

Vatican to send Pope's message of hope into orbit

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A message of faith and hope first delivered by Pope Francis in the middle of the 2020 coronavirus lockdown will be sent into space, the Vatican announced Monday.

The speech of the pontiff praying alone in an empty St Peter's Square have been turned into a "nanobook" measuring less than two millimeters wide, which will be launched into orbit on June 10.

It will travel around the Earth on a purpose-built satellite at an altitude of about 525 kilometers, dispatched on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California.

The "Spei Satelles" (Satellites of Hope in Latin) [project](#)—whose cost and funding has not been revealed—is being coordinated by the Italian Space Agency in conjunction with various Italian institutions.

Agency president Giorgio Saccoccia said the Vatican had asked for "a solution that would allow the Holy Father's words of hope to cross the earth's borders and reach from [space](#) the greatest possible number of women and men on our troubled planet".

On March 27, 2020, the pope urged followers who felt "afraid and lost" in the face of what was then a terrifying new virus to have faith.

The project is not the pontiff's first encounter with space—in 2017, he held a video call with astronauts aboard the International Space Station (ISS), where he asked them about "man's place in the universe".

Six years earlier, his predecessor Benedict XVI also rang the ISS.

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