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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At midday today, Solemnity of Mary Most Holy, the Mother of God, and the 54th World Day of Peace, the Holy Father 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 afternoon and happy New Year!

We begin this year placing ourselves under the maternal and loving gaze of Mary Most Holy, celebrated in today's liturgy as Mother of God. Thus we take up once again the journey along the paths of history, entrusting our anxieties and our torments to her who can do everything. Mary watches over us with maternal tenderness just as she watched over her Son Jesus, and if we look at the Nativity Scene, we see that Jesus is not in the crib, and they told me that the Madonna said: "Won't you let me hold this Son of mine a bit in my arms?" This is what the Madonna does with us: she wants to hold us in her arms to protect us as she protected and loved her Son. The reassuring and comforting gaze of the Holy Virgin is an encouragement to make sure that this time, granted us by the Lord, might be spent for our human and spiritual growth, that it be a time in which hatred and division are resolved, and there are many, that it be a time to experience ourselves as brothers and sisters, a time to build and not to destroy, to take care of each other and of creation. A time to make things grow a time of peace.

It is specifically regarding the care of our neighbours and of creation that the theme for the World Day of Peace, which we celebrate today, is dedicated: *A Culture of Care as a Path to Peace*. The painful events that marked humanity's journey last year, especially the pandemic, taught us how much it is necessary to take an interest in others' problems and to share their concerns. This attitude represents the path that leads to peace, because it fosters the construction of a society founded on fraternal relationships. Each of us, men and women of this time, is called to make peace happen, each one of us, we are not indifferent to this. We are called to make peace

happen each day and in every place we live, taking those brothers and sisters by the hand who need a comforting word, a tender gesture, solidary help. This is a task given us by God. The Lord has given us the task of being peacemakers.

And peace can become a reality if we begin to be in peace with ourselves – at peace inside, in our hearts – and with ourselves, and with those who are near us, removing the obstacles that prevent us from taking care of those who find themselves in need and in indigence. It means developing a mentality and a culture of “care taking” to defeat indifference, to defeat rejection and rivalry – indifference, rejection, rivalry which unfortunately prevail. To remove these attitudes. And thus, peace is not only the absence of war, peace is never sterile: no, peace does not exist in a *quirofano* (an operating room). Peace is within life: it is not only the absence of war, but is a life rich in meaning, rooted in and lived through personal realisation and fraternal sharing with others. Then that peace, so longed for and always endangered by violence, by egoism and evil, that peace that is endangered might become possible and achievable if I take it as a task given to me by God.

May the Virgin Mary, who gave birth to the “Prince of Peace” (*Is 9:6*), and who cuddles him thus, with such tenderness in her arms, obtain for us from heaven the precious gift of peace, which cannot be fully pursued with human force alone. Human force is not enough because peace is above all a gift, a gift to be implored from God with incessant prayer, sustained with patient and respectful dialogue, constructed with an open collaboration with truth and justice and always attentive to the legitimate aspirations of individuals and peoples. My hope is that peace might reign in the hearts of men and women and in families, in recreational and work places, in communities and in nations. In families, at work, in nations: peace, peace. Now is time to think that life today is organised around war, and enmities, by many things that destroy. We want peace. And this is a gift.

On the threshold of this beginning, I extend to everyone my heart-felt greetings for a happy and serene 2021. May each one of us make sure that it be for everyone a year of fraternal solidarity and peace, a year filled with expectant trust and hope, which we entrust to the heavenly protection of Mary, Mother of God and our Mother.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters!

To all of you connected through the media, I wish you a peaceful and serene new year.

I thank the President of the Italian Republic, the Honourable Sergio Mattarella, for the greetings he addressed to me yesterday evening in his Message for the end of the year, and I cordially exchange his greetings.

I am grateful to all those who in every part of the world, while respecting the restrictions imposed due to the pandemic, have promoted moments of prayer and reflection on the occasion of today’s World Day of Peace. I think in particular of yesterday evening’s virtual march organized by the Italian episcopate, Pax Christi, Caritas and Catholic Action, as well as the one this morning organized by Sant’Egidio being transmitted worldwide. I thank everyone for these and the many other initiatives in favour of reconciliation and harmony among peoples.

In this context, I express sadness and concern for the latest escalation of the violence in Yemen that is causing numerous innocent victims, and I pray so that efforts will be made to find solutions that allow peace to return to that tormented population. Brothers and sisters, let us think of the children in Yemen! Without education, without medicine, hungry. Let us pray together for Yemen.

In addition, I invite you to unite your prayer to the Archdiocese of Owerri in Nigeria for Bishop Moses Chikwe and his chauffeur who were kidnapped in the last few days. Let us ask the Lord that they and all who are victims of similar actions in Nigeria might be restored to liberty unharmed and that that beloved country may regain security, harmony and peace.

I extend a special greeting to the *Sternsinger*, the “Star Singers”, children who in Germany and Austria, have found a way to bring families their joyful Christmas proclamation since they cannot visit them in their homes, and to collect donations for their peers who are in need.

I wish everyone a year of peace and hope, under the protection of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your meal and *arrivederci*!
