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Pope Francis delivers his blessing as he leads his general audience in the library of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican March 17, 2021. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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Less than a month after he recognized the "heroic virtues" of three Italian women religious who died caring for Ebola patients in Congo, Pope Francis did the same for three others who also contracted the disease and died in 1995.

The six members of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Poor were among the more than 250 victims of the Ebola outbreak in Kikwit, Congo, in 1995. All six sisters contracted Ebola while caring for others suffering from the virus.

At a meeting March 17 with Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, prefect of the Congregation for Saints' Causes, the pope formally recognized that the other three sisters also lived the Christian virtues to a heroic degree. A miracle attributed to their intercession would be needed for their beatification.

The six sisters, natives of northern Italy, are buried near the cathedral in Kikwit as a sign of their service and devotion to the local people.

The three decrees signed by the pope in March concern:

- Sr. Annelvira Ossoli, a midwife and nurse elected superior of the African province of the sisters in 1992. When the sisters assigned to Kikwit began to get sick, she went to the town to help out. She died at the age of 58 on May 23, 1995, just a month after the first sister succumbed to the disease.
- Sr. Vitarosa Zorza began working in Africa in 1981. She, too, volunteered to go to Kikwit when the pandemic began. She died May 28, 1995, at the age of 51.
- Sr. Danielangela Sorti, a nurse, was working in Tumikia but volunteered to assist one of the sick sisters in Mosango. She contracted Ebola the first night and was transferred to Kikwit, where she died May 11, 1995, a month before her 48th birthday.
- Pope Francis also signed four other decrees recognizing "heroic virtues," the Vatican said March 18:
- Italian Archbishop Mercurio Maria Teresi of Monreale, who lived 1742-1805.
- Spanish Fr. Cosme Muñoz Pérez, a diocesan priest and founder of the Daughters of the Patronage of St. Mary, who lived 1573-1636.
- Spanish Fr. Salvador Valera Parra, a diocesan priest, who lived 1816-1889.

- Conventual Franciscan Fr. Leone Veuthey, founder of the "Crociata della Carità" (Crusade of Charity), who was born in Switzerland in 1896 and died in Rome in 1974.

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