

Pope Francis eats lunch with the poor in the Paul VI hall as he marks World Day of the Poor Nov. 17, 2019, at the Vatican. (CNS/Paul Haring)

by Catholic News Service

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Pope Francis plans to prepare for his celebration of the World Day of the Poor by meeting with and listening to some 500 poor people making a pilgrimage to Assisi, Italy, Nov. 12.

Two days later, on the World Day of the Poor, the pope will celebrate a Mass in St. Peter's Basilica with about 2,000 poor people and those who assist them, the Vatican said. Everyone will be offered a hot meal after Mass.

The Assisi pilgrims, assisted by a French and several Italian Catholic charitable organizations, will go home from Assisi with new backpacks containing winter sweaters, scarves, hats and jackets as well as fabric anti COVID-19 masks.

The Vatican said Nov. 8 the gifts will be packaged by the +Three project, "which promotes products made in respect of environmental and economic sustainability within an ethical and socially useful supply chain."

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The Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization, which promotes and organizes the World Day of the Poor, said Pope Francis will pay particular attention this year to 40 group homes that care for children or children and their mothers, delivering a two-month supply of personal care products and food, especially baby food.

With donations from a grocery store chain and a pasta manufacturer, it said, the group homes and local parishes and charities will share five tons of pasta, one ton of rice, two tons of tomato puree, 1,000 liters of oil and 3,000 liters of milk.

The Vatican also has prepared 5,000 kits filled with common over-the-counter medications for distribution to the poor through Rome parishes, the council said. And an Italian financial services company has made a donation that will allow the office of the papal almoner to help 500 families pay their gas and utility bills, the council said.