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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

Before the Angelus

After the Angelus

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 following is the Pope's introduction to the Marian prayer:

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Today the divine liturgy invites us to celebrate the feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist. His birth is the event that illuminates the life of his parents Elizabeth and Zechariah, and involves his parents and neighbours in joy and wonder. These elderly parents had dreamed and even prepared for that day, but by this point they no longer expected anything: they felt excluded, humiliated, disappointed: they were childless. Faced with the announcement of the birth of a son (cf. *Lk* 1: 13), Zechariah remained incredulous, because the natural laws did not consent this: they were old, they were elderly; as a consequence the Lord rendered him mute for the entire gestation period (cf. v. 20). It was a sign. But God does not depend on our logic and our limited human capacities. It is necessary to learn to trust and to be silent when faced with the mystery of God, and to contemplate in humility and silence His work, which is revealed in history and very often exceeds our imagination.

And now that the event takes place, now that Elizabeth and Zechariah experience that "nothing will be impossible with God" (*Lk* 1: 37), great is their joy. Today's Bible reading (*Lk* 1: 57-66.80) announces the birth

and then pauses at the moment of the naming of the child. Elizabeth chooses a name extraneous to the family tradition and says, “He is to be called John” (v. 60), a freely given and by then unexpected gift, because John means “God has given grace”. And this child will be a herald, a witness of the grace of God for the poor who await His salvation with humble faith. Zechariah unexpectedly confirms the choice of name, writing it on a tablet – because he was mute – and “immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God” (v. 64).

The entire event of the birth of John the Baptist is surrounded by a *joyous sense of wonder, surprise and gratitude*. Wonder, surprise and gratitude. People are gripped by a holy fear of God “and the news of what happened spread throughout the Judean hills” (v. 65). Brothers and sisters, the faithful people realized that even if in a humble and hidden way, something great happened, and ask: “What, then, will this child be?” (v. 66). The faithful people of God are able to live the faith with joy, with a sense of wonder, surprise and gratitude. We look at those people who discussed this marvellous event, about this miracle of the birth of John, and they did so with joy, happily, with a sense of wonder, surprise and gratitude.

May the Blessed Virgin help us to understand that in every human person there is the imprint of God, the source of life. She, Mother of God and our Mother, makes us more and more aware that in the generating of a child the parents act as collaborators of God. This is a truly sublime mission that makes each family a sanctuary of life and awakens – every birth of a child – joy, amazement, gratitude.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

Yesterday, in Asunción, Paraguay, Maria Felicia of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, born María Felicia Guggiari Echeverría, was proclaimed blessed. Called “la Chiquitunga” by her father and by the Paraguayan people, she lived in the first half of the twentieth century, enthusiastically joined Catholic Action and took care of the elderly, sick and imprisoned. This fruitful experience of the apostolate, sustained by the daily Eucharist, resulted in her consecration to the Lord. She died at the age of 34, accepting her illness with serenity. The witness of this young Blessed is an invitation to all young people, especially Paraguayans, to live life with generosity, gentleness and joy. Let us greet la Chiquitunga with an applause, and to all the Paraguayan people!

I greet you all, Romans and pilgrims, in particular those from Hannover and Osnabrück, in Germany, and those from Slovakia.

I greet the Romanian community in Italy, the faithful of Enna, Paternò, Rosolini and San Cataldo, and the group of cyclists from Sesto San Giovanni.

I wish you all a good Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch, and goodbye!
