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Pope Francis greets visitors after his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican March 6, 2024. (CNS/Lola Gomez)



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Pope Francis will continue his custom of celebrating Holy Thursday Mass in a prison during Holy Week 2024, the Vatican said.

In a statement released March 6, the Vatican announced that the pope will visit the women's prison at the Rebibbia correctional facility in Rome March 28 to celebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper with people housed there and those who work at the facility, keeping with a custom he has practiced since the start of his pontificate.

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He had celebrated the Mass with male and female prisoners at the Rebibbia complex in 2015 as well, washing the feet of 12 inmates and a toddler. The prison's maternity section allows incarcerated mothers to keep their children with them until they are 3 years old.

Last year, Francis visited a juvenile detention facility where he washed, dried and kissed the feet of 12 people.

The ceremony of washing another's feet — which follows the Gospel account of Jesus washing the feet of his 12 disciples — "is not something folkloric," the pope said during Holy Thursday Mass in 2023. It is a gesture that shows "how we are to be with one another."

Francis has celebrated Mass at a prison, care facility or refugee center since becoming pope in 2013, while his recent predecessors customarily washed the feet

of priests in St. Peter's Basilica or the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome. In 2016, the pope ordered the then-Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments to clarify that the feet of both women and men can be washed at the Holy Thursday Mass.