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## **Malta: Caritas, 800 meals to the most in need on Christmas Day. Covid prevents traditional lunch at the Curia. Friendly phone line for the lonely**

A story that has made news in a number of Maltese newspapers in the past few hours is that Caritas Malta is preparing 800 meals to be distributed to people and families in need across the island on Christmas Day. The raw materials, provided by the Alf Mizzi Foundation, will be cooked by people working at “Vecchia Napoli”. The menu consists of Mqarrun (a kind of baked pastry), turkey with roast potatoes and vegetables, and Panettone. 120 volunteers will ensure the door-to-door distribution of meals. The tradition, which started seven years ago, was to invite people and families to a meal at the Curia. But that has not been possible in the past two years due to Covid-19, and Caritas has therefore organised the distribution of meals. When the initiative was launched in 2014, 250 people were invited. Also on Christmas Day, a group of volunteers will be available on the phone at the Caritas office between 11:00 and 13:00 to take and make calls to a list of people who suffer from loneliness. Covid has been disruptive, but Caritas’ twofold aim remains the same, Caritas Director Anthony Gatt explained: “to support those who feel alone, and to help families with material difficulties”. Unlike in shared festive meals, however, it will be difficult to “replicate the social aspect when delivering the food”.

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