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Vatican
Francis, the comic strip

by The Associated Press

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With no papal travels abroad this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Pope Francis is cheering efforts for a youth jamboree, traditionally attended by pontiffs, in Lisbon, Portugal, in 2023.

Francis on Sunday presided over a handover ceremony in St. Peter’s Basilica involving young people gearing up for the next World Youth Day, which draws huge crowds of Catholics from around the globe.

When Francis attended the last such event in Panama in 2019, organizers announced that the next jamboree would be held in Lisbon in 2022. But pandemic concerns postponed the event to August 2023.

Francis applauded after youths from Panama symbolically slid across the basilica's floor a towering wooden cross to counterparts from Portugal as part of preparations for Lisbon.

"This is an important step in the pilgrimage that will lead us to Lisbon in 2023," the pope told the young people, several wearing hoodies or T-shirts emblazoned with the event's icon.

No foreign trips are currently scheduled for Francis, who last traveled overseas in November 2019 on a pilgrimage to Thailand and Japan.

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