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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

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 Saint Peter's Square.

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

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

In this Sunday's Gospel passage (cf. *Mt* 13:1-23), Jesus tells a great crowd the Parable - which we all know well - of the Sower, who casts seed over four different types of terrain. The Word of God, symbolized by the seeds is not an abstract Word, but is Christ himself, the Word of the Father who became flesh in Mary's womb. Therefore, embracing the Word of God means embracing the personage of Christ; of Christ Himself.

There are many ways to receive the Word of God. We may do so like a path, where birds immediately come and eat the seeds. This would be distraction, a great danger of our time. Beset by lots of small talk, by many ideologies, by continuous opportunities to be distracted inside and outside the home, we can lose our zest for silence, for reflection, for dialogue with the Lord, such that we risk losing our faith, not receiving the Word of God, as we are seeing everything, distracted by everything, by worldly things.

Another possibility: we may receive the Word of God like rocky ground, with little soil. There the seeds spring up quickly, but they soon wither away, because they are unable to sink roots to any depth. This is the image of those who receive the Word of God with momentary enthusiasm, though it remains superficial; it does not assimilate the Word of God. In this way, at the first difficulty, such as a discomfort or disturbance of life, that still-feeble faith dissolves, as the seed withers that falls among the rocks.

Again - a third possibility that of which Jesus speaks in the parable - we may receive the Word of God like ground where thorny bushes grow. And the thorns are the deceit of wealth, of success, of worldly concerns.... There, the word grows a little, but becomes choked, it is not strong, and it dies or does not bear fruit.

Lastly - the fourth possibility - we may receive it like good soil. Here, and only here the seed takes root and bears fruit. The seed fallen upon this fertile soil represents those who hear the Word, embrace it, safeguard it in their heart and put it into practice in everyday life.

This Parable of the Sower is somewhat the 'mother' of all parables, because it speaks about listening to the Word. It reminds us that the Word of God is a seed which in itself is fruitful and effective; and God scatters it everywhere, paying no mind to waste. Such is the heart of God! Each one of us is ground on which the seed of the Word falls; no one is excluded! The Word is given to each one of us. We can ask ourselves: what type of terrain am I? Do I resemble the path, the rocky ground, the bramble bush? But, if we want, we can become good soil, ploughed and carefully cultivated, to help ripen the seed of the Word. It is already present in our heart, but making it fruitful depends on us; it depends on the embrace that we reserve for this seed.

Often one is distracted by too many interests, by too many enticements, and it is difficult to distinguish, among the many voices and many words, that of the Lord, the only one that makes us free. This is why it is important to accustom oneself to listening to the Word of God, to reading it. And I return once more to that advice: always keep with you a handy copy of the Gospel, a pocket edition of the Gospel, in your pocket, in your purse ... and so, every day, read a short passage, so that you become used to reading the Word of God, understanding well the seed that God offers you, and thinking about the earth that receives it.

May the Virgin Mary, perfect model of good and fertile soil, help us, with her prayer, to become willing soil without thorns or rocks, so that we may bear good fruit for ourselves and for our brothers and sisters.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters

The *International Day of the Sea* falls on this second Sunday in July. I extend warm greetings to all those who work on the sea, especially to those who are far from their loved ones and their country. I greet all those who gathered this morning at the port of Civitavecchia-Tarquinia for the Eucharistic Celebration.

And the sea carries me a little farther away in my thoughts: to Istanbul. I think of Hagia Sophia, and I am very saddened.

I greet all of you, the faithful from Rome and pilgrims from various countries, in particular, the families from the Focolari Movement. I greet with gratitude the representatives of the Pastoral Ministry for Health from the Diocese of Rome, thinking of the many priests, women and men religious and lay people who have been, and remain, at the sides of the the sick, in this time of pandemic. Thank you! Thank you for what you have done, and for what you are doing. Thank you!

And I wish all of you a Blessed Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your meal and *arrivederci*.
