

# *Pope Francis calls to divert weapons funding to research to prevent next pandemic*

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Vatican City, May 31 (RHC)-- Pope Francis urged politicians to divert funds spent on weapons to research to prevent another pandemic, as he led the largest gathering in the Vatican in nearly three months.

Francis presided at an outdoor prayer service with about 130 people, including many directly affected by the pandemic. They prayed the rosary in the Vatican gardens as tens of thousands of people in about 50 Catholic shrines around the world joined in. A large screen in the gardens showed video links with about 25 locations.

In his closing prayer, Francis said national leaders should take a far-sighted attitude, helping the most needy now and putting in place long-term economic and social solutions.

He prayed that the Madonna would "touch (leaders') consciences so that enormous sums spent to possess more armaments and to perfect them be instead destined to the promotion of sufficient research to prevent such catastrophes in the future."

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