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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 scene described in the Gospel of today's Liturgy takes place inside the Temple of Jerusalem. Jesus looks, he looks at what is happening in this the most sacred of places; and he sees how the scribes love to walk around to be seen, greeted and revered, and in order to have the places of honour. And Jesus adds that they "devour widows' houses and recite long prayers in order to be seen" (cf. *Mk* 12:40). At the same time, another scene catches his eyes: a poor widow, precisely one of those exploited by the powers that be, puts in the Temple treasury "everything she had, her whole living" (*Mk* 12:44). This is what the Gospel says, she puts everything she had to live on in the Treasury. The Gospel presents us with this striking contrast: the rich who give from their surplus wealth to make themselves seen, and a poor woman, who without seeming to, offers every little bit she has. Two symbols of human attitudes.

Jesus watches the two scenes. And it is specifically this verb – "to watch" – that sums up his teaching: "we must watch out for" those who live their faith with duplicity, like the scribes, so as not to become like them; whereas we must "watch" the widow, and take her as a model. Let us reflect on this: *to watch out for hypocrites and to watch the poor widow*.

First of all, *to watch out for hypocrites*, that is, to be careful not to base our life on the cult of appearances, externals, and the exaggerated care of one's own image. And most importantly, to be careful not to bend faith around our own interests. In the name of God, those scribes covered-up their own vainglory, and even worse,

they used religion to cultivate their own affairs, abusing their authority and exploiting the poor. Here we see that very bad attitude that we see in many places today, clericalism, this being above the humble, exploiting them, demeaning them, considering oneself perfect. This is the evil of clericalism. This is a warning for all time and for everyone, Church and society: never to take advantage of a specific role to crush others, never to make money off the backs of the weakest! And to watch out so as not to fall into vanity, so as not to be fixated on appearances, losing what is essential and living superficially. Let us ask ourselves, it will help us: do we want to be appreciated and gratified by what we say and what we do, or rather to be of service to God and neighbour, especially the weakest? We must be watch out for falsehood of the heart, against hypocrisy which is a dangerous illness of the soul! It is a dualism of thought, a dual judgement, as the word itself says: “to judge below”, to appear one way and “hypo”, beneath, to think in a different way. Doubles, people with double souls, a duality of the soul.

To heal this illness, Jesus invites us to *watch the poor widow*. The Lord denounces the exploitation of this woman, who, in making her offering, must return home without even the little she had to live on. How important it is to free the sacred from ties with money! Jesus had already said it elsewhere: you cannot serve two masters. Either you serve God - and we think he says “or the devil”, no - either God or money. He is a master, and Jesus says we must not serve him. But, at the same time, Jesus praises the fact that this widow puts all she has into the treasury. She has nothing left, but finds her everything in God. She is not afraid of losing the little she has because she trusts in God’s abundance, and God’s abundance multiplies the joy of those who give. This also makes us think of that other widow, the one of the prophet Elijah, who was about to make a flatbread with the last of her flour and the last of her oil; Elijah says to her: “Feed me” and she gives; and the flour never runs out, it is a miracle (cf. *1 Kings* 17:9-16). The Lord always, in the face of people’s generosity, goes further, is more generous. But it is He, not our avarice. This is why Jesus proposes her as a teacher of faith, this woman: she does not go to the Temple to clear her conscience, she does not pray to make herself seen, she does not show off her faith, but she gives from her heart generously and freely. The sound of her few coins is more beautiful than the grandiose offerings of the rich, since they express a life sincerely dedicated to God, a faith that does not live by appearances but by unconditional trust. Let us learn from her: a faith without external frills, but interiorly sincere; a faith composed of humble love for God and for our brothers and sisters.

And now let us turn to the Virgin Mary, who with a humble and transparent heart made her entire life a gift for God and for his people.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

I follow with concern the news from the region of the Horn of Africa, particularly from Ethiopia, shaken by a conflict which has lasted for more than a year and which has claimed numerous victims and caused a serious humanitarian crisis. I invite everyone to pray for those peoples so sorely tried, and I renew my appeal for fraternal harmony and the peaceful path of dialogue to prevail.

I also assure my prayers for the victims of the fire following a fuel explosion on the outskirts of Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone.

Yesterday in Manresa, Spain, three martyrs to the faith, belonging to the Order of Capuchin Friars Minor, were proclaimed Blessed: Benet de Santa Coloma de Gramenet, Josep Oriol de Barcelona and Domènech de Sant Pere de Riudebitlles. They were killed during the religious persecution of the last century in Spain, proving to be meek and courageous witnesses to Christ. May their example help today’s Christians to remain faithful to their vocation, even in times of trial. Let us applaud these new Blesseds!

I greet you all, dear faithful of Rome and pilgrims from various countries, especially those who have come from the United States of America and from Portugal. I greet the groups of faithful from Prato and Foligno; and the

young people of the Profession of Faith in Bresso.

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