Santa Maria Maggiore will further be considered in relation to the particular role that the image has played for the Jesuit order, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Such an examination of icons in Rome will illustrate the long-standing tradition of invoking those cult images during times of suffering or uncertainty, the hoped-for deliverance from outbreaks of disease that the Virgin Mary was believed to offer, and the continuing relevance of icons during the contemporary global pandemic.

## The Queen of Heaven: Protecting Rome in the Time of Plague

While it is unknown when icons were first used in penitential processions meant to solicit God's mercy during times of contagion, legends developed that describe Pope Gregory's (590–604) processional use of Marian icons during a late sixth-century plague in Rome. By early 590 the city had been devastated by floods, Pope Pelagius II (579–590) had succumbed to the plague, and citizens were fearful for their own lives. To solicit the intercession of the Virgin Mary, the newly elected pope, Gregory I (later known as Gregory the Great), organized a seven-part procession—the *letania septiformis*.<sup>5</sup> Residents of the entire city, regardless of economic, social, or political standing, gathered in seven groups to depart from seven churches and process simultaneously to meet at the church of Santa Maria Maggiore. By the ninth century, Gregory's *letania septiformis* was conflated with the *letania maior*, a procession that went from San Lorenzo in Lucina to the church of St. Peter.<sup>6</sup> In the first half of the thirteenth century, the legend of Gregory the Great's

procession was modified further, as detailed in the *Liber Epilogorum* (c. 1236) of Bartholomew of Trent: as the procession approached the ancient tomb of Hadrian on the way to St. Peter's, the archangel Michael appeared atop the mausoleum; sheathing his blood-stained sword, he indicated the end of the plague that had taken the lives of many Romans.<sup>7</sup> In his description of the procession in the *Legenda aurea* (c. 1270), Jacobus de Voragine mentions for the first time the inclusion of a Marian image: as it was carried towards Hadrian's mausoleum, the turbulent air of the city was purified, angels appeared singing the hymn of *Regina Coeli*, and the archangel sheathed his sword above the ancient tomb, which was thereafter known as Castel Sant'Angelo, the Castle of the Angel.<sup>8</sup> The *Legenda aurea* further associates the Marian image with the hand of the Evangelist St. Luke, who was believed to have painted the portrait directly from life. Icons associated with St. Luke, often completed through miraculous means, were considered authentic and true portraits of the Virgin and Christ.<sup>9</sup> The venerable association with Luke as well as the prestige associated with helping to protect and heal the city of Rome during contagion encouraged a competition among Marian icons – and the communities that supported them.



Fig. 3 Icon of the Virgin and Child following the 2018 restoration, Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, Italy (artwork in the public domain; photo: Wikimedia Commons; licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0)

An icon's association with Gregory's legendary procession was important both spiritually and economically, for that image had potential thaumaturgic power for future contagions, thus increasing pilgrim traffic and donations through the icon's perceived ability to heal. The proliferation of icon copies, especially in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, led to a further competition among cult images; the promotion of an icon's divine origin and legendary history helped to proclaim and substantiate that representation's power. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the late Middle Ages several icons in Rome were associated with stopping the sixth-century plague.<sup>10</sup> The most important of these images was the Marian icon from Santa Maria Maggiore (fig. 3), an icon that had a special status through its association with the Esquiline basilica, the first Roman church dedicated to Mary. According to legend, the Virgin caused snow to miraculously fall on the Esquiline Hill on August 5, leading to the foundation of the basilica at that site under Pope Liberius (352–366).<sup>11</sup> The Santa Maria Maggiore icon also appeared in the yearly Assumption festivities (August 15), during which the miraculous icon of Christ, contained in the Sancta Sanctorum of the Lateran Palace, was processed through the city streets to arrive at dawn at Santa Maria Maggiore, where the Son encountered his Mother.<sup>12</sup> In relation to the icon's believed intercessory power, Guillaume Durand indicated that the cult image had been carried in Gregory's procession and was responsible for clearing the infected and turbulent air; according to *Durand's Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* (c. 1286), three angels sang *Regina coeli laetare alleluia*, and following a prayer by the pope, the archangel appeared above Hadrian's tomb and indicated the cessation of the plague.<sup>13</sup>



Fig. 4. Icon of the Virgin and Child, Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome, Italy (artwork in the public domain; photo: Wikimedia Commons; licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike)

Even if an icon was not directly associated with Gregory's famous procession, its power could still be validated through its use in subsequent plague outbreaks, as was the case with the Marian icon in Santa Maria del Popolo (fig. 4). In 1231, Gregory IX (1227–1241), along with cardinals and the Roman people, conducted a public procession with that icon in order to request God's intervention during a great pestilence that had ravaged the city.<sup>14</sup> Following the Virgin's intercession and the elimination of the plague, the icon was placed on the high altar of Santa Maria del Popolo where it continued to perform miracles and was increasingly associated with indulgences.<sup>15</sup>

The increasing importance of the mendicant orders in the thirteenth century may have inspired revisions in the Gregory plague legend, as other Marian icons laid claim to the apotropaic powers associated with that pope's procession.<sup>16</sup> In his early fourteenth-century *Historia ecclesiastica nova*, Ptolemy of Lucca credits the image known as the San Sisto icon (fig. 5) with helping to purify Rome's poor air quality and, following its arrival at Hadrian's tomb, with ending the sixth-century pestilence in the city.<sup>17</sup> The San Sisto icon, a representation of the intercessory Virgin or Madonna advocata, had a venerable history in Rome stemming back to at least the ninth century. The location of the image within the cloistered space of a Dominican female religious community on the Via Appia from 1221 on likely limited its circulation; the more controlled access to the icon may have caused other cult images in Rome to increase in popularity.<sup>18</sup> For example, a copy of the San Sisto icon housed in the Franciscan

The increasing importance of the mendicant orders in the thirteenth century may have inspired revisions in the Gregory plague legend, as other Marian icons laid claim to the apotropaic powers associated with that pope's procession.<sup>16</sup> In his



Fig. 5 Icon of San Sisto, Santa Maria del Rosario, Rome, Italy (photo: author)



Fig. 6 Icon of the Virgin, Santa Maria in Aracoeli, Rome, Italy (artwork in the public domain; photo: Wikimedia Commons; licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0)

church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli on the Capitoline Hill in the center of Rome quickly began to eclipse the fame of its model (fig. 6). The Aracoeli icon was also associated with the Gregory procession, perhaps already by the late thirteenth century, when the Franciscan pope, Nicholas III (1277–1280), is credited with sponsoring the construction and decoration of a chapel at Castel Sant’Angelo to honor the archangel. There, according to an anonymous source in the fifteenth century, frescoes illustrated the events of Gregory’s procession and included an inscription naming the icon as that from Santa Maria in Aracoeli.<sup>19</sup>

While early textual sources related to the Aracoeli icon date primarily to the second half of the fourteenth century, its power as an advocate for the Roman people was recognized by Cola di Rienzo in 1347 and reconfirmed during the plague of 1348.<sup>20</sup> Cola di Rienzo, crowned as Tribune in Santa Maria Maggiore in November 1347 after a victory over the Colonna family, went to the Capitoline basilica where he offered his staff, crown, and olive branches to the church’s icon in recognition of the Virgin’s power to protect the Roman citizens.<sup>21</sup> In the following year, when the Black Death ravaged Rome, the Marian icon was taken through the city streets in a ceremony that would have recalled Pope Gregory’s procession. The perceived thaumaturgic power of the Aracoeli icon had an immediate economic effect for the Capitoline basilica. Five thousand florins offered as alms to the image by the Roman people financed the construction of the staircase leading to the west facade of the church. That staircase, started on October 25, 1348 as indicated in an inscription on the building’s facade, served as a monumental *ex-voto* and provided a grand entrance to the church, which had previously been accessed primarily from the Piazza del Campidoglio through a southern door.<sup>22</sup>

Although the *ex-voto* staircase leading to Santa Maria in Aracoeli would have been a visible reminder of the efficacious protection of that church’s icon during the fourteenth-century plague outbreak, the competition among Marian cult images in Rome did not diminish. An icon’s association with healing—most frequently linked to the Gregory legend—would have potentially offered financial and spiritual benefits for the community caring for that image. In this way, it is not surprising that the Marian image used by Gregory continued to be a point of debate. For example, Fra Mariano of Florence summarized the conflicting opinions related to the specific image that participated in Gregory’s procession in his *Itinerarium urbis Romae* (1517) and offered evidence to support the icon of the Virgin found in Santa Maria in Aracoeli. Mariano noted that the canons of Santa Maria Maggiore and the Dominicans of San Sisto similarly claimed that their icons of the Virgin had been taken in procession by Pope Gregory.<sup>23</sup> Although Mariano, as a Brother Minor who stayed with the Franciscans at Santa Maria in Aracoeli during his time in Rome, demonstrates a bias towards the Capitoline basilica and its holy image, he states that “God alone knows which is the true icon.”<sup>24</sup> A marble disc contained in Santa Maria in Aracoeli, however, was believed to display the footprints of the archangel Michael, which miraculously were impressed by the ethereal being at the time of his appearance to Pope Gregory.<sup>25</sup> The presence of that miraculous relic in the Franciscan basilica offered indisputable proof for Mariano that the Santa Maria in Aracoeli icon was crucial in protecting the city during the sixth-century plague.

The Italian peninsula continued to be assailed by various contagions in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and, as before, various icons in the city were associated with the power to heal.<sup>26</sup> As evidence of the continued faith placed in an icon's potential for miraculous intervention, Sixtus IV (1471-1484) celebrated the Mass and offered supplications and prayers before the Marian icon in Santa Maria del Popolo when deadly fevers caused the deaths of many in Rome; following the pope's visit, the city's air quality immediately improved and the sick were healed.<sup>27</sup> During a particularly bad outbreak of the plague in Rome in 1485, Innocent VIII (1484-1492) took an icon from the church of Sant'Agostino to the church of San Pietro in Vincoli on August 1. Over the next three days, the icon passed from San Pietro to Santi Dodici Apostoli, San Silvestro in Capite, San Lorenzo in Lucina, and Santi Celso e Giuliano.<sup>28</sup> Following those stops, the icon continued its journey, passing from church to church throughout the various *rioni* (districts) of Rome with the devotion, fervor, and number of the faithful increasing daily. By the time of the feast of the Assumption on August 15, the icon had arrived at St. Peter's, where solemn celebrations continued to bestow great honor on the Virgin. On August 21, the image left Saint Peter's to be taken to the Pigna neighborhood and was accompanied with great reverence by clerics, confraternities, magistrates, and the *caporioni*, the official leaders of Rome's districts. Stopping in Santa Maria ad Martyres (the Pantheon), the Virgin was proclaimed the "Liberatrice di Roma, Maria Vergine delle Vergini, e Madre di tutti" (Liberator of Rome, Mary Virgin of Virgins, and Mother of all) and the icon was subsequently returned to its home in Sant'Agostino.<sup>29</sup> In thanks for the Virgin's intercession and the halting of the plague, the icon was placed in a new, marble relief frame.<sup>30</sup>

In the context of the Catholic Reformation in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a proliferation of guides to Rome, catalogues of Marian images, and focused histories of specific icons reinforced the sacred topography of the city and documented the use and continuing relevance of cult images.<sup>31</sup> In these texts, the venerable origins of icons, which were often associated with the hand of St. Luke and miraculous intervention, as well as the power of miracle-working images to heal and protect helped to establish Mary as the pre-eminent intercessor while responding to Protestant criticism of the cult of images and the cult of the Virgin. For example, the Jesuit Peter Canisius (1521-1597) in his *De Maria Virgine incomparabili* (1577) recorded that the icon of Santa Maria Maggiore had, in the past, answered prayers and conquered pestilence, such as the plague during the pontificate of Gregory the Great.<sup>32</sup> In the context of the Catholic Reformation, when Mary's efficacy as an intercessor and the value of icons were challenged by Protestants, such an account traced the long-standing history of the image in Rome, provided evidence for its apotropaic power, and supported its devotional use in the present, for the icon's previous miraculous performance was a manifestation of its divine power.<sup>33</sup>

Sources dating to the post-Tridentine period continued to suggest that multiple Marian icons were carried during Gregory's sixth-century procession, allowing the credit for saving the city to be shared among various images and their respective communities. For example, according to Ottavio Panciroli (1554-1624) and Andrea Vittorelli (1580-1653), in addition to the icon of



Santa Maria Maggiore, other Marian images such as those from Santa Maria in Aracoeli and Santa Maria in Portico had also accompanied the procession.<sup>34</sup> Texts written by Fioravante Martinelli (1599–1677) and Francesco Maria Torrigio (1580–1649) on the history of the San Sisto icon instead claim that image’s participation in helping to save Rome from the sixth-century plague.<sup>35</sup> Although demonstrating the historic and cult significance of Marian images in Rome, the texts by Panciroli, Vittorelli, Martinelli, and Torrigio served various purposes. The antiquarian Panciroli provided general descriptions of the “sacred treasures” of the city in his devotional guidebook to Rome.<sup>36</sup> The theologian Vittorelli instead focused on the Pauline Chapel in Santa Maria Maggiore, which was completed three years prior to the publication of his text and housed the church’s Marian icon at its ritual center.<sup>37</sup> The texts by Martinelli and Torrigio, monographs on the San Sisto icon, demonstrate an interest in documenting that cult image through a careful analysis of historical texts.<sup>38</sup> All the texts, nonetheless, reinforced the sacred nature of Rome and the prestige of the religious communities and churches that housed and cared for miracle-working cult images.

Although the often competing narratives related to the miracle-working activities of Marian images reaffirmed that various Roman icons had the potential to defend against contagion, the promotion of those cult images during periods of outbreak could also increase the risk of further spreading disease. Crowded displays of devotion developed a tension between the protective and healing power of the cult image and the inherent risks to public health that communal displays of popular piety might create. In the seventeenth century, such gatherings defied contemporary quarantines and plague-time city ordinances and necessitated restrictions on processions, the display of miracle-working cult images, and church access, as was the case during the devastating plague that ravaged Rome in 1656–1657 under Pope Alexander VII (1655–1667).<sup>39</sup> Church authorities were clearly aware of these competing imperatives: out of an attempt to reduce the mixing of the healthy and the sick, the pope placed limitations on visits to a Marian icon conserved in the church of San Gregorio. He additionally had a private cult image that was controlled by the Boncompagni family moved to San Paolo fuori le Mura, where the number of visitors was lower due to the more remote location outside the city walls.<sup>40</sup>

Even with these attempts to suppress the crowds that cult images attracted, and to manage the related possible danger to public health, the perceived power of icons to potentially heal the city nonetheless continued in 1656, as seen with the propagandistic promotion of a *champlevé* image of the Virgin and Child from Santa Maria in Portico. According to Vittorelli, the image not only had been carried during the procession of Gregory, but also had been taken through the city during other contagions at the time of Popes Callistus III (1455–1458) and Hadrian VI (1522–1523); piously processed through Rome, the image was able to liberate the city from the “fatal scourge” and “deadly contagion.”<sup>41</sup> In 1656, the Clerics Regular of Santa Maria in Portico promoted the church’s feast day celebration on July 17 by circulating leaflets that described earlier miracles performed by the image as a way of demonstrating its ability to protect the city from the contemporary plague.<sup>42</sup> The increasing popularity of the icon inspired great crowds of pious visi-

tors, which necessitated an armed guard to maintain order, and eventually led to the enforced closure of the church to stem the further spread of disease. The Roman Senate strategically requested permission from Alexander VII to offer a vow for the construction of a new church to honor the image and provide thanks for the Virgin's intercession and the end of the plague.<sup>43</sup> That new church, Santa Maria in Campitelli, was designed by Carlo Rainaldi (1611-1691) with a high altar by Giovanni Antonio de Rossi (1616-1695) (fig. 7); as suggested by Sheila Barker, the architecture of the ecclesiastical space and the display of the reframed Marian image directly addressed concerns related to "social distancing" and sanitization that would help to neutralize the air-borne plague.<sup>44</sup> Specifically, the light-filled sanctuary, the white plaster walls and ceilings, and the particular display of the Marian icon—best appreciated close to the entrance to the church—were believed to help diminish the spread of disease and limit crowding around the cult image.



Fig. 7 Santa Maria in Campitelli, interior, Rome, Italy (artwork in the public domain; photo: Wikimedia Commons; licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0)

### ***Urbi et Orbi:* The Santa Maria Maggiore Icon, the Jesuits, and COVID-19**

Although numerous icons and cult images in Rome have historically been associated with the power to heal, Pope Francis has shown special devotion to the icon of the Virgin and Child currently contained in the Pauline Chapel in Santa Maria Maggiore. In this way, Francis has not only followed in a tradition of popes like Gregory the Great, but has also reflected the longstanding Jesuit dedication to this particular Marian image. By reproducing and distributing copies of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon, the Jesuits helped to disseminate an image that had been associated with propitiatory processions in Rome and had played an important role in the Assumption procession.

The Assumption procession, the most significant Roman civic-religious celebration, took place annually from the ninth century until 1566.<sup>45</sup> From the late medieval period, the Assumption procession was overseen primarily by civic officials, the Confraternity of the Salvatore, the Con-

fraternity of the *Raccomandati* (later *Gonfalone*), and private citizens; the pope, when he participated in the ceremony, would celebrate Mass in Santa Maria Maggiore. After the all-night procession and the arrival of the Lateran icon of Christ at the Esquiline basilica, the Marian icon was transported from its tabernacle in Santa Maria Maggiore to the piazza in front of the church where Mother and Son greeted one another as the images ceremonially “bowed.”<sup>46</sup> By the mid-sixteenth century, the nocturnal Assumption celebration was increasingly characterized by violent incidents and disagreements between the Confraternity of the Salvatore and the Lateran canons, which likely contributed to Pius V’s (1566–1572) decision to cancel the annual procession in 1566. By the end of the sixteenth century, further restrictions were placed on the Santa Maria Maggiore icon, as demonstrated in 1597 when Clement VIII confirmed that “the icon cannot be removed from, and must always remain in, S. Maria Maggiore, in the care of the canons and the Confraternity of the *Gonfalone*.”<sup>47</sup> By 1613, however, the icon was transferred to a tabernacle in Paul V’s newly constructed funerary chapel, where its access was controlled by papal keys, rather than the confraternal brothers or the Roman people.<sup>48</sup>

Although the Santa Maria Maggiore icon’s movement was increasingly restricted from the second half of the sixteenth century, copies—frequently sponsored by the Jesuits—helped to circulate the Marian image far beyond the confines of Rome to a more global context. Francis Borgia (1510–72), the third general of the Jesuit order from 1565 to 1572, initiated a campaign to reproduce the icon with the purpose of using those copies as missionary tools and as instruments of propaganda in the fight against the Protestants.<sup>49</sup> With Pius V’s permission in 1569, the icon was copied and had a widespread and immediate distribution to Jesuit educational institutions; to missionaries traveling as far as South America, Africa, and China; and to numerous crowned heads and high-ranking ecclesiastics across Europe who received the reproductions as diplomatic gifts.<sup>50</sup> Based on the Roman original in Santa Maria Maggiore that was believed to have been painted by the Evangelist Luke, the reproductions were valued as true portraits of the Virgin and sometimes became images worthy of special honor and veneration, as was the case with a copy sent to the first Jesuit college in Germany located in Ingolstadt.<sup>51</sup> While copies of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon were distributed globally, the original in Rome only infrequently left its chapel in the Esquiline basilica. The extensive copying and global dispersion of reproductions of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon, especially by the Jesuits, spread the international fame of the Marian image at the same time that the original in Rome was hidden from public view.

The fact that the rare public appearances of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon were linked to the earlier tradition of plague processions is, therefore, significant. In the context of the modern period and the advent of a rational scientific age, such displays demonstrate the survival of religious beliefs, popular piety, and the tradition of propitiatory processions. More than two centuries after the icon had been transferred to and enclosed within the Pauline Chapel, the cult image was removed from the basilica to take part in processions related to the outbreaks of cholera in 1835, when the disease entered the Italian peninsula, and in 1837, when it arrived in Rome.<sup>52</sup> The cholera processions not only mark the first time in over two hundred years that the

icon had been removed from Santa Maria Maggiore, but also demonstrate a new negotiation of technology, public health, and devotional practice. This can be seen by comparing how the 1835 and 1837 processions were handled. In 1835, Pope Gregory XVI (1831–1846) ordered a processional itinerary intended to evoke the sixth-century procession of his papal namesake, Gregory the Great: the Marian icon was taken from the Esquiline basilica through the streets of Rome until a torrential downpour necessitated a stop at the Chiesa Nuova, where the icon remained for seven days prior to proceeding towards Castel Sant'Angelo and St. Peter's.<sup>53</sup> The path of the procession linked various sites of Marian devotion in the city and led to reports of numerous miracles performed by other images of the Virgin. When cases of cholera appeared in Rome in 1837, especially in the Borgo and Trastevere, the icon was again borne in procession, but this time followed a route that avoided the more afflicted regions of the city by the Tiber River in favor of less densely populated neighborhoods. In this way, a concern for public health and contemporary theories of disease transmission prompted adjustments to the traditional processional path to St. Peter's that had been used in 1835. The celebration of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon, as well as smaller processions of other Marian images through well-illuminated streets, nonetheless reaffirmed the salvific power of the Virgin Mary while also asserting the authority of the pope.<sup>54</sup> Although alterations in the two propitiatory processions of 1835 and 1837 took into account the changing conditions of the cholera outbreak in Rome, the presence of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon on both occasions would have evoked devotional displays associated with the medieval Church. Gregory XVI's appeal to the thaumaturgic power of the Marian cult image is characteristic of the more conservative and traditionalist approach of his pontificate and reflects the continuing significance of popular piety in the modern period. The direct participation of Gregory XVI in the processions would have additionally reinforced the spiritual and political authority of the papacy in relation to devotional practice.<sup>55</sup>

Following the cholera procession of 1837, the Santa Maria Maggiore icon remained within the Pauline Chapel for nearly the next one hundred years, a period when the Church in Rome strove for a careful balance of scholarship, ecclesiastical authority, and rationalist thought. In the nineteenth century, devotional images, street shrines, and other objects of popular devotion were sometimes sacrificed in favor of civic modernization.<sup>56</sup> Discrepancies between Christian theology and new advances in science and philosophy furthermore led to an increased questioning of Church doctrine. The response of the papacy, as demonstrated in encyclicals like Leo XIII's *Providentissimus Deus* (1893), was to defend the infallibility of scripture.<sup>57</sup> At the same time, the papacy encouraged critical investigation and the documentation of early Christianity and medieval history by opening the Vatican Archives in 1881; through archaeological research, such as the catacomb exploration of Giovanni de Rossi (1822–1894); and in the documentation of relics and holy objects, like those in the Sancta Sanctorum.<sup>58</sup> In this environment characterized by a historical analysis of the Christian past coupled with fears of modernism, images like the Santa Maria Maggiore icon continued to offer solace, as demonstrated in the title granted to the image in 1870: *Salus Populi Romani*, the Salvation [or Health] of the Roman People.<sup>59</sup> Underscoring both the historic and continuing communal significance of the image, the *Salus Populi Romani*

title associates the image with the security, safety, and wellbeing of the city and its citizens from both a religious and a political perspective.<sup>60</sup> With the formation of the Italian state in 1870 and the withdrawal of the pope to the Vatican, the promise of safety and security would have certainly been sought by the papacy, especially as the rights of the pope and the ownership of cultural patrimony in Italy were questioned.

Following the Lateran Treaty of 1929, which established papal sovereignty over the Vatican and papal control of extraterritorial property including Santa Maria Maggiore, the icon of the Esquiline basilica received renewed attention, primarily as part of Marian celebrations. The image was restored in 1931 and processed on May 10 of the same year in honor of the fifteenth centenary of the Council of Ephesus.<sup>61</sup> The image was again taken in procession from Santa Maria Maggiore to St. Peter's at the conclusion of the "Crusade for a Better World" on December 8, 1949 and at the proclamation of the Dogma of the Assumption on November 1, 1950, both under Pius XII (1939–1958).<sup>62</sup> The icon also played an important role during the papally proclaimed international Marian years of 1953–1954 and 1987–1988; it was during these celebrations that popular devotion was shown to the Virgin through religious processions and pilgrimage to Marian sanctuaries.<sup>63</sup> At the conclusion of the Marian year in 1954, the Santa Maria Maggiore icon was taken in procession to St. Peter's where Pius XII added crowns to the heads of Christ and the Virgin as part of the celebration of the Queenship of Mary, as expressed in the encyclical *Ad caeli reginam*, To the Queen of Heaven, issued on October 11, 1954.<sup>64</sup> In the Marian Year 1987–1988, the Santa Maria Maggiore image joined other Marian icons from the city as part of an exhibition, *De vera effigie Mariae*, that was held in the Esquiline basilica.<sup>65</sup>

In more recent years, Francis, like many previous popes, has promoted Marian devotion through feast day celebrations, pilgrimage, Apostolic Blessings, and special Masses in honor of the Virgin.<sup>66</sup> The first Jesuit pope has, however, shown particular devotion to the Santa Maria Maggiore icon since the start of his pontificate, reflecting his order's longstanding veneration for that image. Francis has visited and prayed before the icon in Santa Maria Maggiore on numerous occasions, including his first public excursion as pontiff on March 14, 2013, a day after his election as pope.<sup>67</sup> On September 7, 2013, Francis had the icon brought to St. Peter's and processed by four Swiss guards through the square as part of a prayer vigil for the safeguarding of the people of Syria and those threatened by violence throughout the world.<sup>68</sup> Before and after international apostolic visits, Francis has prayed before the icon in Santa Maria Maggiore, as he has done prior to traveling to Georgia, Mozambique, Madagascar, and Mauritius and following trips to destinations such as Morocco and Romania. According to the Holy See Press Office, Francis prays before the Marian icon to "[invoke] the Virgin Mary's protection on his travels and upon the people he will visit in the country."<sup>69</sup> In 2017, the Vatican Museums restored the icon, returning the image to the Pauline Chapel where Francis celebrated Mass on January 28, 2018, a day that marked the feast celebration of the icon's translation to the chapel in 1613.<sup>70</sup> While crediting the Vatican restorers, Father Raymond J. de Souza noted that, "in truth, it is the Holy Father himself who has restored *Salus Populi Romani* to prominence in Rome. Its artistic restoration followed a

devotional resurgence led by Pope Francis, beginning on his first full day as pope.”<sup>71</sup>

Given Francis’s special interest in the image combined with its historic association with healing during times of contagion, it is not surprising that the pope would turn to the Santa Maria Maggiore icon at the outbreak of COVID-19. With the increasing threat of the coronavirus and the limitations of movement placed on 60 million Italians announced by Prime Minister Giuseppe Conti on March 8, 2020, the icon in Santa Maria Maggiore, along with the miraculous crucifix in San Marcello, was invoked by Francis for its propitiatory power. On March 15, Francis conducted a “mini-pilgrimage,” traveling by car from the Vatican to Santa Maria Maggiore, where he spent twenty minutes in prayer before the basilica’s Marian icon (see fig. 1).<sup>72</sup> From the Esquiline Hill, Francis then went to San Marcello where he prayed in front of the miraculous wooden crucifix that was credited with saving Rome from a plague in 1522. A photo, showing the pope before the icon of the Virgin and Child with the accompanying hashtag “#praytogether,” publicized Francis’s visit to Santa Maria Maggiore on his papal Instagram account to 6.6 million followers. Other photographs, released by Vatican Media and widely distributed on Twitter, capture Francis’s solitary approach to San Marcello, depicting the pope walking along the empty Via del Corso at the heart of a locked-down city center (see fig. 2).<sup>73</sup>



Fig. 8 Pope Francis, *Urbi et Orbi* Blessing, St. Peter’s, Rome, Italy, March 27, 2020 (photo: Getty Images)

flanked the pope as he offered prayers outside the basilica and a blessing *Urbi et Orbi* —“to the city and the world” (fig. 8).<sup>75</sup> A plenary indulgence was “granted to the faithful suffering from COVID-19 disease . . . as well as to health care workers, family members, and all those who in any capacity, including through prayer, care for them.”<sup>76</sup> Given the conditions of quarantine, the faithful could “unite spiritually through the media” in order to fulfill the specific conditions for the granting of the plenary indulgence.

The outbreak of COVID-19 has necessitated a widespread adoption of social network platforms

Less than two weeks later, on March 27, Francis delivered a special *Urbi et Orbi* blessing to an empty piazza in front of St. Peter’s basilica; broadcast via Facebook, YouTube, television, and radio, the blessing normally reserved for Christmas Day and Easter Sunday directly addressed concerns over the spread of COVID-19.<sup>74</sup> The icon of Santa Maria Maggiore and the crucifix from San Marcello, removed from their chapels and brought to St. Peter’s for that service,

and new media resources to connect with the faithful who have been isolated through social distancing, lockdowns, and quarantine. The Vatican has adjusted to the circumstances of the coronavirus: through live-streamed Easter Triduum liturgies offered inside an empty St. Peter's basilica; through an Exceptional Plenary Indulgence granted for a virtual pilgrimage to Lourdes conducted "via broadcast, live-stream, recorded television or radio program"; through the promotion of a "virtual parish" with a daily Mass broadcast on Facebook and YouTube that is celebrated by the pope in an empty chapel; or through the recitation of the Angelus prayer through video conferencing.<sup>77</sup> Just as the Jesuits used the printing press during the Catholic Reformation in the sixteenth century to support a global distribution of copies of devotional images, televised and livestreaming displays today provide an instantaneous dissemination of sacred art at a time when visiting cult centers in person may be impossible.<sup>78</sup> The prominent display and promotion of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon and the crucifix of San Marcello, two representations historically associated with miraculous healing, demonstrate the continuing significance and sacred power associated with devotional images during the coronavirus pandemic. The pope's use of these images as well as their online and televised distribution through the Holy See's national broadcaster, Vatican Media, have underscored their authority, legitimacy, and historic resonance.<sup>79</sup> At a time when new technology is being promoted to overcome social distance and to address devotional needs, images long associated with the miraculous eradication of disease continue to play a central role for the *salus populi*—for the welfare of the people.

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## About the Author

Kirstin Noreen is Professor of Art History at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. Her recent research examines the visualization and replication of sanctity during the period of the Counter-Reformation as expressed in the popular resurgence of medieval cult images.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Philip Pullella, “Pope in Dramatic Visit to Empty Rome to Pray for End of Virus,” *Reuters*, March 15, 2020 (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-pope/pope-in-dramatic-visit-to-empty-rome-to-pray-for-end-of-virus-idUSKBN212094>, accessed March 16, 2020); Francis d’Emilio, “Pope Goes on Roman Walkabout, Prays for End to Pandemic,” *AP News*, March 15, 2020 (<https://apnews.com/e2ca795ac04b8038b80f259e1fc-207ca>, accessed March 20, 2020); Delia Gallagher, “Pope Francis Prays for a Coronavirus Miracle at ‘Plague’ Crucifix Church,” *CNN*, March 16, 2020 (<https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/16/europe/pope-francis-prayer-coronavirus-plague-crucifix-intl/index.html>, accessed March 16, 2020); *Vatican News*, “Pope Francis’ Twin Prayers for an ‘End to the Pandemic,’” *Vatican News*, March 15, 2020 (<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-03/pope-francis-mary-prayer-crucifix-coronavirus.html>, accessed March 16, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> The most extensive analysis of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon is found in Gerhard Wolf, *Salus populi romani: die Geschichte römischer Kultbilder im Mittelalter* (Weinheim: VCH Acta Humaniora, 1990). See also Pietro Amato, *De vera effigie Mariae. Antiche icone romane* (Milan and Rome: A. Mondadori, De Luca Edizioni d’Arte, 1988), 52–60; and Barbara Jatta, “Restaurata la Salus populi Romani,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, 158, no. 19, January 25, 2018 and [http://www.vatican.va/various/basiliche/sm\\_maggiore/it/salus-populi-romani/salus-populi-romani-barbara-jatta-or\\_it.htm](http://www.vatican.va/various/basiliche/sm_maggiore/it/salus-populi-romani/salus-populi-romani-barbara-jatta-or_it.htm) (accessed July 6, 2020). Measuring 117 x 79 cm, the ash and linden wood icon has been variably dated from the fifth century through the thirteenth century; a recent technical analysis and restoration by the Laboratorio di Restauro Pitture of the Vatican Museums suggests a date from the late ninth century through the early eleventh century, with the frame dating slightly later. The exact origins of the icon are unknown. For the poplar wood crucifix of San Marcello, see Carla Bertorello, Barbara Fabian, Angela Lo Monaco, and Elio Corona, “Il restauro del crocifisso di San Marcello a Roma. Conservazione ed esigenze di culto,” *Kermes* 14 (2001): 27–40; Kira Maye Albinsky, “Art, Ritual, and Reform: The Archconfraternity of the Holy Crucifix of San Marcello in Rome” (PhD diss., Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2017). The crucifix, measuring 1.92 x 1.94 m. (with the cross 2.63 by 1.99 m.), is associated with an anonymous fourteenth- to fifteenth-century sculptor. In addition to being used in propitiatory processions, the crucifix has also been transferred to St. Peter’s during Jubilee celebrations since the year 1600, most recently under John Paul II in 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Pullella, “Pope in Dramatic Visit.”

<sup>4</sup> For the processional use of icons in Rome and beyond, see Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> Early references to the *letania septiformis* occur in Gregory of Tours’ *Historiarum libri decem* and a sermon of Gregory I that announced the procession in 603; the procession is next mentioned by Paul the Deacon (second half of the eighth century) and John the Deacon (late ninth century). For the early sources related to Gregory’s procession, see Cesare D’Onofrio, *Castel S. Angelo e Borgo tra Roma e papato* (Rome: Romana Società editrice, 1978), 152–8; Wolf, *Salus populi romani*, 131–5; Margaret M. Andrews, “The *Laetaniae Septiformes* of Gregory I, S. Maria Maggiore and Early Marian Cult in Rome,” in *The Moving City: Processions, Passages and Promenades in Ancient Rome*, eds. Ida Ostenberg, Simon Malmberg, Jonas Bjørnebye (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 155–64; Jacob Latham, “Inventing Gregory ‘the Great’: Memory, Authority, and the Afterlives of the *Letania Septiformis*,” *Church History* 84 (2015): 1–31.

<sup>6</sup> As described, for example, in the ninth-century *Sacramentarium Gregorianum* and the *Liber Pontificalis* life of Pope Leo III (795–816).

<sup>7</sup> Bartholomew of Trent, *Liber epilogorum in gesta sanctorum*, ed. Emore Paoli (Florence: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2001), 119: CLXI *De apparitione sancti Michaelis*, as discussed in Wolf, *Salus populi romani*, 134–5; Latham, “Inventing Gregory,” 23–4.

<sup>8</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, 2nd ed., ed. Giovanni Paolo Maggioni (Florence: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 1998), vol. 1, 288–9: “...in qua ymaginem beate Marie semper uirginis, que adhuc, ut aiunt, est Rome, quam Lucas arte medicus et pictor egregius formasse dicitur et eidem uirgini simillima per omnia perhibetur, ante processionem reuerenter portari fecit. Et ecce, tota aeris infectio et turbulencia ymagini cedebat ac si ipsam ymaginem fugeret et eius presentiam ferre non posset sicque post ymaginem mira serenitas et aeris puritas remanebat. Tunc in aere, ut fertur, iuxta ymaginem audite sunt uoces angelorum canentium ‘Regina celi letare....’” Wolf discusses

and reproduces a version of the *Legenda aurea* that clarifies the image was “in ecclesia, quae dicitur Sancta Maria Major”; see *Salus populi romani*, 134–8, 329–30: Q19. See also Latham, “Inventing Gregory,” 24. Another variant of this legend was recorded by a fifteenth-century traveler from Spain, Pedro Tafur, who suggested that the plague was related to the worshipping of a false idol in the church of Sant’Agata in Suburra; after the idol was destroyed by a thunderbolt, Pope Gregory returned to St. Peter’s, encountering the archangel Michael at Hadrian’s tomb. The sheathing of the angel’s sword, in this instance, indicated that idolatry had been suppressed, God had been appeased, and the plague would cease. See *Pedro Tafur: Travels and Adventures (1435-1439)*, ed. and trans. by Malcolm Letts (New York, London: Harper & Brothers, 1926), chap. 3, as digitized at <http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/tafur.html#ch3> (accessed March 17, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> For icons associated with St. Luke, see Michele Bacci, *Il pennello dell’Evangelista. Storia delle immagini sacre attribuite a san Luca* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> For a discussion of the competition of Marian icons in Rome, see D’Onofrio, *Castel S. Angelo*, 152–8; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 320–9; Wolf, *Salus populi romani*, 156–60.

<sup>11</sup> The Santa Maria Maggiore icon was sometimes referred to as the Madonna of the Snow, in recognition of the miraculous snowfall. Santa Maria Maggiore was actually dedicated under Sixtus III (432–40).

<sup>12</sup> The first mention of an encounter between icons in Santa Maria Maggiore occurs in 1170. William Tronzo, “Apse Decoration, the Liturgy and the Perception of Art in Medieval Rome: S. Maria in Trastevere and S. Maria Maggiore,” in *Italian Church Decoration of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance. Functions, Forms, and Regional Traditions*, ed. William Tronzo (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1989), 175; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 68; Wolf, *Salus populi romani*, 37, 93ff. See also Ernst Kitzinger, “A Virgin’s Face: Antiquarianism in Twelfth-Century Art,” *The Art Bulletin*, 62 (1980): 6–19; Hans Belting, “Icons and Roman Society in the Twelfth Century,” in *Italian Church Decoration*, 27–41.

<sup>13</sup> Guillelmus Durandus, *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, Lib. VII, cap. 890 (septem dies post Pascha), ed. 1459, f. 113: “Ad hoc notandum est, quod cum in urbe Roma esset magna aeris pestilentia, Beatus Gregorius in tempore paschali ordinavit, ut imago Beatae Virginis, quae in Ecclesia Sanctae Mariae Maioris servatur, quam beatus Lucas pinxisse dicitur, et eidem Virgini similis perhibetur, processionaliter portaretur, et dum ante processionem reverenter portaretur, ecce tota aeris infectio et turbulentia cedebat imagini fugiens, ac si eam ferre non posset, sic quod post imaginem mira sanitas remanebat, tunc autem iuxta imaginem auditae dicuntur tres voces angelorum, canentium, Regina coeli laetare alleluia...” As transcribed in Wolf, *Salus populi romani*, 330 Q20, see also 98–101. Later sources include a treatise composed during the plague year of 1464 that promoted miracles performed by the Marian image (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Lat. 5539) as well as a contemporary frame sponsored by Cardinal Guillaume d’Estouteville that included an image of Gregory’s procession; see Sheila Barker, “Miraculous Images and the Plagues of Italy, c. 590–1656,” in *Saints, Miracles and the Image: Healing Saints and Miraculous Images in the Renaissance*, eds. Sandra Cardarelli and Laura Fenelli (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 33, 49 n. 14. For the role of the confraternity of the Gonfalone in the care and celebration of the icon, see Barbara Wisch and Nerida Newbigin, *Acting on Faith: The Confraternity of the Gonfalone in Renaissance Rome* (Philadelphia: St. Joseph’s University Press, 2013), 156–89.

<sup>14</sup> Ottavio Panciroli, *I tesori nascosti nell’alma città di Roma, con nuovo ordine ristampati, & in molti luoghi arricchiti* (Rome, 1625), 450: “Stava la dett’Imagie [the Marian icon] nella cappella del Salvatore alla cima delle Scale sante, e si tiene una di quelle, che S. Luca dipinse. L’occasione di levarla da quel santo luogo fù, perche essendo Roma travagliata da grave pestilenza l’anno 1231. *Ann. to. 13. eo an.* Gregorio IX determinò portarla in processione a questa chiesa [Santa Maria del Popolo], *Alber. lo. cit.* e postola sù l’altare maggiore, vedendo che cessava la peste, non volse più ritornarla al suo luogo.” Andrea Vittorelli instead associates the Gregory IX plague with the year 1227: “Gregorio IX...in questo tempio la [the icon] transferì, l’anno 1227. con occasione di publica processione; che, con i Cardinali, & Popolo Romano fece; per chiedere da Dio gratia; che cessasse il flagello di gravissima pestilenza; ch’all’hora andava serpendo. Era costume, di portarla in processione, ne tempi di grave calamità, & per ciò la fece portare all’hora Gregorio alla Chiesa del Popolo, illustre per miracoli: celebrò anco quivi la Messa; & vedendo; (dopo pochi giorni) ch’era estinto l’incendio della pestilenza, non la rimosse.” See *Gloriose memorie della B.ma Vergine Madre di Dio; Gran parte delle quali sono accennate con Pitture, Statue, & altro nella maravigliosa Cappella Borghesia dalla Santità di N. S. PP. Paolo V* (Rome, 1616), 356.

<sup>15</sup> Shelley E. Zuraw, “The Efficacious Madonna in Quattrocento Rome: Spirituality in the Service of Papal Power,” in *Visions of Holiness: Art and Devotion in Renaissance Italy*, eds. Andrew Ladis and Shelley E. Zuraw (Athens, GA: Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia, 2001), 104–5.

<sup>16</sup> Giulia Barone, “Immagini miracolose a Roma alla fine del Medio Evo,” in *The Miraculous Image in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance*, eds. Erik Thunø and Gerhard Wolf (Rome: L’Erma di Bretschneider, 2004), 129–31.

<sup>17</sup> Ptolemy of Lucca, “Historia Ecclesiastica,” in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, XI, ed. Ludovico Antonio Muratori (Milan: Typographia Societatis Palatinae, 1727), coll. 912: “Pergendo igitur per Urbem tota turbulentia aëris à facie ipsius recedebat; sicque post Imaginem mira serenitae, & aëris puritas remanebat. Tunc, ut fertur, juxta Imaginem auditae sunt voces Angelorum canentium: *Regina Caeli*....Tunc sanctus Pontifex vidit redeundo de processione ad Sanctum Petrum super Castrum Crescentii Angelum Domini, qui gladium cruentatum detergens, in vaginam revocabat: ex quo cognovit pestilentiam cessasse.”

<sup>18</sup> Sister Cecilia, one of the nuns who moved to San Sisto in 1221, notes that the icon was transferred during a nocturnal procession out of fear that the Romans would object due to the increased inaccessibility of the image at the more distant church of San Sisto, which was located in the *disabitato* close to the ruins of the Baths of Caracalla. For Cecilia’s text, see Angelus Walz, “Die ‘Miracula beati Dominici’ der Schwester Cäcilia,” *Archivium fratrum praedicatorum* 37 (1967): 43. The San Sisto icon, along with the female religious community, was transferred to the church of Santi Domenico e Sisto in the late sixteenth century; the icon is now found in Santa Maria del Rosario, where it has been located since 1931.

<sup>19</sup> The anonymous description is reproduced in Casimiro da Roma, *Memorie istoriche della chiesa e convento di S. Maria in Araceli di Roma* (Rome, 1736), 134; see also D’Onofrio, *Castel S. Angelo*, 160–2.

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of the early sources for the Santa Maria in Aracoeli icon and its relationship to other Roman icons, see Carlo Bertelli, “L’immagine del ‘Monasterium Tempuli’ dopo il restauro,” *Archivium fratrum praedicatorum* 31 (1961) 82–111, esp. 95–100; Belting, “Icons and Roman Society,” 27–41, esp. 35; Wolf, *Salus populi romani*, 228–235; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 320–323. For Santa Maria in Aracoeli more generally, see Claudia Bolgia, *Reclaiming the Roman Capitol: Santa Maria in Aracoeli from the Altar of Augustus to the Franciscans, c. 500–1450* (London, New York: Routledge, 2017). For the confraternal care of the Aracoeli icon, see Wisch and Newbiggin, *Acting on Faith*, 190–209. The role of the Aracoeli icon as an advocate of the Roman people would have been reinforced by its location in the Capitoline basilica, a church that had a special political, religious, and civic relationship with the governing structures of the city located in the adjacent Piazza del Campidoglio. For a discussion of the later sixteenth-century renovation of the interior and the installation of the icon on the high altar, see Kirstin Noreen, “The High Altar of Santa Maria in Aracoeli: Recontextualizing a Medieval Icon in Post-Tridentine Rome,” *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 53 (2008): 99–128.

<sup>21</sup> For a transcription of the 1350 letter from Cola di Rienzo to the Archbishop of Prague that confirms this event, see Claudia Bolgia, “The Felici Icon Tabernacle (1372) at S. Maria in Aracoeli, Reconstructed: Lay Patronage, Sculpture and Marian Devotion in Trecento Rome,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 68 (2005): 30 and 68 appendix 3.

<sup>22</sup> As recorded on a plaque located to the left of the central portal of the church. For the construction of the staircase, see Casimiro da Roma, *Memorie istoriche*, 26–7; Ronald E. Malmstrom, “S. Maria in Aracoeli at Rome” (PhD diss., New York University 1973), 129–31; Marianna Brancia di Apricena, *Il complesso dell’Aracoeli sul Colle Capitolino (IX–XIX secolo)* (Rome: Quasar, 2000), 79–80, 89. The use of the Aracoeli icon during both Gregory’s sixth-century procession and the 1348 outbreak of the plague was also recorded in a guidebook by William Brewyn from c. 1470. For a discussion and transcription of that text, see Bolgia, “The Felici Icon Tabernacle,” 29–30, 69–70: appendix n. 11.

<sup>23</sup> Mariano da Firenze, *Itinerarium urbis Romae*, ed. with notes by Enrico Bulletti, *Studi di antichità cristiana* 2 (Rome: Pontificio istituto di archeologia cristiana, 1931), 42: “Licet canonici sanctae Mariae Maioris dicant illam fuisse quae in eorum ecclesia veneratur; sicque fratres Praedicatores asserunt esse illam quae in ecclesia eorum sancti Xysti est.” For Fra Mariano and his text, see also D’Onofrio, *Castel S. Angelo*, 150–1; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 532.

<sup>24</sup> Mariano da Firenze, *Itinerarium*, 42: “Sed qualis sit, Deus scit.”

<sup>25</sup> Mariano da Firenze, *Itinerarium*, 42: “In pariete chori subter imagine iam dictae Virginis lapis marmoreus insertus est, ferrea crata circumdatus, super quem angelus evaginato gladio in arce Hadriani quae et Crescentii item dicta, adstare visus est cum divus Gregorius cum dicta imagine in festis paschatis processionaliter ad sanctum Petrum pergebat et tunc ante eam aer infectus purificabatur....” See also Pompilio Totti, *Ritratto di Roma moderna* (Rome, 1638), 409; Cesare D’Onofrio, *Castel S. Angelo* (Rome: Cassa di Risparmio, 1971), 91–104; idem, *Castel S. Angelo* (1978), 148–62; Johanna Heideman, “The Roman Footprints of the Archangel Michael. The Lost Shrine of S. Maria in Aracoeli and the Petition of Fioravante Martinelli,” *Mededelingen van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome* 47 (1987): 147–56; eadem, “Orme romane ed il perduto reliquiario delle ‘pedate’ dell’Arcangelo Michele,” *Bollettino dei Musei Comunali di Roma* 4 (1990) 17–26; Bolgia, “The Felici Icon Tabernacle,” 38–40. The circular stone is now contained in the Palazzo Nuovo of the Museo Capitolino (Sala delle Colombe, inv. nr. 331).

<sup>26</sup> For fourteenth- and fifteenth-century legislation related to plague outbreaks and quarantine regulations in Italy, see Ann G. Carmichael, “Plague Legislation in the Italian Renaissance,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 57, n. 4 (1983): 508–25; Jane Stevens Crawshaw, “The Renaissance Invention of Quarantine,” in *The Fifteenth Century XII: Society in an Age of Plague*, eds. Linda Clark and Carole Rawcliffe (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), 161–73.

<sup>27</sup> As recounted by Vittorelli, *Gloriose memorie*, 356: “Sisto Quarto venerò questa Imagine, & Chiesa, & vedendo Roma travagliata da insolite mortali febri; che in pochi giorni, havevano tolta di vita moltitudine grande di huomini, andò a visitarla, fece offerire à Dio l’augustissimo Sacrificio della Messa; &, con calde preghiere, lo supplicò; che rendesse salubre l’aria, & risanasse gl’infermi.”

<sup>28</sup> For the following description of this fifteenth-century plague and the ensuing processions involving the icon of Sant’Agostino, see Angelo Lombardi, *Cenni storici intorno la sacratissima immagine di Maria ss.ma...di S. Agostino in Roma* (Naples, 1859), 41–5. See also Panciroli, *I tesori nascosti*, 471; Totti, *Ritratto di Roma*, 264.

<sup>29</sup> Lombardi, *Cenni storici*, 45.

<sup>30</sup> Panciroli, *I tesori nascosti*, 471: “l’anno 1485. essendo una gran peste in Roma, si liberò, portandola Innocenzo VIII. in processione da questa chiesa a quella di S. Pietro in Vaticano, *ex iisdem M.S.* Questa miracolosa gratia è rappresentata in varie figure di mezzo rilievo nell’ornamento di marmo, in cui è riposta.” See also Sible de Blaauw, “Das Hochaltarretabel in Rom bis zum frühen 16. Jahrhundert: das Altarbild als Kategorie der liturgischen Anlage,” *Mededelingen van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome. Papers of the Netherlands Institute in Rome* 55 (1996): 101. For an overview of fifteenth-century propitiatory processions, see Zuraw, “The Efficacious Madonna,” 101–22, esp. 101–106. Roman icons were also copied and distributed throughout Europe, especially from the 1460s through the 1490s by artists such as Antoniazio Romano; see Zuraw, “The Efficacious Madonna,” 105–106 and Wisch and Newbiggin, *Acting on Faith*, 114–7.

<sup>31</sup> Andrew Casper, “Icons, Guidebooks, and the Religious Topography of Sixteenth-Century Rome,” in *Early Modern Rome 1341–1667*, ed. Portia Prebys (Ferrara: EDISAI, 2011), 477–87.

<sup>32</sup> Petrus Canisius, *De Maria Virgine incomparabili, et dei genitrice sacrosancta* (Ingolstadt, 1577), 697–8.

<sup>33</sup> Gabriele Paleotti, *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane in Trattati d’arte del Cinquecento, fra Manierismo e Controriforma*, ed. Paola Barocchi, vol. 2 (Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 1961), 229; Giuseppe Scavizzi, *The Controversy on Images from Calvin to Baronius* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 232.

<sup>34</sup> Panciroli, *I tesori nascosti*, 69: “Nel principio del Papato di S. Gregorio il grande, essendo Roma travagliata da grave pestilenza, fù per ordine suo portata questa imagine [that of Santa Maria in Aracoeli] con altre in processione, come in simili occasioni soleva farsi.” Vittorelli, *Gloriose memorie*: for the icon in Santa Maria Maggiore, 281–2, 349–53 (367–71, due to a mispagination); for the icon of Santa Maria in Aracoeli, 363–4; and for the image in Santa Maria in Portico, 380.

<sup>35</sup> Fioravante Martinelli, *Imago B. Mariae virginis quae apud venerandas SS. Sixti, & Dominici moniales à mille ferè annis maximo cultu asservatur* (Rome, 1635), xxvii: “...haec sacrosancta imago, quam & vetusti Codicis narratio, tum fama, & constans traditio à S. Luca depictam affirmat, publicè in maxima Urbis calamitate, irae divinae placandae, &

pesti averruncandae, a S. Gregorio Magno circumlata fuerit....” Francesco Maria Torrigio includes a chapter entitled “La sacra Immagine fù delineata da S. Luca, fù portata in Processione altempo di S. Gregorio, e fù posta in S. Sisto” but does not discuss at length the Gregory procession; see *Historia della veneranda immagine di Maria Vergine posta nella Chiesa del Monastero delle RR. monache di Santi Sisto, e Domenico di Roma (Rome, 1641)*, 23.

<sup>36</sup> Panciroli’s *Tesori nascosti*, first published in 1600, was updated and republished in 1625 with a dedication to Costanza Magalotti Barberini.

<sup>37</sup> Vittorelli’s text, *Gloriose memorie* (1616), was dedicated to the Borghese pope, Paul V, who sponsored the construction of the Pauline Chapel.

<sup>38</sup> Texts by Martinelli and Torrigio include several disagreements between the two scholars. For a brief discussion of that polemic, see Raimondo Spiazzi, ed., *La chiesa e il monastero di San Sisto all’Appia: raccolta di studi storici* (Bologna: Edizioni studio domenicano, 1992), 388–394. See also Kirstin Noreen, “Female Community, Identity, and Icon: Honoring the Madonna Advocata in Santi Domenico e Sisto,” forthcoming.

<sup>39</sup> Italy was affected by two primary outbreaks of the plague in the seventeenth century: in the north and central regions primarily from 1629 to 1633 and in southern Italy from 1656 to 1657. For the use of border controls, the institution of quarantine, and the position of the Church during the plague of 1630–1631 in Florence, see John Henderson, *Florence Under Siege: Surviving Plague in an Early Modern City* (London: Yale University Press, 2019). For provisions to separate the healthy from the sick in Rome, see Sforza P. Pallavicino, *Della vita di Alessandro VII*, (Prato: Tipografia fratelli Giachetti, 1839–1840), vol. 2, esp. lib. 4, cap. 13–4, 171–84; Pallavicino notes (182): “Nè solamente furon dismesse le comunanze o geniali, o civili, ma non meno le sacre, cioè le pontificie cappelle, le consuete processioni, le pie congreghe, la solennità degli uffizj nelle chiese, chiudendole in quei giorni, ch’eran per loro solennemente festivi, e però attrattivi di molto popolo.” For Rome, see also Girolamo Gastaldi, *Tractatus de avertenda et profliganda peste politico-legalis* (Bologna, 1684).

<sup>40</sup> Pallavicino, *Della vita*, 2, lib. 4, cap. 14, 183: “Poi nell’ottava de’ morti, proibendo il solito concorso alla perdonanza solenne di S. Gregorio, surrogò per acquisto di quella famosa indulgenza alcuna delle private opere dette avanti.” See also Sheila Barker, “Art, Architecture and the Roman Plague of 1656–1657,” in *La peste a Roma (1656–57)*, ed. Irene Fosi (Rome: Università Roma Tre-Croma, 2007), 251 and Barker, “Miraculous Images,” 43.

<sup>41</sup> Vittorelli, *Gloriose memorie*, 380: “Più volte, in tempo, che Roma era da pestilenza travagliata, fù questa pretiosa Reliquia (chiamiamola così) portata in processione, come nell’allegata Relatione si scrive. La portò S. Gregorio, à S. Pietro in Vaticano, & la riportò alla propria Chiesa, & cessò l’ira di Dio. Calisto Terzo, per simile occasione, la fece; con sacra pompa, portare per la Città, & ottenne la liberatione da sì funesto flagello; il medesimo fece Adriano Sesto: & fuggiva la mortale contagione, ov’era portata la Immagine, recata in terra da Serafini.” Vittorelli is unclear regarding which Gregory he references. Luigi Marracci specifies that the Virgin, as represented in the miraculous image, had interceded during a plague at the time of Gregory VII, as well as John I, Callistus III, and Hadrian VI; see *Memorie di S. Maria in Portico, ora in Campitelli, dal giorno della sua apparizione nell’anno 525 fino all’anno 1675*, ed. Giovacchino M. Corrado (Rome: Fratelli Monaldi, 1871), 104.

<sup>42</sup> Marracci, *Memorie di S. Maria in Portico*, 88–106; Pallavicino, *Della vita*, 2, lib. 4, cap. 14, 184; Barker, “Art, Architecture,” 251–4; eadem, “Miraculous Images,” 43–6.

<sup>43</sup> As Barker indicates, the Roman Senate requested the public vow at a time when the priests of Santa Maria in Portico were defying plague-time ordinances with their promotion of the church’s Marian image. Following the pope’s agreement, the image was moved to several locations before it was placed in the church of Santa Maria in Campitelli, at the base of the Capitoline and close to the Senate. See “Art, Architecture,” 251–2.

<sup>44</sup> Barker, “Art, Architecture,” 252–4; Barker, “Miraculous Images,” 45–6.

<sup>45</sup> For the following discussion of the Assumption procession, see Wisch and Newbigin, *Acting on Faith*, 156–74 and Kirstin Noreen, “Serving Christ: The Assumption Procession in Sixteenth-Century Rome,” in *Remembering the Middle Ages in Early Modern Italy*, eds. Lorenzo Pericolo and Jessica N. Richardson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 231–5.

<sup>46</sup> For the location of the icon in Santa Maria Maggiore prior to its seventeenth-century transfer to the Pauline

Chapel, see Wolf, *Salus populi romani*, 223–7.

<sup>47</sup> This clause was included in an act of donation by Clement VIII, as cited by Steven F. Ostrow, *Art and Spirituality in Counter-Reformation Rome: The Sistine and Pauline Chapels in S. Maria Maggiore* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 130. See also Wisch and Newbiggin, *Acting on Faith*, 169. The Gonfalone confraternity was elevated to an archconfraternity in 1579.

<sup>48</sup> For the seventeenth-century installation in the Pauline Chapel, see Ostrow, *Art and Spirituality*, esp. 118–75.

<sup>49</sup> For the reproduction and distribution of copies of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon, see Sepp Schüller, “Die ‘Chinesische Madonna,’ der bedeutendste Fund aus der ersten Missionsperiode in China,” *Die Katholischen Missionen* 64 (1936): 177–183; Ugo Monneret de Villard, “La Madonna di Santa Maria Maggiore e l’illustrazione dei miracoli di Maria in Abissinia,” *Annali Lateranensi* 11 (1947): 9–90; Pasquale M. d’Elia, “La prima diffusione nel mondo dell’immagine di Maria ‘Salus Populi Romani,’” *Fede e Arte* (1954), 301–11; Marie-France Jacops, “Contribution à l’étude de la dévotion mariale en Lorraine: le culte de la Vierge de saint Luc,” *Pays-lorrain* 65, no. 2 (1984): 101–117; Tania C. Tribe, “Memory and Wonder: Our Lady Mary in Ethiopian Painting (15<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> Centuries),” in *Memory and Oblivion. Proceedings of the 29<sup>th</sup> International Congress of the History of Art held in Amsterdam, 1–7 September 1996*, eds. Wessel Reinink and Jeroen Stumpel (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 625–34; Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542–1773* (Toronto and Buffalo, 1999); Kirstin Noreen, “The Icon of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome: An Image and its Afterlife,” *Renaissance Studies* 19 (2005): 660–72; Mia M. Mochizuki, “Sacred Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction: The *Salus Populi Romani* Madonna in the World,” in *Sacred and Profane in Early Modern Art*, ed. Kayo Hirakawa (Kyoto: Graduate School of Letters, Kyoto University, 2016), 129–44; Simon Ditchfield, “*Romanus* and *Catholicus*: Counter-Reformation Rome as *Caput Mundi*,” in *A Companion to Early Modern Rome, 1492–1692*, eds. Pamela M. Jones, Barbara Wisch, and Simon Ditchfield (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 141–6.

<sup>50</sup> In Poland, an early seventeenth-century copy of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon that was believed to have been blessed by Clement VIII (1592–1605) and associated with the Jesuit St. Stanislaw Kostka was used in propitiatory processions in Kraków. For this image, known as the “Polish Mother of God,” see Krzysztof J. Czyżewski and Marek Walczak, “The Archconfraternity of the Rosary in the Dominican Churches of Kraków. Piety and Patronage of the Arts,” in *Illuminating the Soul, Glorifying the Sacred. Religious Confraternities and the Visual Arts in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Barbara Murovec, Mija Oter Gorenčič, and Barbara Wisch, a special issue of *Acta historiae artis Slovenica*, 23/2 (2018): 139–62.

<sup>51</sup> Kirstin Noreen, “Replicating the Icon of Santa Maria Maggiore: The *Mater ter admirabilis* and the Jesuits of Ingolstadt,” *Visual Resources* 24 (2008): 19–37.

<sup>52</sup> For the following discussion, see Andrew P. Griebeler, “Cholera and the *Salus Populi Romani*,” in *Erzeugung und Zerstörung von Sakralität zwischen Antike und Mittelalter: Beiträge der internationalen Tagung in München vom 20.–21.10.2015*, eds. Armin F. Bergmeier, Katharina Palmberger, and Joseph E. Sanzo (Heidelberg: Propylaeum, 2016), 133–41. The only other documented removal of the icon from the Pauline Chapel prior to the cholera outbreak occurred in 1831, when the image was taken to the church’s nave to mark the start of Gregory XVI’s pontificate; see Wisch and Newbiggin, *Acting on Faith*, 169.

<sup>53</sup> Gregory XVI’s name selection was likely influenced by his position as abbot of the Monastery of San Gregorio Magno al Celio and through a desire to honor his predecessor, Gregory XV, the founder of Propaganda Fide. See “Pope Gregory XVI,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07006a.htm>, accessed October 12, 2020.

<sup>54</sup> In the year following the 1837 procession, a silver revetment and new crowns were added to the icon by Gregory XVI; see Jatta, “Restaurata la Salus populi Romani.”

<sup>55</sup> The pope did not participate in all parts of the 1835 and 1837 processions. Gregory XVI did, however, lead the 1835 procession as it passed Castel Sant’Angelo on the way to St. Peter’s; it was at Castel Sant’Angelo that the miracle of Gregory the Great and the archangel took place. For exact details of Gregory XVI’s participation, see Griebeler, “Cholera,” 135–138.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, the discussion of sacred images in nineteenth-century Genoa, in Jane Garnett and Gervase Rosser, *Spectacular Miracles: Transforming Images in Italy from the Renaissance to the Present* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), esp. 240–7.

<sup>57</sup> *Providentissimus Deus* (1893): [https://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_18111893\\_providentissimus-deus.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_18111893_providentissimus-deus.html) (accessed July 22, 2020). See also Dan O’Leary, *Roman Catholicism and Modern Science: A History* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 68–72.

<sup>58</sup> Kirstin Noreen, “Opening the Holy of Holies: Early Twentieth-Century Explorations of the Sancta Sanctorum (Rome),” *Church History* 80: 3 (2011): 520–46.

<sup>59</sup> Wolf explains that the title *Salus Populi Romani* was first used in 1870 by Pius IX, but became more widely diffused in the early twentieth century. In 1958–1959, John XXIII reproduced the icon accompanied by *Salus Populi Romani* on a silver medal. See Wolf, *Salus populi romani*, 19 and 254 n. 83; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 68.

<sup>60</sup> As described by Griebeler, who discusses the meaning of the title in relation to its use in ancient Rome (“Cholera,” 133).

<sup>61</sup> Amato, *De vera effigie Mariae*, 52.

<sup>62</sup> Amato, *De vera effigie Mariae*, 52; “The Assumption Proclamation (1950),” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-JcSyaRU0kc> (accessed July 6, 2020).

<sup>63</sup> Samuel Koo, “Marian Year Called Return to Tradition,” *The Washington Post*, February 21, 1987 (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1987/02/21/marian-year-called-return-to-tradition/60060152-4c5f-4ef6-b41e-15223cff0487/>, accessed October 14, 2020). The 1953–1954 international Marian Year commemorated the centenary of Pius XII’s proclamation of the Dogma of Mary’s Assumption. The second international Marian Year, proclaimed by John Paul II, ran from June 1987 through August 1988.

<sup>64</sup> “Religion: The Queenship of Mary,” *Time*, November 8, 1954; “Incoronazione de la ‘Salus Populi Romani,’” <http://www.newliturgicalmovement.org/2017/08/pope-pius-xii-celebrates-queenship-of.html#XwPTrsZ7l-U> (accessed July 6, 2020). For *Ad caeli reginam*, see [http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_enc\\_11101954\\_ad-caeli-reginam.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_11101954_ad-caeli-reginam.html) (accessed July 2, 2020).

<sup>65</sup> Amato, *De vera effigie Mariae*.

<sup>66</sup> For example, in 2018 Francis added the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church to the Roman calendar on the day after Pentecost Sunday. Pope Francis’s devotion to the Virgin has been discussed in the popular press and visually documented in a “devotional keepsake” that includes quotes from his speeches, prayers and tweets; see Christopher J. Hale, “Why Pope Francis Is Obsessed With Mary,” *Time*, March 25, 2015; Deacon Nick Donnelly, “Why Does Pope Francis Love the Blessed Virgin Mary So Much?,” *National Catholic Register*, December 21, 2015 (<https://www.ncregister.com/news/why-does-pope-francis-love-the-blessed-virgin-mary-so-much>, accessed October 9, 2020); Vincenzo Sansonetti, ed. *Pope Francis and the Virgin Mary: A Marian Devotion* (New York: Rizzoli, 2015). John Paul II was also known for his Marian piety; see Edward D. O’Connor, “The Roots of Pope John Paul II’s Devotion to Mary,” *Marian Studies* 39 (1988): 78–114.

<sup>67</sup> Paddy Agnew, “Changed times at Vatican as Pope Francis makes first public outing,” *The Irish Times*, March 14, 2013 (<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/changed-times-at-vatican-as-pope-francis-makes-first-public-outing-1.1325645>, accessed March 23, 2020). This visit was recorded in a video of Telegraph.co.uk, found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8Q3vEuzJq4> (accessed March 27, 2020). For Francis’s particular devotion to the icon of Santa Maria Maggiore, see also Angelo Jesus Canta, “Our Lady of the Coronavirus,” *America*, March 22, 2020 (<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2020/03/22/our-lady-coronavirus?fbclid=IwAR0J4M-KIX045YizNcNYh6zIMyyfU04qu4C722HBTRM3qdtATW7ISzTmcqBc>, accessed March 25, 2020). The basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore also played a special role for the founder of the Jesuits, as this was the location where Ignatius of Loyola celebrated his first Mass as a priest on December 25, 1538.

<sup>68</sup> Elizabeth Dias, “Pope Francis Leads Global Prayer Vigil for Syria,” *Time*, September 7, 2013.

<sup>69</sup> Deborah Castellano Lubov, "Pope Prays at Santa Maria Maggiore Before Departing for Mozambique," *Zenit*, September 3, 2019 (<https://zenit.org/articles/pope-prays-at-santa-maria-maggiore-before-departing-for-mozambique/>, accessed March 23, 2020). See also Deborah Castellano Lubov, "Pope Prays at Santa Maria Maggiore Before Departing for Georgia," *Zenit*, September 30, 2016 (<https://zenit.org/articles/pope-prays-at-santa-maria-maggiore-before-departing-for-georgia/>, accessed March 23, 2020); eadem, "Returning from Morocco, Pope Stops at Santa Maria Maggiore," *Zenit*, April 1, 2019 (<https://zenit.org/articles/returning-from-morocco-pope-stops-at-santa-maria-maggiore/>, accessed March 23, 2020); eadem, "Returning from Romania, Pope Stops at Santa Maria Maggiore," *Zenit*, June 3, 2019 (<https://zenit.org/articles/returning-from-romania-pope-stops-at-santa-maria-maggiore/>, accessed March 23, 2020).

<sup>70</sup> Jatta, "Restaurata" and [http://www.vatican.va/various/basiliche/sm\\_maggiore/it/salus-populi-romani/salus-populi-romani-barbara-jatta-or\\_it.htm](http://www.vatican.va/various/basiliche/sm_maggiore/it/salus-populi-romani/salus-populi-romani-barbara-jatta-or_it.htm); "Santa Maria Maggiore, restaurata l'icona della 'Salus Populi Romani,'" *La Stampa*, January 24, 2018, <https://www.lastampa.it/vatican-insider/it/2018/01/24/news/santa-maria-maggiore-restaurata-l-icona-della-salus-populi-romani-1.33971530> (accessed July 6, 2020). By January 2019, Francis had visited the Esquiline basilica sixty-seven times during his pontificate; see Elise Harris, "Pope's Love Affair with Mary Hits New High with 67<sup>th</sup> Roman Visit," *Crux Now*, January 23, 2019 (<https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2019/01/popes-love-affair-with-mary-hits-new-high-with-67th-roman-visit/>, accessed July 17, 2020).

<sup>71</sup> Fr. Raymond J. de Souza, "Pope Francis Restores Beloved Marian Icon to Prominence," *National Catholic Register*, January 31, 2018 (<https://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/pope-francis-restores-beloved-marian-icon-to-prominence>, accessed July 2, 2020).

<sup>72</sup> The reporting of Francis's visits to Santa Maria Maggiore and San Marcello was widespread. See, for example, Hannah Brockhaus, "Pope Francis Makes Walking Prayer Pilgrimage for Coronavirus Pandemic," *Catholic News Agency*, March 15, 2020 (<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-francis-makes-walking-prayer-pilgrimage-for-coronavirus-pandemic-40105>, accessed July 17, 2020) and Cindy Wooden, "Pope Francis Makes Mini-Pilgrimage Outside Vatican to Pray for End of Coronavirus Pandemic," *Catholic News Service*, March 16, 2020 (<https://www.catholicnews.com/services/englishnews/2020/pope-makes-mini-pilgrimage-outside-vatican-to-pray-for-end-of-pandemic.cfm>, accessed July 17, 2020). According to Father Elio Lops, a priest of the vicariate of Rome, Francis had planned to go to Santa Maria Maggiore on March 13 to mark the seventh year of his pontificate, but had canceled that visit due to the Italian lockdown.

<sup>73</sup> Francis was accompanied on his mini-pilgrimage by a small police escort. Brockhaus includes a copy of a tweet from the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) that depicts the pope's visit to San Marcello (see "Pope Francis").

<sup>74</sup> Devin Watkins, "Pope's Special *Urbi et Orbi* Blessing: 'God Turns Everything to our Good,'" *Vatican News*, March 27, 2020 (<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-03/pope-francis-urbi-et-orbi-blessing-coronavirus.html>, accessed March 27, 2020). For the full address, see Pope Francis, "Read: Pope Francis' *Urbi et Orbi* Address on Coronavirus and Jesus Calming the Storm," *America*, March 27, 2020 (<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2020/03/27/read-pope-francis-urbi-et-orbi-address-coronavirus-and-jesus-calming-storm>, accessed March 27, 2020). The pope announced the *Urbi et Orbi* blessing during his Angelus address on March 22. Two days prior to the *Urbi et Orbi* blessing, on the feast of the Annunciation (March 25), Francis asked Christians of all denominations to join in a recitation of the Lord's Prayer at noon.

<sup>75</sup> "Miraculous Crucifix Moved to St. Peter's Square for Pope Francis' *Urbi et Orbi* Blessing," *Catholic News Agency*, March 25, 2020 (<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/miraculous-crucifix-moved-to-st-peters-square-for-pope-francis-urbi-et-orbi-blessing-54055>, accessed July 17, 2020).

<sup>76</sup> "Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary on the granting of special Indulgences to the faithful in the current pandemic, 20.03.2020," <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/03/20/200320c.html> (accessed July 15, 2020).

<sup>77</sup> Virtual pilgrimage using the internet is not new, as demonstrated by Mark W. MacWilliams, "Virtual Pilgrimages on the Internet," *Religion* 32, no. 4 (2002): 315–35. For the Exceptional Plenary Indulgence, see the Our Lady of Lourdes Hospitality, North American Volunteers website: <https://lourdesvolunteers.org/online-lourdes-vir->



[tual-pilgrimage-experience-2/](#) (accessed July 21, 2020). See also Elise Ann Allen, “As Coronavirus Spreads, so does Pope’s ‘Virtual Parish,’” *Crux*, March 17, 2020 (<https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2020/03/as-coronavirus-spreads-so-does-popes-virtual-parish/>, accessed March 24, 2020). The extensive use of social media platforms demonstrates an evolving approach to digital media consumption; see Jonathan Crowd, “How the Vatican’s Social Media Strategy Became a Surprise Success Story,” *Skyword*, June 12, 2018 (<https://www.skyword.com/contentstandard/how-the-vaticans-social-media-strategy-became-a-surprise-success-story/>, accessed July 20, 2020).

<sup>78</sup> Mochizuki, “Sacred Art.”

<sup>79</sup> For the digital reproduction of cult images, see Kirstin Noreen, “Negotiating the Original: Copying the Virgin of Guadalupe,” *Visual Resources* 33, n. 3-4 (2017): 363–84 and Andrew R. Casper, “What Does it Mean to Exhibit the Shroud of Turin Online?” *Slate*, April 10, 2020 (<https://slate.com/technology/2020/04/shroud-of-turin-virtual-exhibition-easter.html>, accessed July 20, 2020).