



## Troubled youth write meditations for the pope's Good Friday "Via Crucis"

For the second year in a row Pope Francis is being forced to celebrate the Church's most important liturgical feasts on the calendar in the shadow of the seemingly never-ending COVID-19 pandemic.

Holy Week celebrations at the Vatican, which begin with Palm Sunday on March 28 and extend through Easter Monday on April 5, will be once again scaled down and include the participation of only a very limited number of people. And it is in this context that the pope has asked young people from modest and low-income families to provide the meditations

for the Good Friday commemoration of the Via Crucis or "Way of the Cross" in St. Peter's Square.

Among those who will be writing the meditations are members of a scout troop, young people with disabilities, abused children and those living in homeless families. Each of the traditional 14 Stations, which commemorate the passion and death of Jesus Christ, will also feature "the drawings of a number of children and young people from 13-19 years of age", a Vatican statement said. Some of the kids who are helping provide the meditations for this year's Via Crucis are from the Holy Martyrs of Uganda Parish in Rome where "a catechesis for and with people with disabilities" has been in place for several years. The parish also helps house "women and children victims of abuse", as well as "homeless families", according to the Vatican.

"In this reality of solidarity, about 500 children and young people preparing for their first communion and confirmation helped shape the meditations," the statement said. Very small number of faithful This is the second year in a row that the Via Crucis will not be able to take place in the suggestive setting of the Colosseum, which usually draws thousands of people. Instead, only a very small number of the faithful will be able to join the 9:30 p.m. event in St. Peter's Square. Italy's government has imposed a semi-total lockdown in Rome and throughout most of the country until Easter Monday. This includes restrictions on movement and a ban on large gatherings. That also means that very few people will be able to join the pope in St. Peter's Basilica for the major liturgies of Holy Week, beginning with Palm Sunday. Francis then will preside at the Chrism Mass with select members of Rome's clergy on Holy Thursday morning, the Easter Vigil on Saturday evening and Easter Sunday Mass the next morning. The pope is expected to leave the Vatican on Holy Thursday evening for a still-undisclosed place symbolic of the "existential peripheries". There he will celebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper and feet-washing ceremony. The first wave of pandemic prevented him from leaving the Vatican for last year's celebration, but in the previous three years Francis celebrated the Mass of the Lord's Supper in various prisons. He went to a migrant reception center before that. Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals, will preside at the Holy Thursday evening Mass in St. Peter's Basilica. As he did last year, Pope Francis will give his "Urbi et Orbi" address and blessing "to the city and the world" inside the basilica immediately following Mass on Easter Sunday. ([From La Croix International.](#))