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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 afternoon!

On this second Sunday after Christmas, the Word of God does not offer us an episode from the life of Jesus, but rather it tells us about Him before He was born. It takes us back to reveal something about Jesus before He came among us. It does so especially in the prologue of the Gospel of John, which begins: "In the beginning was the Word" (*Jn 1:1*). *In the beginning*: are the first words of the Bible, the same words with which the creation account begins: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (*Gen 1:1*). Today, the Gospel says that Jesus, the One we contemplated at His Birth, as an infant, existed before: before things began, before the universe, before everything. He existed before space and time. "In Him was life" (*Jn 1:4*), before life appeared.

Saint John calls Him the *Logos*, that is, the *Word*. What does he mean by this? The word is used to communicate: people do not speak alone, people speak with someone. One always speaks with someone. When we are in the street and we see people who talk to themselves, we say, "This person, something has happened to them...". No, we always speak to someone. Now, the fact that Jesus was the Word from the very beginning means that from the beginning God wants to communicate with us, He wants to talk to us. The only-begotten Son of the Father (see v. 14) wants to tell us about the beauty of being children of God; He is "the true light" (v. 9) and wants to remove the darkness of evil from us; He is "the life" (v. 4), who knows our lives and wants to tell us that He has always loved them. He loves us all. Here is today's wondrous message: Jesus is God's Word, the eternal Word of God, who has always thought of us and wanted to communicate with us.

And to do so, He went beyond words. In fact, at the heart of today's Gospel we are told that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (v. 14). The Word became *flesh*: why does Saint John use this expression "flesh"? Could he not have said, in a more elegant way, that the Word was made *man*? No, he uses the word *flesh* because it indicates our human condition in all its weakness, in all its frailty. He tells us that God became fragile so He could touch our fragility up close. So, from the moment that the Lord became flesh, nothing about our life is extraneous to Him. There is nothing that He scorns, we can share everything with Him, everything. Dear brother, dear sister, God became flesh to tell us, to tell you that He loves us like that, in our frailty, in your frailty; right there, where we are most ashamed, where you are most ashamed. This is bold, God's decision is bold: He took on flesh precisely where very often we are ashamed; He enters into our shame, to become our brother, to share the path of life.

*He became flesh* and never turned back. He did not put our humanity on like a garment that can be put on and taken off. No, He never detached Himself from our flesh. And He will never be separated from it: now and forever He is in heaven with His body made of human flesh. He has *united Himself forever* to our humanity; we might say that He "espoused" Himself to it. I like to think that when the Lord prays to the Father for us, He does not merely speak: He makes Him see the wounds of the flesh, He makes Him see the wounds He suffered for us. This is Jesus: with His flesh He is the intercessor, he wanted to bear even the signs of suffering. Jesus, with His flesh, is in front of the Father. Indeed, the Gospel says that *He came to dwell among us*. He did not come to visit us, and then leave; He came to dwell with us, to stay with us. What, then, does He desire from us? He desires a great *intimacy*. He wants us to share with Him our joys and sufferings, desires and fears, hopes and sorrows, people and situations. Let us do this, with confidence: let us open our hearts to Him, let us tell Him everything. Let us pause in silence before the crib to savour the tenderness of God who became near, who became flesh. And without fear, let us invite Him among us, into our homes, into our families. And also - everyone knows this well - let us invite Him into our frailties. Let us invite Him, so that He may see our wounds. He will come and life will change.

May the Holy Mother of God, in whom the Word became flesh, help us to welcome Jesus, who knocks on the door of our hearts to dwell with us.

### After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

I renew to you all my wishes for the Year that has just begun. As Christians, we tend to shun the mentality of fatalism or magic; we know that things we improve to the extent that, with God's help, we work together for the common good, placing the weakest and most disadvantaged at the centre. We do not know what 2021 holds for us, but what each one of us, and all of us together, can do is to take care of each other and of creation, our common home.

It is true, there is the temptation to take care only of our own interests, to continue to wage war, for example, concentrating only on the economic aspect, to live hedonistically, that is, seeking only to satisfy our own pleasure... there is that temptation. I read something in the newspapers that saddened me greatly: in one country, I forget which, more than 40 aircraft left, to enable people to flee from the lockdown and to enjoy the holidays. But those people, good people, did they not think about those who stayed at home, about the economic problems faced by many people who have been floored by the lockdown, about the sick? They thought only about taking a holiday for their own pleasure. This pained me greatly.

I address a special greeting to those who begin the new year with greater difficulties, the sick, the unemployed, to those who live situations of oppression or exploitation. And with affection I wish to greet all families, especially those in which there are young children or which are expecting a birth. A birth is always a promise of hope. I am close to these families: may the Lord bless you!

I wish you all a blessed Sunday, thinking always of Jesus who became flesh precisely to dwell with us, in the good things and the bad, always. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Have a good meal, and *arrivederci!*

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