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Pope's Condition Stable, Vatican Says

By Sabina Castelfranco

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Pope John Paul II is said to have spent a peaceful night at Gemelli hospital in Rome after being rushed there Tuesday night in an ambulance with breathing difficulties, brought on by the flu.

Hospital sources at Rome's Gemelli hospital said the Pope had a restful night. They said his temperature had slightly diminished, and his breathing improved overnight. His condition is now believed to be stable. He was also able to have a small breakfast.

The chief Vatican spokesman arrived at the hospital early this morning and after visiting the Pope said there was no cause for alarm on his condition. Despite initial anxiety due to a breathing crisis last night, the Pope appears to have stabilized quickly.

The Pope spent the night with his closest collaborators next to him. He was kept under careful observation by the doctors and was to undergo a series of tests, Wednesday.

He is being cared for in the same rooms on the 10th floor of the hospital where he has been treated several times before. It is the 8th time the pope has been hospitalized at Gemelli Hospital.

The Pope's frailty has been obvious to all in recent years. Although the Vatican has never confirmed this, the pope suffers from Parkinson's disease and his difficulties speaking and walking have increased over time.

There is much concern over his health, as he gets closer to his 85th birthday in May. Pope John Paul came down with the flu on Sunday. He was last seen

addressing the faithful in Saint Peter's square in a good mood but was finding it difficult to speak.

He was forced to cancel all his engagements over the past couple of days and the Vatican had already announced he would not be holding his customary general audience Wednesday before he was diagnosed Tuesday night with an acute inflammation of the throat. It is unclear how long he will be kept in hospital.



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