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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At midday today, *Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord*, 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, *buongiorno!*

Today, we celebrate the Solemnity of the Epiphany, that is, the manifestation of the Lord to all peoples: in fact, the salvation wrought by Christ knows no boundaries. It is for everyone. Epiphany is not an additional mystery, it is always the same mystery as the Nativity, viewed, however, from the dimension of light, the light that illumines every man and women, the light to be *welcomed* in faith and the light *to bring to others* in charity, through witness, in the proclamation of the Gospel.

Isaiah's vision, reported in today's Liturgy (see 60:1-6), resounds in our time and is more timely than ever: "darkness covers the earth, and thick darkness the peoples" (v. 2), the text from Isaiah says. With that background, the prophet announced the light: the light given by God to Jerusalem and destined to enlighten the path of all the peoples. This light has the power to attract everyone, near and far, everyone sets out on the path to reach it, verse 3). It is a vision that opens the heart, that makes the breath come easier, that invites hope. Certainly, the darkness is present and threatening in everyone's life and in the story of humanity; but God's light is more powerful. It needs to be welcomed so that it might shine on everyone. But, we can distance this light from us. But we can ask ourselves: "Where is this light?" The prophet caught a glimpse of it from afar, but that was already enough to fill the heart of Jerusalem with irrepressible joy. Where is that light?

The Evangelist Matthew in his turn, recounting the episode of the Magi (see 2:1-12), shows that this light is the Baby of Bethlehem, it is Jesus, even if His kingship was not accepted by everyone. Rather some rejected it, like

King Herod. He is the star who appeared on the horizon, the awaited Messiah, the One through whom God would inaugurate His kingdom of love, His kingdom of justice and of peace. He was born not only for some, but for all men and women, for all peoples. The light is for all peoples, salvation is for all peoples.

And how does this “radiation” come? How does Christ’s light shine in every place and at every moment? It has its own method of expanding. It does not do so through the powerful means of this world’s empires who always seek to seize power. No, Christ’s light spreads through the proclamation of the Gospel. Through proclamation...by word and witness. And with this same “method”, God chose to come among us: the Incarnation, that is, by drawing near to the other, encountering the other, assuming the reality of the other and bringing the witness of our faith, everyone. This is the only way that Christ’s light, who is Love, can shine in those who welcome it and attract others. Christ’s light does not expand only through words, through fake methods, commercial ones.... No, no, through faith, word and witness. Thus the light of Christ expands. The star is Christ, but we too can and must also be the star for our brothers and sisters, as witnesses of the treasures of goodness and infinite mercy that the Redeemer offers freely to everyone. Christ’s light does not expand through proselytism. It expands through witness, through the confession of the faith. Even through martyrdom.

Therefore, the condition is to welcome this light within, to welcome it always more. Woe to us if we think we possess it, no; woe to us if we think that we only need to “manage” it! No. Like the Magi, we too are called to allow ourselves to be fascinated, attracted, guided, illuminated and converted by Christ: He is the journey of faith, through prayer and the contemplation of God’s works, who continually fills us with joy and wonder, an ever new wonder. That wonder is the always the first step to go forward in this light.

Let us invoke the protection of Mary on the universal Church, so that it might spread throughout the entire world the Gospel of Christ, the light of all the peoples, the light of every people.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

I am following carefully and with preoccupation the events in the Central African Republic where elections recently took place in which the people have manifested the desire to pursue the path of peace. I invite all of the parties to a fraternal, respectful dialogue, to reject any form of hatred and to avoid any form of violence.

I extend my affection to the brothers and sisters of the Oriental Churches, Catholic and Orthodox, who, according to their tradition celebrate the Nativity of the Lord tomorrow. To them, I extend my most heartfelt wishes for a Holy Christmas in the light of Christ our peace and our hope.

On today’s feast of Epiphany the World Missionary Child Day is celebrated which involves many children and boys and girls around the world. I thank each one of them and I encourage them to be joyful witnesses of Jesus, seeking to always bring fraternity among your peers.

I cordially greet all of you connected through various means of communication. A special greeting goes to the Three Kings Procession Foundation that organizes events of evangelization and solidarity in numerous cities and villages in Poland and in other nations.

I wish you all a Happy Feast Day! Please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your meal and *arrivederci*.
