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## The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At midday today, Second Sunday of the Word of God, 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!*

This Sunday's Gospel passage (cf. *Mk* 1:14-20) shows us, so to speak, the "passing of the baton" from John the Baptist to Jesus. John was His precursor; he prepared the terrain for Him and prepared the way for Him: now Jesus can begin his mission and announce the salvation by now present; He was salvation. His preaching is summarized in these words: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel" (v. 15). Simply. Jesus did not mince words. It is a message that invites us to reflect on two essential themes: *time* and *conversion*.

In this text of Mark the Evangelist, *time* is to be understood as the duration of the history of salvation worked by God; therefore, the time "fulfilled" is that in which this salvific action reaches its pinnacle, full realization: it is the historical moment in which God sent his Son into the world and his Kingdom is rendered more "close" than ever. The time of salvation is fulfilled because Jesus has arrived. However, salvation is not automatic; salvation is a gift of love and as such offered to human freedom. Always, when we speak of love, we speak of freedom: a love without freedom is not love; it may be interest, it may be fear, many things, but love is always free, and being free it calls for a freely given response: it calls for our *conversion*. Thus, it means to change mentality – this is conversion, to change mentality – and to change life: to no longer follow the examples of the world but those of God, who is Jesus; to follow Jesus, as Jesus had done, and as Jesus taught us. It is a decisive change of view and attitude. In fact, sin – above all the sin of worldliness which is like air, it permeates everything – brought about a mentality that tends toward the affirmation of oneself against others and against God. This is curious....

What is your identity? And so often we hear that one's identity is expressed in terms of "opposition". It is difficult to express one's identity in the worldly spirit in positive terms and those of salvation: it is against oneself, against others and against God. And for this purpose it does not hesitate – the mentality of sin, the worldly mentality – to use deceit and violence. Deceit and violence. We see what happens with deceit and violence: greed, desire for power and not to serve, war, exploitation of people.... This is the mentality of deceit that definitely has its origins in the father of deceit, the great pretender, the devil. He is the father of lies, as Jesus defines him.

All this is opposed by the message of Jesus, who invites us to recognize ourselves as in need of God and his grace; to have a balanced attitude with regard to earthly goods; to be welcoming and humble toward others; to know and fulfil ourselves in the encounter with and service of others. For each one of us the time in which we are able to receive redemption is brief: it is the duration of our life in this world. It is brief. Perhaps it seems long.... I remember that I went to administer the Sacraments, the Anointing of the Sick to a very good elderly man, very good, and in that moment, before receiving the Eucharist and the Anointing of the Sick, he told me this phrase: "My life flew by". This is how we, the elderly, feel, that life has passed away. It passes away. And life is a gift of God's infinite love, but is also the time to prove our love for Him. For this reason every moment, every instant of our existence is precious time to love God and to love our neighbour, and thereby enter into eternal life.

The history of our life has two rhythms: one, measurable, made of hours, days, years; the other, composed of the seasons of our development: birth, childhood, adolescence, maturity, old age, death. Every period, every phase has its own value, and can be a privileged moment of encounter with the Lord. Faith helps us to discover the spiritual significance of these periods: each one of them contains a particular call of the Lord, to which we can offer a positive or negative response. In the Gospel we see how Simon, Andrew, James and John responded: they were mature men; they had their work as fishermen, they had their family life.... Yet, when Jesus passed and called to them, "immediately they left their nets and followed him" (Mk 1:18).

Dear brothers and sisters, let us stay attentive and not let Jesus pass by without welcoming him. Saint Augustine said "I am afraid of God when he passes by". Afraid of what? Of not recognizing Him, of not seeing Him, not welcoming Him.

May the Virgin Mary help us to live each day, each moment as the time of salvation, in which the Lord passes and calls us to follow him, every second of our life. And may she help us to convert from the mentality of the world, that of worldly reveries which are fireworks, to that of love and service.

### **After the Angelus**

Dear brothers and sisters, this Sunday is dedicated to the Word of God. One of the great gifts of our time is the rediscovery of Sacred Scripture in the life of the Church at all levels. Never as today has the Bible been accessible to everyone: in all languages and now even in audiovisual and digital formats. Saint Jerome, the 16th centenary of whose death I recently recalled, says that those who ignore Scripture ignore Christ; those who ignore Scripture ignore Christ (cf. *In Isaiam Prol.*). And vice versa is Jesus, the Word made Flesh, dead and risen, who opens our mind to understanding the Scriptures (cf. Lk 24:45). This happens in particular in the Liturgy, but also when we pray alone or as a group, especially with the Gospel and with the Psalms. I thank and encourage the parishes for their steadfast commitment to educate to listening and to the Word of God. May we never lack the joy to sow the Gospel. And I repeat once again: may we have the habit, may you have the habit of always carrying a small Gospel in your pocket, in your bag, to be able to read it during the day, at least three, four verses. The Gospel always with us.

This past 20 January, a few metres from Saint Peter's Square, a homeless 46-year-old Nigerian man named Edwin was found dead due to the cold. His incident is added to that of so many other homeless people who

have recent died in Rome in the same tragic circumstances. Let us pray for Edwin. Let us be admonished by what was said by Saint Gregory the Great, who before the death of a mendicant due to the cold, stated that that day Mass would not be celebrated because it was like Good Friday. Let us think of Edwin. Let us think of what this man, 46 years old, felt, in the cold, ignored by everyone, abandoned, even by us. Let us pray for him.

Tomorrow afternoon, in the Basilica of Saint Paul outside the Wall, we will celebrate Vespers for the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul, at the conclusion of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, together with representatives of other Churches and ecclesial communities. I invite you spiritually join in our prayer.

Today is also the memorial of Saint Francis de Sales, Patron of journalists. Yesterday the Message for World Day of Social Communications, entitled "Come and see, was disseminated. Communicating by encountering people where and as they are". I encourage all journalists and communicators to "go and see", even where no one wants to go, and witness to the truth.

I greet all of you who are linked via media. A reminder and a prayer goes to the families who are struggling more in this period. Take courage, let us go forth! Let us pray for these families, and to the extent possible let us be their neighbours. And I wish a happy Sunday to all. Please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch.  
*Arrivederci!*

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