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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!

The Gospel passage of this fifth Sunday of Lent is that of the resurrection of Lazarus (cf. *Jn* 11: 1-45). Lazarus was the brother of Martha and Mary; they were good friends of Jesus. When He arrives in Bethany, Lazarus has already been dead for four days; Martha runs towards the Master and says to Him: "If you had been here, my brother would not have died!" (21). Jesus replies to her: "Your brother will rise again" (23) and adds: "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die" (25). Jesus makes Himself seen as the Lord of life, He Who is capable of giving life even to the dead. Then Mary and other people arrive, all in tears, and so Jesus - the Gospel says - "was deeply moved in spirit and troubled ... Jesus wept" (33, 35). With this turmoil in his heart, He has the tomb opened and cries aloud: "Lazarus, come out!" (43). And Lazarus emerges with "his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face" (44).

Here we are able to touch with our hand the fact that God is life and gives life, yet takes on the drama of death. Jesus could have avoided the death of His friend Lazarus, but He wanted to share in our pain for the death of people dear to us, and above all He wished to demonstrate God's dominion over death. In this Gospel passage we see that man's faith and the omnipotence of God, of God's love seek each other and finally meet. It is like a dual street: the faith of man and the omnipotence of God's love that seek each other and finally meet. We see this in the cry of Martha and Mary, and all of us with them: "If you had been here!". And God's answer is not a speech, no, God's answer to the problem of death is Jesus: "I am the resurrection and the life"... have faith. Amid grief, continue to have faith, even when it seems that death has won. Take away the stone from your heart!

Let the Word of God restore life where there is death” .

Today, too, Jesus repeats to us: “Take away the stone”. God did not create us for the tomb, He created us for life, beautiful, good, joyful. But “through the devil’s envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his company experience it” (*Wisdom, 2: 24*) says the Book of Wisdom, and Jesus Christ came to free us from its bonds.

Therefore, we are called to take away the stones of all that smacks of death: for example, the hypocrisy with which faith is lived, is death; the destructive criticism of others, is death; offence, slander, is death; the marginalisation of the poor, is death. The Lord asks us to take away these stones from our hearts, and life will then flourish again around us. Christ lives, and he who welcomes Him and follows Him comes into contact with life. Without Christ, or outside of Christ, not only is life not present, but one falls back into death.

The resurrection of Lazarus is also a sign of the regeneration that takes place in the believer through Baptism, with full integration with the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Through the action and power of the Holy Spirit, the Christian is a person who journeys in life as a new creature: a creature for life and that goes towards life.

May the Virgin Mary help us to be compassionate like her Son Jesus, Who made our pain His own. May each of us be close to those who are in difficulty, becoming for them a reflection of God’s love and tenderness, which liberates from death and makes life victorious.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

In these past days, the Secretary General of the United Nations launched an appeal for an “immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world”, invoking the current Covid-19 crisis, which does not recognise borders. An appeal for a total ceasefire.

I myself join those who have welcomed this appeal and I invite everyone to follow it up by ceasing any form of hostility, promoting the creation of humanitarian aid routes, openness to diplomacy, and attentiveness to those who find themselves in situations of grave vulnerability.

May our joint fight against the pandemic bring everyone to recognize the great need to reinforce brotherly and sisterly bonds as members of one human family. In particular, may it inspire a renewed commitment to overcome rivalries in the leaders of nations and those parties involved. Conflicts are not resolved through war! Antagonism and differences must be overcome through dialogue and a constructive search for peace.

In this moment my thoughts turn in a special way to all those people who suffer the vulnerability of being compelled to live in a group: rest homes, barracks... In particular I would like to mention those in prison. I read an official note of the Commission for Human Rights which talks about the problem of overcrowded prisons, which could become a tragedy. I ask the authorities to be sensitive to this serious problem and to take the necessary measures to avoid future tragedies.

I wish everyone a blessed Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me; I will do so for you. Enjoy your meal and arrivederci.

