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Vatican
Pope Francis greets people during an event marking the 50th anniversary of the founding of C

Pope Francis greets people during an event marking the 50th anniversary of the founding of Caritas Italy, at the Vatican June 26. (CNS/Reuters/Remo Casilli)

Frances D'Emilio

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Pope Francis went Sunday to a Rome hospital for scheduled surgery for a stenosis, or restriction, of the large intestine, the Vatican said.

The brief announcement from the Holy See's press office didn't say exactly when the surgery would be performed but said there would be an announcement when the surgery is complete.

Just three hours earlier, Francis had cheerfully greeted the public in St. Peter's Square in keeping with a Sunday tradition and told them he will go to Hungary and Slovakia in September.

A week earlier, Francis, 84, had used the same appearance to ask the public for special prayers for himself, which, in hindsight might have been hinting at the planned surgery at Rome's Gemelli Polyclinic.

The Vatican said the pope had been diagnosed with "symptomatic diverticular stenosis of the colon," a reference to a narrowing in the large intestine.

Francis is in generally good health, but did have part of one lung removed as a young man. He also suffers from sciatica, occasionally having painful bouts of the condition that involves a nerve affecting the lower back and leg.

Gemelli doctors have performed surgery before on papal patients, including on Pope John Paul II, who had a benign tumor in his colon removed in 1992.

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