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Pope to celebrate Holy Thursday Mass at center for elderly, disabled

by Carol Glatz by Catholic News Service

Vatican City — Pope Francis will celebrate the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper at a Rome rehabilitation facility for the elderly and people with disabilities.

He will preside over the Holy Thursday evening Mass and foot-washing ritual at the Father Carlo Gnocchi Foundation's Our Lady of Providence Center on the outskirts of Rome, the Vatican announced Tuesday.

Last year, the pope celebrated the Holy Thursday liturgy at Rome's Casal del Marmo juvenile detention center, where he washed the feet of young male and female offenders.

Moving the Holy Thursday evening ceremony out of either St. Peter's Basilica or the Basilica of St. John Lateran marked a change in papal tradition, but it reflected the traditional practice of then-Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, Argentina. The future pope used to celebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper -- which reflects on the call to imitate Christ by serving one another -- in prisons, hospitals or shelters for the poor and marginalized.

Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, had said in February that the pope would once again choose a "special situation from a pastoral point of view" for the setting of the April 17 Holy Thursday Mass, which will not be open to the public.

The Vatican said Tuesday that patients, their relatives as well as the facility's staff and directors would take part in the Mass and ceremony.

The pope will hold the Holy Thursday morning chism Mass in St. Peter's Basilica as is customary and

bless the oils used for sacraments in the diocese of Rome.

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