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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At the end of the Holy Mass celebrated in the Vatican Basilica for the Solemnity of Mary Mother of God, and the 55th World Peace Day, 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*! Happy New Year!

Let us begin the new year entrusting it to Mary, the Mother of God. The Gospel of today's Liturgy speaks of her, taking us back once again to the wonder of the crib. The shepherds hasten toward the stable and what do they find? The text says they find, "Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger" (*Lk* 2:16). Let us pause on this scene and let us imagine Mary who, like a tender and caring mamma, has just laid Jesus in the manger. We can see a gift given to us in that act of laying him down: the Madonna does not keep her Son to herself, but presents him to us. She not only holds him in her arms, but puts him down to invite us to look at him, welcome him, adore him. Behold Mary's maternity: she offers the Son who is born to all of us. Always by giving her Son, showing her Son, never treating her Son as something of her own, no. And so throughout Jesus' life.

And in laying him before our eyes, without saying a word, she gives us a wonderful message: God is near, within our reach. He does not come with the power of someone who wants to be feared, but with the frailness of someone who asks to be loved. He does not judge from his throne on high, but looks at us from below, like a brother, rather, like a son. He is born little and in need so that no one would ever again be ashamed. It is precisely when we experience our weakness and our frailness that we can feel God even nearer, because he appeared to us in this way – weak and frail. He is the God-child who is born so as not to exclude anyone. He did this to make us all become brothers and sisters.

And so, the new year begins with God who, in the arms of his mother and lying in a manger, gives us courage with tenderness. We need this encouragement. We are still living in uncertain and difficult times due to the pandemic. Many are frightened about the future and burdened by social problems, personal problems, dangers stemming from the ecological crisis, injustices and by global economic imbalances. Looking at Mary with her Son in her arms, I think of young mothers and their children fleeing wars and famine, or waiting in refugee camps. There are so many of them! And contemplating Mary who lays Jesus in the manger, making him available to everyone, let us remember that the world can change and everyone's life can improve only if we make ourselves available to others, without expecting them to begin to do so. If we become craftsmen of fraternity, we will be able to mend the threads of a world torn apart by war and violence.

Today the World Day of Peace is celebrated. Peace "is both a gift from on high and the fruit of a shared commitment" (*Message for the 55th World Day of Peace*, 1). *Gift* from on high: we need to implore it of Jesus because we are not capable of preserving it. We can truly build peace only if we have peace in our hearts, only if we receive it from the Prince of peace. But peace is also our *commitment*: it asks us to take the first step, it demands concrete actions. It is built by being attentive to the least, by promoting justice, with the courage to forgive thus extinguishing the fire of hatred. And it needs a positive outlook as well, one that always sees, in the Church as well as in society, not the evil that divides us, but the good that unites us! Getting depressed or complaining is useless. We need to roll up our sleeves to build peace. At the beginning of this year, may the Mother of God, the Queen of Peace, obtain harmony in our hearts and in the entire world.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

At the beginning of the New Year, I wish everyone peace, which is the epitome of all good. Peace! I warmly and gratefully acknowledge the greeting of the President of the Italian Republic, Sergio Mattarella, and I assure him of my prayers for him and for the Italian people.

Today is the World Day of Peace, initiated by Saint Paul VI in 1968. In this year's Message I emphasised that peace is built through dialogue between generations, through education and through work. Without these three elements, the foundations are missing.

I am grateful for all the initiatives promoted around the world on the occasion of this Day, compatibly with the pandemic situation; and in particular for the Vigil held yesterday evening in Savona Cathedral as an expression of the Church in Italy.

I greet the participants in the demonstration "Peace in all lands", organized by the Sant'Egidio Community here in Rome and in many parts of the world – these Sant'Egidio people are good, they are good! – in collaboration with the dioceses and the parishes. Thank you for your presence and your commitment!

And I greet you all, dear Romans and pilgrims! I greet the young people of Curtatone, the families of Forlimpopoli, the faithful of Padua and those of Comun Nuovo, near Sotto il Monte – the home town of Saint John XXIII, the Pope of the encyclical *Pacem in terris*, more relevant than ever.

Let us go home thinking: peace, peace, peace! We need peace. I was watching the images on the television programme "*A sua immagine*", today, on war, on displaced persons, on poverty… but this happens in the world today. We want peace!

Good wishes to you all! Please, do not forget to pray for me. Happy New Year! Have a good meal, and *arrivederci*, until tomorrow.