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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 are the Pope's words of introduction to the Marian prayer:

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, happy Sunday!

Today's Gospel offers us a story regarding the meaning of life of each person. It is the parable of the ten virgins, called to go out to meet the bridegroom (cf. *Mt 25:1-13*). Living is this: a grand preparation for the day when we will be called to go to Jesus! However, in the parable of the ten virgins, five are wise and five foolish. Let us see what constitutes wisdom and foolishness. Wisdom in life, and foolishness in life.

All those bridesmaids are there to welcome the bridegroom, that is, they want to meet him, just as we too desire a happy fulfilment of life: the difference between wisdom and foolishness is therefore not in goodwill. Nor does it lie in the punctuality with which they arrive at the meeting: they were all there. The difference between the wise and the foolish is another: preparation. The text says: the wise "*took flasks of oil with their lamps*" (v. 4); the foolish, on the other hand, did not. Here is the difference: the oil. And what is one of the characteristics of the oil? That it cannot be seen: it is inside the lamps, it is not conspicuous, but without it the lamps have no light.

Let us look at ourselves, and we will see that our life runs the same risk: many times, we are very careful about our appearance – the important thing is to take good care of one's image, to make a good impression in front of others. But Jesus says that the wisdom of life lies elsewhere: in taking care of what cannot be seen, but which is more important, taking care of the heart. *Nurturing the inner life*. This means knowing how to stop and listen to one's heart, to keep watch over one's own thoughts and feelings. How many times are we unaware of what has happened in our heart in that day? What happens within each one of us? Wisdom means knowing how to make

room for silence, so as to be capable of listening to ourselves and others. It means knowing how to give up some of the time passed in front of the telephone screen to look at the light in the eyes of others, in one's own heart, in God's gaze upon us. It means not falling into the trap of activism, but devoting time to the Lord, to listening to His Word.

And the Gospel gives us the right advice so not to neglect the oil of inner life, the "oil of the soul": it tells us that it is important to *prepare it*. And in the account, we see, in fact, that the virgins already possess the lamps, but they must prepare the oil: they must go to the sellers, buy it, put it in the lamps... (cf. vv. 7-9). It is the same for us: the inner life cannot be improvised, it is not a matter of a moment, of once in a while, of once and for all; the inner life must be prepared by dedicating a little time every day, with constancy, as one does for every important thing.

So, we can ask ourselves: what am I preparing at this moment in life? Within myself, what am I preparing? Perhaps I am trying to put aside some savings, I am thinking about a house or a new car, concrete plans... They are good things; they are not bad things. They are good things. But am I also thinking about dedicating time to the care of the heart, to prayer, to service to others, to the Lord who is the destination of life? In short, how is the oil of my soul? Each one of us, let us ask ourselves this: how is the oil of my soul? Do I nourish it, do I keep it well?

May Our Lady help us to cherish the oil of inner life.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters!

For some months Sudan has been in the throes of a civil war that shows no sign of abating, and which is causing numerous victims, millions of internally displaced people and refugees in neighbouring countries, and a very grave humanitarian situation. I am close to the sufferings of those dear populations of Sudan, and I address a heartfelt appeal to local leaders to facilitate access to humanitarian aid and, with the contribution of the international community, to work in search of peaceful solutions. Let us not forget these brothers and sisters of ours who are in distress!

And our thoughts turn every day to the very serious situation in Israel and in Palestine. I am close to all those who are suffering, Palestinians and Israelis. I embrace them in this dark moment. And I pray for them a lot. May the weapons be stopped: they will never lead to peace, and may the conflict not widen! Enough! Enough, brothers! In Gaza, let the wounded be rescued immediately, let civilians be protected, let far more humanitarian aid be allowed to reach that stricken population. May the hostages be freed, including the elderly and children. Every human being, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, of any people or religion, every human being is sacred, is precious in the eyes of God and has the right to live in peace. Let us not lose hope: let us pray and work tirelessly so that the sense of humanity may prevail over hardness of heart.

Two years ago, the *Laudato si'* Action Platform was launched. I thank those who have joined in this initiative and encourage them to continue on the path of ecological conversion. In this regard, let us pray for the Dubai Climate Change Conference, COP28, which is now close at hand.

Today the Italian Church celebrates Thanksgiving Day, on the theme "The cooperative approach to agricultural development".

I greet you all affectionately, pilgrims from Italy and other parts of the world, especially the priests from the archdiocese of Szczecin- Kamień, Poland, and the parish groups from Augsburg, Zara, Poreč, Pola, Porto and Paris. I greet the members of the Sant'Egidio Community from countries in Asia, and I encourage them in their

commitment to evangelization and promotion. Keep going forward, bravely! And you also help make peace too.

I greet the faithful of Volargne, Ozieri and Cremona. I greet with affection the pilgrimage of Ukrainian faithful and Basilian monks – I can see the Ukrainian flags there – from various countries to celebrate the fourth centenary of the martyrdom of Saint Josaphat. I pray with you for peace in your beleaguered country. Brothers and sisters, let us not forget tormented Ukraine, let us not forget her.

And I wish you all a happy Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch, and *arrivederci!*
