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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At midday today, *Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, 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, *buongiorno* and happy feast day!

Today, the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, the Gospel presents us with the scene of the Annunciation (cf. *Lk* 1:26-38). It demonstrates two of Mary's attitudes that help us understand how she may have guarded the unique gift she received – a heart completely free from sin. These two attitudes are *amazement* regarding the works of God and *fidelity* in the simple things.

Let's look at the first: *amazement*. The Angel says to Mary, "Rejoice, full of grace: the Lord is with you" (cf. v. 28). And the Evangelist Luke notes that the Virgin "was greatly troubled...and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be" (v. 29). She remains surprised, struck, troubled: she is amazed when she hears herself called "full of grace" – Our Lady is humble – that is, filled with God's love. This is a very noble attitude: to be amazed before the Lord's gifts, never taking them for granted, appreciating their value, rejoicing in the trust and tenderness they bring with them. And it is also important to demonstrate this amazement before others, speaking humbly about God's gifts, about the good received, and not only about daily problems. To be more positive. We can ask ourselves: Do I know how to be amazed regarding God's works? Does it happen at times that I am filled with wonder and share it with someone? Or am I always focused on the bad things, sad things?

And now the second attitude: *fidelity in simple things*. Prior to the Annunciation, the Gospel says nothing about Mary. She is presented as a simple girl, apparently equal to so many others who were living in her village. A

young girl who, precisely because of her simplicity, kept pure that Immaculate Heart with which, by God's grace, she had been conceived. And this too is important, for to welcome God's great gifts, it is necessary to know how to treasure those that are more everyday and less apparent.

It is precisely with her *daily fidelity in goodness* that Our Lady allowed God's gift to grow within her. This is how she trained herself to respond to the Lord, to say "yes" to him with her entire life.

So, let us ask ourselves: Do I believe that fidelity to God is important both in everyday situations as well as in my spiritual journey? And if I believe this, do I find the time to read the Gospel, to pray, to participate in the Eucharist and to receive Sacramental forgiveness, to perform some tangible act of disinterested service? These are the small everyday choices, choices necessary to welcome the Lord's presence.

May Mary Immaculate help us be amazed at God's gifts and respond to them with faithful generosity each day.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters!

I warmly greet the people from Rome and pilgrims from Italy and various countries, particularly, the faithful from Novoli and the Confirmation candidates from Cingoli.

On this Feast of the Immaculate Conception, membership in Catholic Action is being renewed in Italian parishes. I encourage all members, from the youngest to the oldest, to be living stones in the Church and good yeast in society. I hope all goes well!

I wholeheartedly bless the faithful from Rocca di Papa and the torch with which they will light the large star of the Fort of their beautiful city in honour of Mary Immaculate.

I send my greetings to the faithful of the Diocese of Québec in Canada, who today celebrate the Feast of their Patron, the Immaculate Conception, and inaugurate the Jubilee of the 350th anniversary of the Diocese. Québec was the first Diocese founded in Canada. May you have a good Jubilee year and may the Virgin Mary accompany all of you!

And now I have the joy to announce that the 25th and 26th of May next year, we will celebrate the first World Day of Children in Rome. The initiative, organized by the Dicastery for Culture and Education, responds to the question: What type of world do we want to transmit to the children who are growing up? Like Jesus, we want to put children at the centre and take care of them.

This afternoon, I will go first to Saint Mary Major and then to Piazza di Spagna to pray to Our Lady. I ask everyone, especially the faithful of Rome, to unite themselves spiritually to me in this act of entrustment to our Mother, praying particularly for peace, peace in Ukraine, peace in Palestine and Israel, and in every land wounded by war. Let us ask for peace, that hearts might be at peace, that there be peace!

And I wish all of you a Happy Feast Day and a blessed Advent journey under the guidance of the Virgin Mary. In a special way, I greet the young people of the Immaculata, today is your day! And please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch and *arrivederci!*
