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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

Before the Angelus

After the Angelus

At the end of the Eucharistic Celebration of the Solemnity of Mary Most Holy, Mother of God, and on the 51st World Day of Peace, the Holy Father Francis appeared at the window of his study in the Vatican Apostolic Palace and, before reciting the Angelus, addressed the following words to the faithful and pilgrims gathered in Saint Peter's Square.

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

On the first page of the calendar of the New Year that the Lord gives us, the Church puts as stupendous miniature the liturgical solemnity of Mary Most Holy, Mother of God. On this first day of the solar year, let us fix our gaze on her, to resume, under her maternal protection, the journey along the paths of time.

Today's Gospel (cf. *Lk* 2: 16-21) takes us back to the stable of Bethlehem. The shepherds arrive in haste and find Mary, Joseph, and the Child, and repeat the announcement given to them by the Angels, namely, that that Newborn is the Saviour. They are all astonished, while "Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (v. 19). The Virgin makes us understand how the event of Christmas is to be received: not superficially but in the heart. She indicates the true way to receive God's gift: to keep it in the heart and ponder it. It is an invitation addressed to each one of us to pray, contemplating and enjoying this gift that is Jesus Himself.

It is through Mary that the Son of God assumes bodily form. However, Mary's maternity is not reduced to this: thanks to her faith, she is the first disciple of Jesus and this "expands" her maternity. It was Mary's faith brought

about the first miraculous “sign” at Cana, which contributed to inspiring the faith of the disciples. Mary is present with the same faith at the foot of the cross, and receives as a son the Apostle John. And, finally, after the Resurrection, she becomes the praying Mother of the Church, on which the Holy Spirit descends powerfully on the Day of Pentecost.

As a Mother, Mary performs a very special function: she puts herself between her Son Jesus and men in the reality of their privations, indigence, and sufferings. Mary intercedes, as at Cana, aware that, as Mother, she can, rather, must make present to her Son the needs of men, especially the weakest and most disadvantaged. Indeed, it is to these people that World Day of Peace, which we celebrate today, is dedicated: “Migrants and Refugees: Men and Women in Search of Peace” is the motto of this Day. Once again, I wish to make myself the voice of these brothers and sisters of ours, who invoke for their future a prospect of peace. For this peace, which is a right for all people, many are prepared to risk their life in a journey that is in most cases long and dangerous; they are willing to face toils and sufferings (cf. *Message for World Day of Peace 2018*, 1).

Please, let us not extinguish the hope in their heart; let us not suffocate their expectations of peace! It is important that, on the part of all — civil institutions, educational, welfare, and ecclesial realities, there is the commitment to ensure to refugees, to migrants and to all a future of peace. May the Lord grant us to work in this New Year with generosity, with generosity, to bring about a more fraternal and hospitable world. I invite you to pray for this, while together with you I entrust to Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, the year 2018 that has just begun. The old Russian monks, mystics, said that in times of spiritual turbulence it is necessary to shelter under the mantle of the Holy Mother of God. Thinking of the many turbulences of today, and especially of migrants and refugees, let us pray as they taught us to pray: “We seek refuge under your protection, Holy Mother of God: do not disdain the entreaties of we who are in trial, but deliver us from every danger, O glorious and Blessed Virgin.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

On the threshold of 2018, I send warm wishes to you all for the very best for the new year! I wish to thank the President of the Italian Republic for the good wishes he addressed to me yesterday evening in his end of year Message, which I return from my heart, wishing for the Italian people a year of serenity and peace, illumined by God’s constant blessing.

I express my appreciation for the many initiatives of prayer and actions for peace, organized throughout the world, on the occasion of today’s World Day of Peace. I think, in particular, of the National March held yesterday evening at Sotto il Monte, promoted by the Italian Episcopal Conference, Italian Caritas, Pax Christi and Catholic Action. And I greet the participants in the “Peace in All Lands” event, promoted in Rome and in many countries by the Sant’Egidio Community. Dear friends, I encourage you to continue joyfully in your commitment to solidarity, especially in the outskirts of cities, to foster peaceful coexistence.

I address greetings to you, dear pilgrims present here, especially those from New York, the musical band from California and the “Pro Loco” group of Massalengo.

I reiterate to all of you my wishes for a year of peace in the Lord’s grace and with the maternal protection of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. Have a good year, a good lunch, and do not forget to pray for me. Goodbye!
