

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLIS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 200315a

Sunday 15.03.2020

The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At midday today, the Holy Father Francis led the recitation of the Angelus prayer from the Library of the Vatican Apostolic Palace. The following is the Pope's introduction to the Marian prayer:

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

At this moment in Milan, the Mass celebrated by the archbishop in the Policlinico for the sick, doctors, nurses and volunteers is coming to an end. The archbishop is close to his people and also close to God in prayer. Last week's photograph comes to mind: him alone on the roof of the Duomo, praying to Our Lady. I would also like to thank all the priests, the creativity of priests. A lot of news arrives to me from Lombardy about this creativity. It is true, Lombardy has been very affected. Priests who think of a thousand ways to be close to the people, so that the people do not feel abandoned; priests with apostolic zeal, who have understood well that in times of pandemic one must not be like "Don Abbondio". Many thanks to you priests.

The Gospel passage for today, the Third Sunday of Lent, presents Jesus' meeting with a Samaritan woman (cf. *Jn* 4: 5-42). He is on a journey with His disciples and takes a break in Samaria near a well. The Samaritans were considered heretics by the Jews, and were very much despised, as second-class citizens. Jesus is tired, thirsty. A woman arrives to draw water and He asks her: "Give me a drink" (v. 7). Thus, breaking every barrier, He initiates a dialogue in which He reveals *the mystery of living water* to this woman, that is, of the Holy Spirit, God's gift. In fact, in response to the woman's reaction of surprise, Jesus answers: "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink', you would have asked him and he would have given you living water" (v. 10).

The focus of this dialogue is water. On the one hand, water as an essential element that slakes the body's thirst and sustains life. On the other, water as a symbol of divine grace which gives eternal life. In the biblical tradition God is the source of living water: as it is said in the Psalms, in the prophets : distancing oneself from God, the

source of living water, and from His Law, leads to the worst drought. This is the experience of the people of Israel in the desert. During the long journey to freedom, dying of thirst, they cried out against against Moses and against God because there was no water. So, God willed that Moses made water flow from a rock, as a sign of God's providence accompanying His people and giving them life (cf. *Ex 17:1-7*).

The Apostle Paul, too, interprets that rock as a symbol of Christ. He says: "And that rock was Christ" (cf. *1 Cor 10:4*). It is the mysterious figure of His presence in the midst of the people of God on their journey. Christ, in fact, is the Temple from which, according to the prophets, flows the Holy Spirit, the living water which purifies and gives life. The one who thirsts for salvation can draw freely from Jesus, and the Spirit will become a spring of life to the full and eternal life in him or in her. The promise of living water that Jesus made to the Samaritan woman becomes a reality in His Passion: from His pierced side "blood and water" flowed (*Jn 19: 34*). Christ, the Lamb, immolated and risen, is the spring from which flows the Holy Spirit Who remits sins and regenerates to new life.

This gift is also the source of testimony. Like the Samaritan woman, whoever personally encounters the living Jesus feels the need to talk about Him to others, so that everyone might arrive at the point of professing that Jesus "is truly the saviour of the world" (*Jn 4: 42*), as the woman's fellow townspeople later said. We too, generated to new life through Baptism, are called to testify to the life and hope that are within us. If our quest and our thirst are thoroughly slaked in Christ, we will manifest that salvation is not found in the "things" of this world, which in the end produce drought, but in Him Who has loved and always loves us: Jesus, our Saviour.

May Mary, Most Holy, help us cultivate a desire for Christ, font of living water, the only One Who can satisfy the thirst for life and love which we bear in our hearts.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

Saint Peter's Square is closed at this time. Therefore, my greetings go directly to you who are connected through the means of communications.

In this situation of pandemic, in which we find ourselves living more or less isolated, we are invited to rediscover and deepen the value of communion that unites all the members of the Church. United to Christ we are never alone, but we form one sole Body, of which He is the Head. It is a union that is nourished with prayer, and also with the spiritual communion in the Eucharist, a practice that is highly recommended when it is not possible to receive the Sacrament. I say this for everyone, especially for those who live alone.

I renew my nearness to all the sick and those caring for them. This goes for all the caregivers and volunteers who help those who cannot leave their homes, and those who are meeting the needs of the poorest and the homeless.

Thank you so much for all the effort that each one of you is making to help at this difficult time. May the Lord bless you, may Our Lady keep you; and please do not forget to pray for me. Have a good Sunday and a good lunch! Thank you.
