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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, *buongiorno!*

The Gospel for the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (see *Jn* 1:35-42) presents the meeting between Jesus and His first disciples. The scene unfolds along the Jordan River the day after Jesus's baptism. It is John the Baptist himself who points out the Messiah to the two with these words: "Behold, the Lamb of God!" (v. 36). And those two, trusting the Baptist's testimony, follow Jesus. He realizes this and asks: "What are you looking for?", and they ask Him: "Rabbi, where are you staying?" (v. 38).

Jesus does not respond: "I live in Capernaum, or in Nazareth", but says: "Come and you will see" (v. 39). Not a calling card, but an invitation for an encounter. The two follow Him and remained that afternoon with Him. It is not difficult to imagine them seated asking Him questions and above all listening to Him, feeling their hearts enflamed ever more while the Master speaks. They sense the beauty of the words that respond to their greatest hope. And all of a sudden they discover that, even though it is evening, in their hearts, that light that only God can give was exploding within them. One thing that catches our attention: sixty years later, or maybe more, one of them would write in his Gospel: "it was about four in the afternoon" – he wrote the time. And this is one thing that makes us think: every authentic encounter with Jesus remains alive in the memory, it is never forgotten. You forget many encounters, but a true encounter with Jesus remains forever. And many years later, those two even remembered the time, they had not forgotten that encounter that was so happy, so complete, that it changed their lives. Then, when they leave from that meeting and return to their brothers, that joy, that light overflows from their hearts like a raging river. One of the two, Andrew, says to his brother, Simon – whom Jesus will call

Peter when He will meet him – “We have found the Messiah” (v. 41). They left sure that Jesus was the Messiah, certain.

Let us pause a moment on this experience of meeting Christ who calls us to remain with Him. Each one of God’s calls is an initiative of His love. He is the one who always takes the initiative. He calls you. God calls to *life*, He calls to *faith*, and He calls to a *particular state* in life: “I want you here”. God’s first call is to *life*, through which He makes us persons; it is an individual call because God does not make things in series. Then God calls us to *faith* and to become part of His family as children of God. Lastly, God calls us to a *particular state* in life: to give of ourselves on the path of matrimony, or that of the priesthood or the consecrated life. They are different ways of realizing God’s design that He has for each one of us that is always a design of love. But God calls always. And the greatest joy for every believer is to respond to that call, offering one’s entire being to the service of God and the brothers and sisters.

Brothers and sisters, before the Lord’s call, which reaches us in a thousand ways – through others, happy or sad events – our attitude at times might be rejection. No... “I am afraid”... Rejection because it seems to be in contrast to our aspirations; and even fear because we believe it is too demanding and uncomfortable: “Oh no, I will never be able to do it, better not to, a calmer life is better... God over there, me here”. But God’s call is always love: we need to try to discover the love behind each call, and it should be responded to only with love. This is the language: the response to a call that comes out of love, only love. At the beginning there is an encounter, or rather, there is *the encounter* with Jesus who speaks to us of His Father, He makes His love known to us. And then the spontaneous desire will arise even in us to communicate it to the people that we love: “I met Love”, “I met the Messiah”, “I met Jesus”, “I found the meaning of my life”. In a word: “I found God”.

May the Virgin Mary help us make of our lives a hymn of praise to God in response to His call and in the humble and joyful fulfillment of His will.

But let us remember this: there was a moment for each one of us, in his or her life, in which God made Himself present more strongly, with a call. Let us remember that. Let us go back to that moment so that the memory of that moment might always renew that encounter with Jesus for us.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

I express my closeness to the population of the Island of Sulawesi in Indonesia, hit by a strong earthquake. I pray for the deceased, for the wounded, and for all those who lost their homes and jobs. May the Lord console and sustain the efforts of all those who are engaged in bringing aid. Let us pray together for our brothers and sisters of Sulawesi, and for the victims of the airplane accident that also happened in Indonesia last Saturday. (Hail Mary...)

Today the Day for deepening and developing the dialogue between Catholics and Jews is being celebrated in Italy. I am delighted that this initiative has been going on for over thirty years, and I hope that it might bear abundant fruits of fraternity and collaboration.

Tomorrow is an important day: The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins. This year, the theme refers to Jesus’s counsel: “Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit”. And Monday, 25 January, we will conclude it with the celebration of Vespers in the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls, together with representatives of other Churches and Christian communities present in Rome. In these days, let us pray together so that Jesus’s desire might be accomplished – that all may be one: unity, that is always superior to conflict.

I extend my cordial greetings to all of you who are connected through the means of social communication. I wish

all of you a good Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your meal and *arrivederci!*
