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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At midday today, the Holy Father Francis led the Angelus prayer from the Library of the Vatican Apostolic Palace. At the end of the Angelus, the Pope appeared at the window of his study to greet 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!

It is a bit strange, this Angelus prayer today, with the Pope "caged" in the library, but I see you, I am close to you. And I would like to begin also by thanking that group [present in the Square] that is demonstrated and fighting "For the forgotten of Idlib". Thank you! Thank you for what you do. But we are praying the Angelus in this way today to comply with the preventative measures, so as to avoid small crowds of people, which can promote the transmission of the virus.

The Gospel of this second Sunday of Lent (cf. *Mt 17: 1-9*), presents to us the account of the Transfiguration of Jesus. He takes Peter, James and John and goes up a high mountain, symbol of closeness to God, to open them to a fuller understanding of the mystery of His person, Who must suffer, die and then rise again. Indeed, Jesus had begun to speak to them of the sufferings, death and resurrection that awaited Him, but they were unable to accept this prospect. Therefore, once he reached the summit of the mountain, Jesus immersed Himself in prayer and was transfigured before the three disciples: "his face", says the Gospel, "shone like the sun and his clothes became as dazzling as light" (2).

Through the wondrous event of the Transfiguration, the three disciples are called to recognize in Jesus the Son of God shining with glory. They thus advance in their knowledge of their Master, realizing that the human aspect does not express all His reality; in their eyes the otherworldly and divine dimension of Jesus is revealed. And

from above there resounds a voice that says: “This is my Son, the Beloved; He enjoys my favour. Listen to Him” (5). It is the heavenly Father Who confirms the “investiture” – let us call it that – of Jesus already made on the day of His baptism in the Jordan and invites the disciples to listen to Him and to follow Him.

It must be emphasized that, in the midst of the group of the Twelve, Jesus chooses to take James, John and Peter with Him on the mountain. He reserved for them the privilege of witnessing the transfiguration. But why does He select these three? Because they are the holiest? No. Yet, at the hour the trial, Peter will deny Him; and the two brothers James and John will ask for the first places in His kingdom (cf. *Mt* 20: 20-23). But Jesus does not choose according to our criteria, but according to His plan of love. Jesus’ love is without measure: it is love, and He chooses with that plan of love. It is a free, unconditional choice, a free initiative, a divine friendship that asks for nothing in return. And just as He called those three disciples, so today too He calls some to be close to Him, to be able to bear witness. To be witnesses to Jesus is a gift we have not deserved; we may feel inadequate but we cannot back out with the excuse of our incapacity.

We have not been on Mount Tabor, we have not seen with our own eyes the face of Jesus shining like the sun. However, we too were given the Word of Salvation, faith was given to us, and we experienced the joy of meeting Jesus in different ways. Jesus also says to us: “Stand up, do not be afraid” (*Mt* 17: 7). In this world, marked by selfishness and greed, the light of God is obscured by the worries of everyday life. We often say: I do not have time to pray, I am unable to carry out a service in the parish, to respond to the requests of others... But we must not forget that the Baptism we have received has made us witnesses, not because of our capacity, but as a result of the gift of the Spirit.

In the favourable time of Lent, may the Virgin Mary obtain for us that docility to the Spirit which is indispensable for setting out resolutely on the path of conversion.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

I greet all of you following this moment of prayer. I greet in particular the participants in the training course, “Inspirers of a new way of communicating”; the faithful of Torrent, in Spain; the group from Corato; the young people of Coverciano and the children taking their First Communion, from Montedorsio.

I greet the associations and groups engaged in solidarity with the Syrian people, and especially with the inhabitants of the city of Idlib and of the north-west of Syria – I see you here – compelled to flee from recent developments in the war. Dear brothers and sisters, I reiterate my great apprehension, my sorrow for this inhuman situation of these helpless people, including many children, who are risking their lives. One cannot turn away from this humanitarian crisis, but instead must give it priority above any other interest. Let us pray for these people, these brothers and sisters of ours, who suffer greatly in the north-west of Syria, in the city of Idlib.

I am close with prayer to those who are suffering as a result of the current coronavirus epidemic, and to all those who are caring for them. I join with my brother bishops in encouraging the faithful to live this difficult moment with the strength of faith, the certainty of hope and the fervour of charity. May the time of Lent help us to give all an evangelical meaning also to this moment of trial and suffering.

I wish you a good Sunday. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Now I will look out, to see you a little, in real time. Have a good lunch, and *arrivederci!*
