

Beat: Politics

ITALY-NAPLES EXCITED OVER POPE'S VISIT

POPE FRANCIS TO HAVE LUNCH IN PRISON

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USPA NEWS - The city of Naples is filled with excitement surrounding a visit by Pope Francis that would include a lunch with prison inmates and prayers at the Shrine of the Virgin of the Rosary of Pompeii.

As many as three million people were expected to attend Pope Francis' pastoral visit and some 1,500 volunteers were recruited to assist the flock of pilgrims arriving in the city, Church sources said. Children from the ghettoized neighbourhood of Scampia were drawing pictures of Francis, coloured with hues of his favourite soccer team from the pope's native Argentina.

In Scampia, Francis will offer a message of hope, courage and dignity, and meet those who are too often overlooked, Naples Archbishop Cardinal Crescenzo Sepe said Friday.

"The Pope knows the contradictions present in our reality, where there is poverty and welfare, backwardness and development, where there is a great faith, a faith alive, though there are also forms of indifference," Sepe told Vatican Radio. Officials added that Saturday's visit would not include any special fireworks to mark his visit, as a sign of respect and mourning for the deadly terrorist attacks on Wednesday at a museum in Tunis.

The day was scheduled to begin with an early-morning visit by Francis to pray in Pompeii's shrine of the Virgin of the Rosary, a traditional stop for pontiffs when visiting the Naples area.

Travelling by helicopter, the pope is scheduled to then travel to the Scampia neighbourhood of Naples followed by Mass in Piazza del Plebiscito in the city central Naples at 11 a.m. Hundreds of church bells will ring to mark his arrival and 1,500 singers will croon from a choir in the central Piazza del Plebiscito when the pope celebrates a solemn Mass climaxing his visit. After Mass, Francis will have lunch with about 90 inmates at a jail in Poggioreale - a group that will reportedly include about 10 people from its section for gay and transgender inmates, including some ill with HIV.

Meanwhile, gay rights organization Arcigay said Friday that it would be included in meetings planned for Pope Francis in Naples on Saturday.

Article online:

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