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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 are the Pope's words of introduction to the Marian prayer:

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

At the centre of the liturgy of this fourth Sunday of Lent there is the theme of *light*. The Gospel (cf. *Jn* 9: 1-41) recounts the episode of the man blind from birth, to whom Jesus gives sight. This miraculous sign confirms Jesus' affirmation that "I am the light of the world" (v. 5), the light that brightens our darkness. Jesus is thus. He operates illumination on two levels: a physical level and a spiritual level: the blind person first receives the *sight* of the eyes and then is led to *faith* in the "Son of Man" (v. 35), that is, in Jesus. It is all a journey. Today it would be good if you were all to take a copy of the Gospel according to John, chapter nine, and read this passage: it is so good and it will do us good to read it once or twice more. The wonders that Jesus performs are not spectacular gestures, but have the purpose of leading to faith through a journey of inner transformation. The doctors of the law - who were there, a group - persist in not admitting the miracle, and ask the healed man insidious questions. But he disconcerts them with the power of reality: "One thing I do know. I was blind and now I see" (v. 25). Amidst the distrust and hostility of those who surround him and interrogate him, incredulous, he gradually takes a route that leads him to discover the identity of the One who opened his eyes and to confess his faith in Him. At first he considers Him a prophet (cf. v. 17); then he recognises Him as one Who comes from God (cf. v. 33); finally he welcomes Him as the Messiah and prostrates himself before Him (cf. vv. 36-38). He understood that by giving him sight Jesus displayed "the works of God" (cf. v. 3).

May we too have this experience! With the light of faith he who was blind discovers his new identity. He is now a "new creature", able to see his life and the world around him in a new light, because he has entered into communion with Christ, he has entered into another dimension. He is no longer a beggar marginalised by the community; he is no longer a slave to blindness and prejudice. His path of enlightenment is a metaphor for the path of liberation from sin to which we are called. Sin is like a dark veil that covers our face and prevents us from clearly seeing ourselves and the world; the Lord's forgiveness takes away this blanket of shadow and darkness

and gives us new light. The Lenten period that we are living is an opportune and valuable time to approach the Lord, asking for His mercy, in the different forms that Mother Church proposes to us.

The healed blind man, who now sees both with the eyes of the body and with those of the soul, is the image of every baptised person, who immersed in Grace has been pulled out of the darkness and placed in the light of faith. But it is not enough to *receive* the light, one must *become light*. Each one of us is called to receive the divine light in order to manifest it with our whole life. The first Christians, the theologians of the first centuries, used to say that the community of Christians, that is the Church, is the “mystery of the moon”, because it gave light but it was not its own light, it was the light it received from Christ. We too can be “mystery of the moon”: giving light received from the sun, which is Christ, the Lord. Saint Paul reminds us of this today: “Live as children of light; for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth” (*Eph 5: 8-9*). The seed of new life placed in us in Baptism is like the spark of a fire, which first of all purifies us, burning the evil in our hearts, and allows us to shine and illuminate. With the light of Jesus.

May Mary Most Holy help us to imitate the blind man of the Gospel, so that we can be flooded with the light of Christ and set out with Him on the way of salvation.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

In these trying days, while humanity trembles due to the threat of the pandemic, I would like to propose to all Christians that together we lift our voices towards Heaven. I invite all the Heads of the Churches and the leaders of every Christian community, together with all Christian of the various confessions, to invoke the Almighty, the omnipotent God, to recite at the same time the prayer that Jesus, our Lord, taught us. I, therefore, invite everyone to do this several times a day, but all together, *to recite the Our Father this coming Wednesday, 25 March, at noon*, all together. On that day on which many Christians recall the annunciation to the Virgin Mary of the Incarnation of the Word, may the Lord listen to the united prayer of all of His disciples who are preparing themselves to celebrate the victory of the Risen Christ.

With this same intention, this coming Friday, 27 March, at 6:00pm, I will preside over a moment of prayer on the *sagrata* of Saint Peter’s Basilica, before the empty square. I invite everyone to participate spiritually through the means of communication. We will listen to the Word of God, we will lift up our supplication, we will adore the Blessed Sacrament, with which at the end, I will give the *Urbi et Orbi* blessing, to which will be connected the possibility of receiving the plenary indulgence.

To the pandemic caused by the virus, we want to respond with the universality of prayer, of compassion, of tenderness. Let us remain united. Let us make our closeness felt toward those persons who are the most lonely and tried. Our closeness to the doctors, the healthcare workers, nurses, volunteers... Our closeness to the authorities who must impose stringent measures, but for our own good. Our closeness to the police, to the soldiers who try always to keep order on the streets, to ensure that the things the government asks to be done for the good of all are implemented. Closeness to all.

I express my closeness to the populations of Croatia, struck this morning by an earthquake. May the Lord give them the strength and solidarity to face this calamity.

And do not forget: today, take the Gospel and read calmly, slowly, the ninth chapter of John. I will do it too. It will do us all good.

And to all I wish a blessed Sunday. Do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your meal and *arrivederci*.
