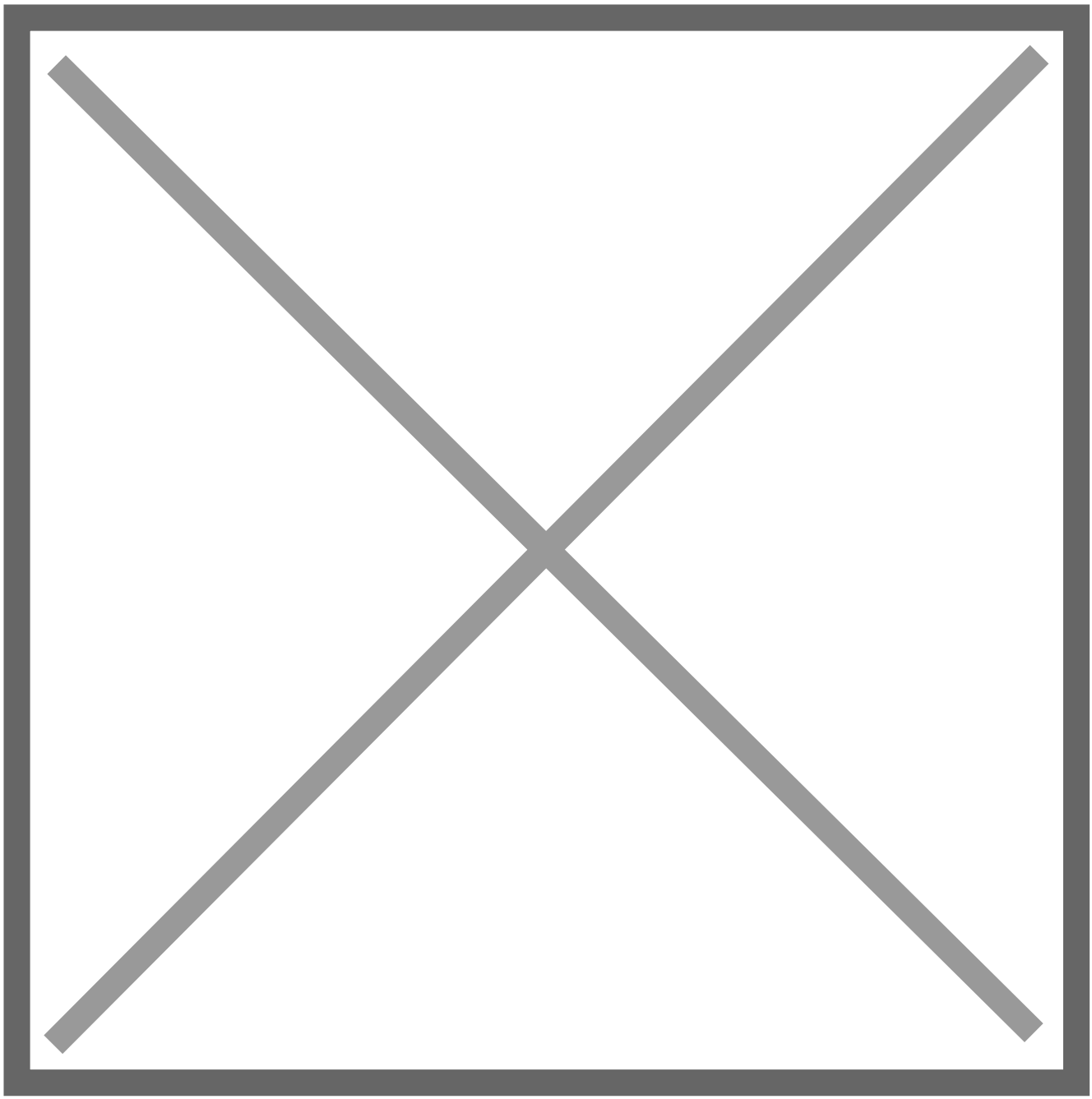
Vatican



Pope Francis holds the arm of his aide, Sandro Mariotti, was he walks during his general audience in the Paul VI hall at the Vatican in this Jan. 26, 2022, file photo. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)



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ROME — Pope Francis, who in recent months has been sidelined by severe knee pain, suspended his appointments on Friday, April 22 for a medical check-up, according to the Vatican.

Matteo Bruni, director of the Holy See Press office, said the pope had "slowed down his activities" due to "necessary" medical check-ups. The pope's public activities are usually published in the Vatican's daily bulletin, but on April 22, his calendar was empty.

The pope's knee issues have repeatedly frustrated the usually energetic pontiff's schedule since having to cancel a day trip to the Italian city of Florence in February. In an April 22 interview with the Argentine daily newspaper *La Nacion*, the pope said he suffers from a ligament tear in his right knee.

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During his April 2-3 travels to and from Malta, Francis was boarded into the plane via a lift, marking the first time in his 36 trips outside of Italy that he has been unable to use the stairs to board the aircraft.

While Francis was present for all of the Vatican's Holy Week events, his participation was at times modified to accommodate his difficulties in walking.

Despite his limited mobility, the 85-year-old Francis is slated to have a busy summer of travel, with likely trips to Lebanon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Canada.

Francis is currently scheduled to celebrate Mass in St. Peter's Basilica on April 24 for Divine Mercy Sunday.