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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At midday today, Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Holy Father 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 Pope's words of introduction to the Marian prayer:

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno* and happy feast day!

In today's Gospel, the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Mary into Heaven, the *Magnificat* resounds in the liturgy. This hymn of praise is like a "photograph" of the Mother of God. Mary "rejoices in God", why? "Because he has looked on the *humility* of his handmaid", as it says (cf *Lk* 1:47-48).

Mary's secret is humility. It is her humility that attracted God's gaze to her. The human eye always looks for grandeur and allows itself to be dazzled by what is flashy. Instead, God does not look at the appearance, God looks at the heart (cf *1 Sam* 16:7) and is enchanted by humility. Humility of heart enchants God. Today, looking at Mary assumed into heaven, we can say that humility is the way that leads to Heaven. The word "humility", as we know, comes from the Latin word *humus*, which means "earth". It is paradoxical: to arrive on high, in Heaven, what is needed is to stay low, like the earth! Jesus teaches this: "the one who humbles himself will be exalted" (*Lk* 14:11). God does not exalt us because of our gifts, because of our wealth or how well we do things, but because of humility. God loves humility. God lifts up the one who humbles him or herself; he lifts up the one who serves. Mary, in fact, attributes no other "title" except servant to herself, to serve: she is, "the servant of the Lord" (*Lk* 1:38). She says nothing else about herself, she seeks nothing else for herself. Only to be the servant of the Lord.

Today, then, let us ask ourselves, each one of us in our heart: how am I doing with humility? Do I want to be

recognised by others, to affirm myself and to be praised, or do I think rather about serving? Do I know how to listen, like Mary, or do I want only to speak and receive attention? Do I know how to keep silence, like Mary, or am I always chattering? Do I know how to take a step back, defuse quarrels and arguments, or do I always want to excel? Let us think about these questions, each one of us: how am I doing with humility?

In her littleness, Mary wins Heaven first. The secret of her success is precisely that she recognises her lowliness, that she recognises her need. With God, only those who recognise themselves as nothing can receive the all. Only the one who empties him or herself can be filled by Him. And Mary is the “full of grace” (v. 28) precisely because of her humility. For us as well, humility is always the point of departure, always, it is the beginning of our having faith. It is fundamental to be poor in spirit, that is *in need of God*. Those who are filled with themselves have no space for God. And many times, we are full of ourselves, and the one who is filled with him or herself gives no space to God, but those who remain humble allow the Lord to accomplish great things (cf v.49).

The poet, Dante, calls the Virgin Mary, “humbler and loftier than any creature” (*Paradise*, XXXIII, 2). It is beautiful to think that the humblest and loftiest creature in history, the first to win heaven with her entire being, in soul and body, lived out her life for the most part within the domestic walls, she lived out her life in the ordinary, in humility. The days of the *Full of grace* were not all that striking. They followed one after the other, often exactly the same, in silence: externally, nothing extraordinary. But God’s gaze was always upon her, admiring her humility, her availability, the beauty of her heart never stained by sin.

It is a huge message of hope for us, for you, for each one of us, for you whose days are always the same, tiring and often difficult. Mary reminds you today that God calls you too to this glorious destiny. These are not beautiful words: it is the truth. It is not a well-crafted, beautiful ending, a pious illusion or a false consolation. No, it is the truth, it is pure reality, it is as real, as live and true as the Madonna assumed into Heaven. Let us celebrate her today with the love of children, let us celebrate her joyful but humble, enlivened by the hope of one day being with her in Heaven!

And let us pray to her now that she accompany us on our journey that leads from Earth to Heaven. May she remind us that the secret to the journey is contained in the word humility. Let us not forget this word which the Madonna always reminds us of. And that lowliness and service are the secrets for obtaining the goal, of reaching heaven.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

I join in the unanimous concern for the situation in Afghanistan. I ask all of you to pray with me to the God of peace so that the clamour of weapons might cease and solutions can be found at the table of dialogue. Only thus can the battered population of that country – men, women, elderly and children – return to their own homes, and live in peace and security, in total mutual respect.

In the past few hours, a strong earthquake occurred in Haiti, provoking numerous deaths, wounding many, and causing extensive material damage. I want to express my closeness to the dear people hard hit by the earthquake. While I lift up my prayer to the Lord for the victims, I extend my word of encouragement to the survivors, hoping that the interest of the international community to help might move toward them. May the solidarity of all alleviate the consequences of the tragedy! Let us pray together to the Madonna for Haiti. Hail Mary...

I greet all of you, people from Rome and pilgrims from various countries: families, associations and individual members of the faithful. In particular, I greet the group from Santa Giustina in Colle, the young people from

Carugate, and those from Sabbio Bergamasco and from Verona.

In addition, I would like to extend a thought to those who are passing these days of *Ferragosto* in various tourist resorts: I wish them serenity and peace. I cannot, however, forget those who cannot go on vacation, those who remain at the service of the community and those who find themselves in uncomfortable conditions, aggravated by the strong heat and by the lack of certain services due to the holiday. I think especially of the ill, the elderly, the incarcerated, the unemployed, refugees and all those who are alone or in difficulty. May Mary extend her maternal protection over each one of you.

I invite you to perform a beautiful gesture today: go to a Marian Shrine to venerate the Madonna. Those who are in Rome could go to pray before the icon of the *Salus Populi Romani*, in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major.

I wish all of you a good Sunday and a happy feast of the Assumption! Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch and *arrivederci!*
