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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At the end of Holy Mass, celebrated in the Vatican Basilica for the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, and on the 57th World Day of Peace, Pope 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 Holy Father's words of introduction to the Marian prayer:

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, happy New Year!

On this day, when we celebrate Mary, Mother of God, we place the new time given to us under her caring gaze. May she watch over us this year.

Today the Gospel reveals to us that the greatness of Mary does not consist in performing some extraordinary deed; rather, while the shepherds, having received the announcement from the angels, hurry towards Bethlehem (cf. Lk 2:15-16), she remains silent. The Mother's silence is a beautiful feature. It is not a simple absence of words, but a silence filled with wonder and adoration for the wonders that God is working. "Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart", Saint Luke notes. (2:19). In this way she makes room within herself for the One who was born; in silence and adoration, she places Jesus at the centre and bears witness to Him as Saviour.

Thus, she is Mother not only because she carried Jesus in her womb and gave birth to him, but because she brings him into the light, without occupying his place. She will remain silent even beneath the cross, in the darkest hour, and will continue to make room for Him and generate Him for us. A twentieth-century religious and poet wrote: "Virgin, cathedral of silence / [...] you bring our flesh into paradise / and God into the flesh" (D.M. TUROLDO, *Laudario alla Vergine*. "Via pulchritudinis", Bologna 1980, 35). Cathedral of silence: it is a beautiful image. With her silence and humility, Mary is God's first "cathedral", the place where He and man can meet.

But our mothers too, with their hidden care, with their thoughtfulness, are often magnificent cathedrals of silence. They bring us into the world and then continue to attend to us, often unnoticed, so that we can grow. Let us remember this: love never stifles; love makes room for the other. Love lets us grow.

Brothers and sisters, at the beginning of the new year, let us look to Mary and, with a grateful heart, let us also think of and look at mothers, to learn that love that is cultivated above all in silence, that knows how to make room for the other, respecting their dignity, leaving the freedom to express themselves, rejecting every form of possession, oppression and violence. There is so much need for this today, so much! There is so much need for silence to listen to each other. As the Message for the World Day of Peace today reminds us, "Freedom and peaceful coexistence are threatened whenever human beings yield to the temptation to selfishness, self-interest, the desire for profit and the thirst for power". Love, on the other hand, consists of respect, it consists of kindness: in this way, it breaks down barriers and helps us to live fraternal relationships, to build up more just, more humane, more peaceful societies.

Let us pray today to Mary Mother of God, and our Mother, that in the new year we may grow in this meek, silent and discreet love that generates life, and open paths of peace and reconciliation in the world.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

I thank the President of the Italian Republic for the expressions of good wishes he addressed to me in his end-of-year Message; I return them heartily, invoking the Lord's blessing on his service to the country.

I have been following with deep concern what is happening in Nicaragua, where Bishops and priests have been deprived of their freedom. I express to them, to their families and to the entire Church in the country my closeness in prayer. I also invite all of you present here, and all the People of God, to pray insistently; meanwhile I hope that we will always seek the path of dialogue to overcome difficulties. Let us pray for Nicaragua today.

My wishes are in particular for you, dear Romans and pilgrims who are here today in Saint Peter's Square. I greet the participants in the "Peace in all lands" demonstration, organized by the Sant'Egidio Community, also in other cities throughout the world, as well as the European Movement for Nonviolent Action. And I gratefully recall the countless initiatives for prayer and commitment to peace taking place during this Day in all continents, organized by the ecclesial communities; I mention in particular the one that took place at national level yesterday evening in Gorizia.

And please, may we not forget Ukraine, Palestine, and Israel, who are at war. Let us pray for peace, all together.

I greet the choir of young Polish and Ukrainians, who have brought a message of peace to the Franciscan shrines of Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio; as well as the students of "Manhattan College", New York, the Fraterna Domus group and the faithful of La Valletta Brianza and Casatenovo.

May the Virgin Mary, Holy Mother of God, support with her maternal intercession the intention and the commitment to be peacemakers every day, every day of the New Year too, every day, peacemakers. Bringing peace. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch, and *arrivederci!*
