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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At midday today, first Sunday of Lent, 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!

On this first Sunday of Lent, the Gospel (cf. *Mt* 4: 1-11) recounts that Jesus, after being baptised in the River Jordan, "was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (v. 1). Jesus prepares Himself to begin His mission of proclaiming the Kingdom of Heaven and, just like Moses and Elijah (cf. *Ex* 24: 18; *1 Kings* 19: 8), He does so by fasting for forty days.

At the end of this period of fasting, the tempter, the devil, breaks in and tries three times to put Jesus to the test. The first temptation arises from the fact that Jesus is hungry and so, the devil suggests, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread" (v. 3). But Jesus' response is clear: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (v. 4). Jesus refers to Moses at the point when he reminded the people of the long journey they had made in the desert, through which he learned that his life depended on the Word of God (cf. *Dt* 8: 3).

The devil's second attempt (vv. 5-6) is a bit more astute. This time he also quotes Sacred Scripture. The strategy is clear: if you are so confident in God's power, try it. For Scripture itself affirms that you will be aided by angels (v.6). But even in this case, Jesus does not allow Himself to be confounded, because the one who believes does not put God to the test, but instead entrusts him- or herself to God's goodness. Therefore, to the words of the Bible, which Satan interpreted for his own purposes, Jesus responds with another quotation: "Again it is written; 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test'" (v.7).

Lastly, the third attempt (vv. 8-9) reveals the devil's true reasoning: since the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven means the beginning of his own defeat, the evil one wants to distract Jesus from accomplishing His mission by presenting Him a political-Messianic perspective. But Jesus rejects the idolatry of power and human glory and, in the end, drives the tempter away, saying to him: "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve'" (v. 10). At this point, angels draw near to Jesus, Who is faithful in handing Himself over to the Father (cf. v. 11).

Today too, Satan breaks into people's lives to tempt them with his enticing proposals. He mixes his own voice with the many other voices that try to tame our conscience. Messages come at us from many places inviting us to "let ourselves be tempted", to experience the intoxication of transgression. Jesus' experience teaches us that temptation is an attempt to walk paths other than those of God. They give us the sensation of being self-sufficient, of enjoying life as an end in itself. All of this is illusory, however; very quickly we realize that the more we distance ourselves from God, the more defenceless and helpless we feel when facing the large existential problems.

May the Virgin Mary, the Mother of He Who crushed the head of the serpent, help us during this time of Lent to be vigilant when confronted with temptation, and not to submit ourselves to any idol of this world whatsoever, and to follow Jesus in the battle against evil. Thus we too will be victorious with Him.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters!

I greet you all, faithful of Rome and pilgrims from Italy and from various countries.

In particular, I greet the young people of Formentera, the faithful of Ostuni and those of the parish of San Pio da Pietrelcina in Rome.

I hope that for all of you the Lenten path, which has just begun, may be rich in fruits of the spirit and rich in good deeds.

I am rather saddened by the news of so many displaced people, so many men, women, children banished from their homes due to war, so many migrants seeking refuge in the world, and help. In these days, this has become very serious. Let us pray for them.

I also ask for remembrance in prayer for the Spiritual Exercises of the Roman Curia, which this evening will begin in Ariccia. Unfortunately, the cold prevents me from participating this year: I will follow the meditations from here. I join spiritually with the Curia and all those people who are experiencing moments of prayer, performing the Spiritual Exercises at home.

Have a good Sunday and have a good lunch!
