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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 young people of Catholic Action of the diocese of Rome were present, accompanied by their educators and parents, together with their peers from the schools and parishes of the city, who have concluded, with the "Caravan of Peace", the month of January they traditionally dedicate them to the theme of peace. At the end of the Angelus prayer, a message was read on behalf of Youth Catholic Action of Rome.

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

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

Today's Gospel shows us Jesus freeing a person possessed by an "evil spirit" (see *Mk* 1:21-28), tormenting and making them scream (see vv. 23, 26). This is how the devil acts this is the way he acts: he wants to take possession of us in order to "enchain our souls". To enchain our souls: this is what the devil wants. We must be careful with the "chains" that suffocate our freedom, because the devil always takes away our freedom. Let us try to name some of the *chains* that can shackle our hearts.

I am thinking of addictions, which enslave us and make us constantly dissatisfied, and which devour our energies, goods, and relationships. Another chain I am thinking of is dominant trends that encourage the pursuit of impossible perfectionisms, consumerism, and hedonism, which commodify people and spoil relationships. And yet more chains: there are temptations and conditionings that undermine self-esteem, that undermine peacefulness, and the ability to choose and love life. Another chain is fear, which makes us look to the future with pessimism, and dissatisfaction, which always blames others. Then there is a very ugly chain, which is the idolatry of power, which generates conflicts and resorts to weapons that kill or uses economic injustice and

thought manipulation.

Many are our chains, there truly are many in our lives.

And Jesus came to free us from all these chains. Today, facing the devil who challenges him by shouting, "What have you to do with us? Have you come to destroy us?" (v. 24), Jesus answers, "Quiet! Come out of him!" (v. 25). Jesus has the power to drive out the devil. Jesus frees us from the power of evil but – let us be careful – he drives out the devil but he never negotiates with him! Jesus never negotiated with the devil and when he was tempted in the desert, Jesus' responses were always words from the Bible, never a dialogue. Brothers and sisters: with the devil there must be no dialogue! Be careful: with the devil there can be no dialogue, because if you start speaking to him, he will always win. Be careful.

So, what should we do when we feel tempted and oppressed? Negotiate with the devil? No: there must be no negotiating with him.

We must invoke Jesus: let us call on Him from those places where we feel that the chains of evil and fear are tightest.

Once more, by the power of His Spirit, the Lord wants to say to the evil one today: "Be gone, leave that heart in peace, do not divide the world, do not divide our families and communities; let them live serenely so that the fruits of my Spirit may flourish there, not yours- this is what Jesus says. Let love, joy, meekness reign among them, and instead of violence and shouts of hatred, let there be freedom and peace.

Let us ask ourselves: Do I really want to be freed from those chains that shackle my heart? And also, am I capable of saying "no" to the temptations of evil before they creep into my soul? Finally, do I invoke Jesus, allowing Him to act in me, to heal me from within?

May the Holy Virgin guard us from evil.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

For three years now, the cries of pain and the noise of weapons have replaced the smiles that used to characterize the people of Myanmar. I join the call of some Burmese bishops "in order that weapons of destruction may be transformed into instruments for the growth of humanity and justice". Peace is a journey, and I invite all parties involved to take steps in dialogue and to clothe themselves in understanding so that the land of Myanmar may reach the goal of fraternal reconciliation. The transit of humanitarian aid must be allowed, in order to ensure that the basic necessities of every person may be met.

The same must happen in the Middle East, in Palestine and Israel, and wherever there is conflict: the populations must be respected! I always think intensely of all victims, especially of those who are civilians, who are killed by the war in Ukraine. Please, listen to their cry for peace: it is the cry of the people, who are tired of violence and want the war to stop. It is a disaster for the peoples and a defeat for humanity!

I have been relieved to learn about the release of the nuns and of the other people who were kidnapped with them in Haiti last week. I ask that those who are still being held captive be set free, and that every form of violence may cease. Everyone must contribute to the peaceful development of this country, for which renewed support from the international community is needed.

I would like to express my closeness to the community of the church of Santa Maria Draperis in Istanbul, which suffered an armed attack during Mass that caused one death and left several injured.

Today we celebrate World Leprosy Day. I encourage those who are engaged in granting assistance to and in the social reintegration of the people affected by this disease, which, despite its decline, is still one of the most feared diseases and affecting the poorest and most marginalized.

Greetings to all of you who have come from Rome, Italy, and many parts of the world. In particular, the students of the "Puente Ajuda" Institute in Olivenza, Spain, and those of the "Sir Michelangelo Refalo" Institute in Gozo.

Now I address you, boys and girls of the Catholic Action, of the parishes and Catholic schools in Rome. You have come here at the end of the "Caravan of Peace", during which you have reflected on the call to be guardians of Creation, which is a gift from God. Thank you for your presence! And thank you for your commitment to building a better society. Now let's listen to the message that your friends, who are here by my side, will read.

[Reading of the message]

I wish everyone a good Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. You see that young people, the children of Catholic Action, are good! Take courage! Have a good lunch, and *arrivederci!*
