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The Pope slips in and out of consciousness

At an 11:30 press conference [4:30 a.m. EST], the Holy See Press Office Director Joaquín Navarro-Valls held a briefing for journalists.

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The following is an update as of 9 this morning [2 a.m. EST]:

The general, cardio-respiratory and metabolic conditions of the Holy Father are substantially unchanged and therefore are very serious.

As of dawn this morning, the start of a compromised state of consciousness was observed.

Mass was celebrated this morning in the presence of the Pope.

Last evening the Pope probably had in mind the young people whom he has met throughout the world during his pontificate. In fact, he seemed to be referring to them when, in his words, and repeated several times, he seemed to have said the following sentence [in response to the information that there were many young people keeping vigil in St. Peter's Square]: "I have looked for you. Now you have come to me. And I thank you."

Asked when the next bulletin could be expected, he said that he usually goes to the papal apartments at 5 or 5:30 in the afternoon [10 or 10:30 a.m. EST], and indicated an update

could be expected following that visit.

The press office director, asked about the Pope's state of awareness during Mass, repeated what was he said in the bulletin, namely, that "the start of a compromised state of consciousness was been observed, starting at dawn." He added that, "this does not mean absolutely, technically speaking, that one can speak of a state of coma. When people talk, he opens his eyes and is conscious, at times he seems to be sleeping. When he is spoken to, he does react. The bulletin does not use the expression 'coma' or being in a state of coma."

Asked who is in the Holy Father's room with him, Navarro-Valls said "I can only tell who was there this morning when I visited the Pope: his personal secretary, Archbishop Stanislaw Dziwisz, his other private

secretary, three of the sisters that run the household, and his physician Dr. Buzzonetti. I can't say, however, that this is the standard number of people in the room. There will on occasion be the other doctors treating him, for example."

At 6:30 yesterday afternoon, Holy See Press Office Director Joaquin Navarro-Valls released the following statement to journalists:

"The general conditions and cardio-respiratory conditions of the Holy Father have further worsened.

"A gradual worsening of arterial hypotension has been noted, and breathing has become shallow.

"The clinical picture indicates cardio-circulatory and renal insufficiency. The biological parameters are notably compromised.

"The Holy Father - with visible participation - entrusts himself to the continual prayers of those assisting him."

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