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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At the end of the Holy Mass celebrated in the Vatican Basilica on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the evangelisation of the Philippines, Pope Francis appeared at the window of his study in the Vatican Apostolic Palace to pray the Angelus with the faithful and pilgrims gathered in Saint Peter's Square.

The following are the Holy Father's words of introduction to the Marian prayer:

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

On this fourth Sunday of Lent, the Eucharistic liturgy begins with this invitation: "Rejoice, Jerusalem...". (see *Is* 66:10). What is the reason for this joy? In the middle of Lent, what is the reason for this joy? Today's Gospel tells us: God "so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (*Jn* 3:16). This joyful message is the heart of the Christian faith: God's love found its summit in the gift of his Son to a weak and sinful humanity. He gave his Son to us, to all of us.

This is what appears in the nocturnal dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus, a part of which is described in the same Gospel passage (see *Jn* 3:14-21). Nicodemus, like every member of the people of Israel, awaited the Messiah, identifying him as a strong man who would judge the world with power. Instead, Jesus challenges this expectation by presenting himself in three forms: the *Son of man* exalted on the cross; the *Son of God* sent into the world for salvation; and that of the *light* that distinguishes those who follow the truth from those who follow lies. Let us take a look at these three aspects: Son of man, Son of God, and light.

Jesus presents himself first of all as the *Son of man* (vv. 14-15). The text alludes to the account of the bronze serpent (see *Nm* 21: 4-9) which, by God's will, was mounted by Moses in the desert when the people were attacked by poisonous snakes; whoever had been bitten and looked at the bronze serpent was healed. Similarly, Jesus was lifted up on the cross and those who believe in him are healed of sin and live.

The second aspect is that of the *Son of God* (vv. 16-18). God the Father loves humanity to the point of “giving” his Son: he gave him in the Incarnation and he gave him in handing him over to death. The purpose of God's gift is the eternal life of every person: in fact, God sends his Son into the world not to condemn it, but so that the world that it might be saved through Jesus. Jesus' mission is a mission of salvation, of salvation for everyone.

The third name that Jesus gives himself is “*light*” (vv. 19-21). The Gospel says: “The light has come into the world, but people have loved darkness more than light” (v. 19). The coming of Jesus into the world leads to a choice: whoever chooses darkness will face a judgment of condemnation, whoever chooses light will have a judgment of salvation. The judgement is always the consequence of the free choice of each person: whoever practices evil seeks the darkness, evil always hides, it covers itself. Whoever seeks the truth, that is, who practices what is good, comes to the light, illuminates the paths of life. Whoever walks in the light, whoever approaches the light, cannot but do good works. This is what we are called to do with greater dedication during Lent: to welcome the light into our conscience, to open our hearts to God's infinite love, to his mercy full of tenderness and goodness, to his forgiveness. Do not forget that God always forgives, always, if we humbly ask for forgiveness. It is enough just to ask for forgiveness, and he forgives. In this way we will find true joy and be able to rejoice in God's forgiveness, which regenerates and gives life.

May Mary Most Holy help us not to be afraid of letting ourselves be “thrown into crisis” by Jesus. It is a healthy crisis, for our healing: so that our joy may be full.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

Ten years ago, the bloody conflict in Syria began, leading to one of the most serious humanitarian catastrophes of our time: an untold number of dead and wounded, millions of refugees, thousands missing, destruction, violence of all kinds and immense suffering for the entire population, especially the most vulnerable, such as children, women and the elderly. I renew my heartfelt appeal to the parties to the conflict to show signs of goodwill, so that a glimmer of hope may open up for the exhausted population. I also hope for a decisive and renewed commitment, constructive and in solidarity, on the part of the international community, so that, once the weapons have been laid down, the social fabric can be mended and reconstruction and economic recovery can begin. Let us all pray to the Lord that the great suffering in our beloved and tormented Syria may not be forgotten, and that our solidarity might revive hope. Let us pray together for our beloved and tormented Syria.
Hail Mary...

Next Friday, 19 March, Solemnity of Saint Joseph, will open the *Amoris Laetitia Year of the Family*: a special year to grow in family love. I call for a renewed and creative pastoral drive to place the family at the centre of the attention of both Church and society. I pray that every family may feel in its own home the living presence of the Holy Family of Nazareth, that it may fill our small domestic communities with sincere and generous love, a source of joy even in trials and difficulties.

I greet the boys and girls of the basketball team, accompanied by their families and their coaches, present today in the Square. Well done, carry on like this, keep going!

I warmly greet you all, dear faithful of Rome and dear pilgrims. And in particular, I greet the many Filipinos, who are celebrating five hundred years since the evangelisation of the Philippines. Best wishes to you! And onwards, with the joy of the Gospel!

I wish you all a blessed Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch, and *arrivederci!*

