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Angelus: the mystery of the Nativity, God's closeness

"The liturgy of today, which is the fourth and final Sunday of Advent, is characterised by the theme of proximity, of God's closeness to humanity. The passage from the Gospel shows us two people, the two people who more than any other were involved in this mystery of love: the Virgin Mary and her spouse Joseph. Mystery of love, mystery of God's closeness to humanity", said the Holy Father in his reflections before the Angelus prayer with faithful and pilgrims in St. Peter's Square.

"Mary is presented in the light of the prophecy that says: 'Behold, the Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son...'", he explained. "The Son of God 'comes' into her womb to become man, and she receives Him. So, in a unique way, God approached being human, from the flesh of a woman. God came to us and took His flesh from a woman. .. And to us too, in a different way, God comes close to us with His grace to enter into our life and to offer His Son to us as a gift. And what do we do? Do we welcome Him, do we let Him close to us, or do we deny Him, do we send Him away? Like Mary, offering Herself freely to the Lord of history, allowed Him to change the destiny of humanity, we too, welcoming Jesus and trying to follow Him every day, can cooperate in His plan for salvation for ourselves and for the world. Mary thus appears to us as a model to look upon and a support we can rely on in our search for God, in our closeness to God. In this, let God come close to us and our effort to build a civilisation of love".

The other protagonist in today's Gospel is Joseph, and the evangelist highlights that Joseph by himself cannot give an explanation for the event that is taking place in front of his eyes, namely, Mary's pregnancy. "Just then, in that moment of doubt, even of anguish, God draws close, to him too, with His messenger, and enlightens him on the nature of her motherhood. 'The child that is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit'. So, faced with this extraordinary event, which certainly raises many questions in his heart, he trusts fully in God Who approaches him and, following His invitation, does not repudiate his bride but instead takes her with him and marries Mary. By accepting Mary, Joseph also consciously welcomes with love He Who in her was conceived by the wondrous work of God, for Whom nothing is impossible. Joseph, a humble and righteous man, teaches us always to trust in God, who approaches us: when God approaches us, we must trust Him. Joseph teaches us to let ourselves be guided by Him with willing obedience".

These two figures, Mary and Joseph, who first accepted Jesus through faith, introduce us to the mystery of Christmas. Mary "helps us to adopt an attitude of willingness to welcome the Son of God in our concrete life, in

our flesh. Joseph urges us always to seek God's will and to follow it, trusting fully. ... 'Behold, the Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel', which means, 'God with us'. This is what the angel says the child will be called Immanuel, 'which means God-with-us', that is, God close to us".

"And to God, Who comes close to us, do I open the door ... when I hear inner inspiration, when I feel I am asked to do more for others, when I am called to pray?" asked the Holy Father. "God-with-us, the God Who approaches. This announcement of hope, which comes at Christmas, is the fulfilment of God's hope in each one of us, in the Church, and in the many small ones the world disregards but whom God loves, and to whom He draws near".
