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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 St. Peter's Square.

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

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

In today's Gospel reading (cf. *Mt 5: 13-16*), Jesus says to His disciples, "You are the salt of the earth. ... You are the light of the world" (vv. 13-14). He uses a symbolic language to indicate to those who intend to follow Him some criteria for living presence and witness in the world.

First image: *salt*. Salt is the element that gives flavour and which conserves and preserves foodstuffs from corruption. The disciple is therefore called to keep far from society the dangers, the corrosive germs which pollute the life of people. It is a question of resisting moral degradation, sin, bearing witness to the values of honesty and fraternity, without giving in to the worldly flattery of careerism, of power, of wealth. "Salt" is the disciple who, despite daily failures – because we all have them – gets up again from the dust of his errors, and begins again with courage and patience, every day, to seek dialogue and encounter with others. "Salt" is the disciple who does not seek consensus and praise, but strives to be a humble, constructive presence, faithful to the teachings of Jesus Who came into the world not to be served, but to serve. And there is great need for this attitude!

The second image that Jesus proposes to His disciples is that of light: "You are the light of the world". The light disperses the darkness and allows us to see. Jesus is the light that has dispelled the darkness, but it still remains in the world and in individuals. It is the Christian's task to disperse it by shining the light of Christ and proclaiming His Gospel. It is a radiance that can also come from our words, but it must flow above all from our

“good works” (v. 16). A disciple and a Christian community are light in the world when they direct others to God, helping each one to experience His goodness and mercy. The disciple of Jesus is light when he knows how to live his faith outside narrow spaces, when he helps to eliminate prejudices, to eliminate slander, and to bring the light of truth into situations vitiated by hypocrisy and lies. To make light. But it is not *my* light, it is the light of Jesus: we are instruments to enable Jesus’s light to reach everyone.

Jesus invites us not to be afraid to live in the world, even if sometimes there are conditions of conflict and sin there. In the face of violence, injustice, oppression, the Christian cannot close himself away or hide in the security of his own enclosure; the Church also cannot shut herself away, she cannot abandon her mission of evangelization and service. Jesus, at the Last Supper, asked the Father not to take the disciples out of the world, to leave them there in the world, but to guard them from the spirit of the world. The Church spends herself with generosity and tenderness for the little ones and the poor: this is not the spirit of the world, this is its light, it is salt. The Church listens to the cry of the last and the excluded, because she is aware that she is a pilgrim community called to prolong in history the saving presence of Jesus Christ.

May the Blessed Virgin help us to be salt and light in the midst of the people, bringing to everyone, with life and word, the Good News of God’s love.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

Yesterday, the liturgical memorial of Saint Josephine Bakhita, the *World Day of Prayer, Reflection and Action against Human Trafficking*. To heal this wound – because it is a real wound! – that exploits the weakest, takes the commitment of all: institutions, associations and educational agencies. On the prevention front, I would like to point out that various studies show that criminal organisations increasingly use modern means of communication to lure victims under false pretences. It is therefore necessary, on the one hand, to educate people in the healthy use of technology and, on the other hand, to monitor and remind service providers of their responsibilities.

Distressing reports continue to arrive from north-west Syria, particularly regarding the plight of many women and children, of people forced to flee due to military escalation. I renew my heartfelt appeal to the international community and all those involved to use diplomatic means, dialogue and negotiations, in accordance with International Humanitarian Law, to safeguard the lives and fortunes of civilians. Let us pray for this beloved and tormented Syria: *Hail Mary...*

I greet all of you, from Italy and other countries, especially the pilgrims from Seville, Carmona and Cadiz.

I greet the faithful of Milan, Naples-Fuorigrotta, Portici and Crispano; confirmands from Rosolina and those of Prato; and participants in the International Symposium promoted by Catholic Action on the theme “Pedagogy of holiness”.

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