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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At midday today, 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!*

The Gospel of today's Liturgy tells of Jesus who, when leaving Jericho, restores the sight of Bartimaeus, a blind man begging by the roadside (cf. *Mk* 10:46-52). It is an important encounter, the last one before the Lord's entry into Jerusalem for the Passover. Bartimaeus had lost his sight, but not his voice! For, when he heard that Jesus was about to pass by, he begins to cry out: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (v. 47). And he shouts and shouts. The disciples and the crowd, annoyed by his shouting, rebuke him to make him be quiet. But he shouts even louder: "Son of David, have mercy on me!" (v. 48). Jesus hears, and immediately stops. God always listens to the cry of the poor and is not at all disturbed by Bartimaeus' voice; rather, he realises it is full of faith, a faith that is not afraid to insist, to knock on the door of God's heart, despite not being understood and being reproached. And here lies the root of the miracle. Indeed, Jesus says to him: "Your faith has made you well" (v. 52).

Bartimaeus' faith is evident from his prayer. It is not a timid and standard prayer. First and foremost, he calls the Lord "Son of David": that is, he acknowledges Jesus as the Messiah, the King who would come into the world. Then he calls Him by name, confidently; "Jesus". He is not afraid of Him, he does not stay at a distance. And thus, from the heart, he shouts out his entire drama to God who is his friend: "Have mercy on me!" Just that prayer: "Have mercy on me!" He does not ask for some loose change as he does with passers-by. No. *He asks for everything from the One who can do everything.* He asks people for loose change; he asks everything from Jesus who can do everything. "Have mercy *on me*, have mercy on all that I am". He does not ask for a favour,

but presents himself: he asks for mercy on his person, on his life. It is not a small request, but it is so beautiful because it is a cry for mercy, that is, compassion, God's mercy, his tenderness.

Bartimaeus does not use many words. He says what is essential and entrusts himself to God's love which can make his life flourish again by doing what is humanly impossible. This is why he does not ask the Lord for alms, but makes everything be seen – his blindness and his suffering which was far more than not being able to see. His blindness was the tip of the iceberg; but there must have been wounds, humiliations, broken dreams, mistakes, remorse in his heart. He prayed with his heart. And what about us? When we ask for God's grace, in our prayer do we also include our own history, our wounds, our humiliations, our broken dreams, our mistakes and our regrets?

"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Let us, too, recite this prayer today. And let us ask ourselves: "What is my prayer like?" All of us, let us ask ourselves: "What is my prayer like?" Is it courageous, does it contain the good insistence of Bartimaeus, does it know how to *"take hold" of the Lord as he passes*, or is it rather content with making a formal greeting every now and then, when I remember? Those lukewarm prayers that do not help at all. Furthermore, is my prayer "substantial", does it bare my heart before the Lord? Do I take my story and life experience to him? Or is it anaemic, superficial, made up of rituals, without feeling and without heart? When faith is alive, prayer is heartfelt: it does not beg for spare change, it is not reduced to momentary needs. We must ask everything of Jesus, who can do everything. Do not forget this. We must ask everything of Jesus, with my insistence before Him. He cannot wait to pour out his grace and joy into our hearts; but unfortunately, it is we who keep our distance, through timidity, laziness or unbelief.

So many of us, when we pray, do not believe that the Lord can work miracles. I am reminded of the story - which I have seen - of the father who was told by the doctors that his nine-year-old daughter would not spend the night; she was in hospital. And he took a bus and travelled seventy kilometres to the Shrine of Our Lady. It was closed and, clinging to the gate, spent the whole night praying: "Lord, save her! Lord, give her life!" He prayed to Our Lady, all night long, crying out to God, crying from his heart. Then in the morning, when he returned to the hospital, he found his wife weeping. And he thought: "She is dead". And his wife said: "No-one understands, no-one understands, the doctors say it's a strange thing, she seems to have healed". The cry of that man who asked for everything was heard by the Lord who had given him everything. This is not a story: I saw this myself, in the other diocese. Do we have this courage in prayer? To the One who can give us everything, let us ask everything, like Bartimaeus, who was a great teacher, a great master of prayer. May Bartimaeus, with his genuine, insistent and courageous faith, be an example for us. And may Our Lady, the prayerful Virgin, teach us to turn to God with all our heart, confident that He listens attentively to every prayer.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

I express my closeness to the thousands of migrants, refugees and others in need of protection in Libya: I never forget you; I hear your cries and I pray for you. So many of these men, women and children are subjected to inhuman violence. Once again, I call on the international community to keep its promises to seek common, concrete and lasting solutions for the management of migratory flows in Libya and throughout the Mediterranean. And how those who are turned away suffer! There are real lagers there. We must put an end to the return of migrants to unsafe countries and give priority to saving lives at sea, with rescue devices and predictable disembarkation, guaranteeing them decent living conditions, alternatives to detention, regular migration routes and access to asylum procedures. Let us be aware of our responsibility for these brothers and sisters of ours, who have been victims of this very serious situation for too many years. Let us pray together for them in silence.

Yesterday, Sister Lucia *dell'Immacolata*, a religious of the Handmaids of Charity, was beatified in Brescia. A gentle and hospitable woman, she died in 1954 at the age of 45, after a life spent in the service of others, even

when illness had weakened her body but not her spirit. And today, the young Sandra Sabattini, a medical student who died in a car accident at the age of 22, is being beatified in Rimini. A joyful girl, animated by great love and daily prayer, she dedicated herself with enthusiasm to the service of the weakest in accordance with the charism of the Servant of God Don Oreste Benzi. Let us applaud the two new Blessed. All together!

Today, World Mission Day, let us look upon these two new Blessed as witnesses who proclaimed the Gospel with their lives. And with gratitude I greet the many missionaries - priests, men and women religious, and lay faithful - who spend their energies in the service of Christ's Church, paying first hand - sometimes at great cost - for their witness. And they do so not to proselytise, but to bear witness to the Gospel in their own lives in lands that do not know Jesus. Many thanks to the missionaries! A big round of applause to them too, everyone! I also greet the seminarians of the Urban College.

And I greet all of you, dear Romans and pilgrims from various countries. In particular, I greet the Peruvian community – there are so many Peruvian flags here! - which is celebrating the feast of the *Señor de los Milagros*. This year's Nativity display will also be from the Peruvian community. I also greet a Filipino community in Rome; I greet the *Centro Academico Romano Fundación* from Spain; the Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus gathered in their Chapter and the group of the Emmanuel Community. I also greet the participants in the "marathon" from Treviso to Rome and those travelling the "Way" from the Sacra di San Michele to Monte Sant'Angelo; the cycling pilgrimage in memory of Saint Luigi Guanella; I greet the faithful of Palmi, Asola and San Cataldo. And I send a special greeting to the participants in the Social Week of Italian Catholics, gathered in Taranto, on the theme "The Planet We Hope For".

I wish you all a blessed Sunday. The weather is fine. And please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your meal, and *arrivederci!*
