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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

Before the Angelus

After the Angelus

At midday today, the Holy Father Francis appeared at the window of his study in the Vatican Apostolic Palace to pray the Angelus with the faithful and pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square.

The following is the Pope's introduction to the Marian prayer:

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Today's Gospel (*Mt* 15: 21-28) presents us a unique example of faith in Jesus' encounter with a Canaanite woman, a foreigner to the Jews. The scene unfolds while He is on the way to the cities of Tyre and Sidon, northwest of Galilee: it is here that the woman implores Jesus to heal her daughter who, the Gospel says, "is severely possessed by a demon" (v. 22). Initially the Lord seems not to listen to this cry of grief, so much so as to solicit the intervention of the disciples, who intercede for her. Jesus' apparent detachment does not discourage this mother, who insists in her invocation.

The inner strength of this woman, which enables her to overcome every obstacle, is found in her *maternal love* and in her *confidence* that Jesus can hear her request. And this makes me think of the strength of women. With their fortitude they are able to obtain great things. We have known so many of them! We can say that it is love that moves faith, and faith in turn becomes the reward of love. Her heartrending love for her daughter induces her "to cry: 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David!'" (v. 22). And her steadfast faith in Jesus enables her not to be discouraged, not even when faced with His initial refusal; so the woman "knelt before Him, saying: 'Lord,

help me!” (v. 25).

At the end, in face of such perseverance, Jesus remains in admiration, almost astonished by the faith of the pagan woman. Therefore, He consents saying: “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire’. And her daughter was healed instantly” (v. 28). Jesus points out this humble woman as an example of unwavering faith. Her insistence on invoking Christ’s intervention is a stimulus for us not to be discouraged, not to despair when we are oppressed by life’s harsh trials. The Lord does not turn away in face of our needs and, if at times He seems insensible to requests for help, it is to test and strengthen our faith. We must continue to call out like this woman: Lord, help me! Lord, help me!”. Like so, with perseverance and courage. And this is the courage we must have in prayer.

This evangelical episode helps us to understand that we all need to grow in faith and to strengthen our trust in Jesus. He can help us to rediscover the way, when we have lost our bearings; when the way no longer seems flat but rough and arduous; when it is hard to be faithful to our commitments. It is important to nurture our faith every day, listening attentively to the Word of God, with the celebration of the Sacraments, with personal prayer as a “cry” to Him —“Lord, help me!” — and with concrete attitudes of charity to our neighbour.

We entrust ourselves to the Holy Spirit so that He will help us to persevere in faith. The Spirit infuses boldness in the heart of believers; He gives our life and our Christian witness the strength of conviction and persuasion; He encourages us to overcome disbelief towards God and indifference towards our brothers.

May the Virgin Mary make us increasingly aware of our need of the Lord and of His Spirit; may She obtain for us a strong faith, full of love, and a love that is able to become an entreaty, a courageous entreaty to God.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

In our hearts we carry sadness for the terrorist attacks that have claimed numerous victims in these days, in Burkina Faso, Spain and Finland. Let us pray for all the deceased, for the injured and their families; and let us implore the Lord, God of mercy and peace, to free the world of this inhuman violence. Let us pray together in silence and, afterwards, to Our Lady.

[Hail Mary]

I address a cordial greeting to you, dear pilgrims from Italy and various countries. In particular, I greet the members of the French association “Roulons pour l’Espoir”, who have come by bicycle from Besançon; the new Seminarians with the Superiors of the North American College of Rome; altar boys from Rivoltella, Brescia, and the boys and girls of Zevio, Verona.

I wish you all a good Sunday and please, do not forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch, and goodbye.
