

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE  
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE  
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

# BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 220814a

Sunday 14.08.2022

## 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!*

In the Gospel of today's liturgy there is an expression of Jesus which always strikes us and challenges us. While he is walking with his disciples, he says: "I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" (Lk 12:49). What fire is he talking about? And what is the meaning of these words for us today, this fire that Jesus brings?

As we know, Jesus came to bring to the world the Gospel, that is, the good news of God's love for each one of us. Therefore, he is telling us that the Gospel is like a fire, because it is a message that, when it erupts into history, burns the old balances of living, burns the old balances of living, challenges us to come out of our individualism, challenges us to overcome selfishness, challenges us to shift from the slavery of sin and death to the new life of the Risen One, of the Risen Jesus. In other words, the Gospel does not leave things as they are; when the Gospel passes, and is listened to and received, things do not stay as they are. The Gospel provokes change and invites conversion. It does not dispense a false intimist peace, but sparks a restlessness that sets us in motion, and drives us to open up to God and to our brothers. It is just like fire: while it warms us with God's love, it wants to burn our selfishness, to enlighten the dark sides of life – we all have them, eh! – to consume the false idols that enslave us.

In the wake of the Biblical prophets – think, for example, of Elijah and Jeremiah – Jesus is inflamed by God's love and, to make it spread throughout the world, he expends himself personally, loving up to the end, that is, up

to death, and death on the cross (cf. *Phil 2:8*). He is filled with the Holy Spirit, who is compared to fire, and with his light and his strength, he unveils the mysterious face of God and gives fullness to those considered lost, breaks down the barriers of marginalization, heals the wounds of the body and the soul, and renews a religiosity that was reduced to external practices. This is why he is fire: he changes, purifies.

So, what does that word of Jesus mean for us, for each one of us – for me, for you, for you – what does this word of Jesus, about fire, mean for us? It invites us to rekindle the flame of faith, so that it does not become a secondary matter, or a means to individual wellbeing, enabling us to evade the challenges of life or commitment in the Church and society. Indeed – as a theologian said – faith in God “reassures us – but not on our level, or so to produce a paralyzing illusion, or a complacent satisfaction, but so as to enable us to act” (De Lubac, *The Discovery of God*). In short, faith is not a “lullaby” that lulls us to sleep. True faith is a fire, a living flame to keep us wakeful and active even at night!

And then, we might wonder: am I passionate about the Gospel? Do I read the Gospel often? Do I carry it with me? Does the faith I profess and celebrate lead me to complacent tranquility or does it ignite the flame of witness in me? We can also ask ourselves this question as Church: in our communities, does the fire of the Spirit burn, with the passion for prayer and charity, and the joy of faith? Or do we drag ourselves along in weariness and habit, with a downcast face, and a lament on our lips, and gossip every day? Brothers and sisters, let us examine ourselves on this, so that we too can say, like Jesus: we are inflamed with the fire of God’s love, and we want to spread it around the world, to take it to everyone, so that each person may discover the tenderness of the Father and experience the joy of Jesus, who enlarges the heart – and Jesus enlarges the heart! – and makes life beautiful. Let us pray to the Holy Virgin for this: may she, who welcomed the fire of the Holy Spirit, intercede for us.

### **After the Angelus**

Dear brothers and sisters,

I wish to draw your attention to the grave humanitarian crisis that afflicts Somalia and various zones of the neighbouring countries. The populations of this region, who already live in very precarious conditions, now find themselves in mortal danger due to drought. I hope that international solidarity can respond effectively to this emergency. Unfortunately, war diverts attention and resources, but these are the objectives that demand the utmost commitment: the fight against hunger, health, and education.

I address a warm greeting to you, faithful of Rome and pilgrims from various countries. I see Polish, Ukrainian, French, Italian and Argentine flags! So many pilgrims. I greet, in particular, the educators and catechists from the pastoral unit of Codevigo, Padua, university students of Salesian Youth Movement of Triveneto, and the young people of the pastoral unit of Villafranca, Verona.

And a special thought goes to the many pilgrims who are gathered today at the Shrine of Divine Mercy in Krakow, where twenty years ago Saint John Paul II performed the Act of Entrustment of the World to Divine Mercy. More than ever before, we see today the meaning of that gesture, which we must renew in prayer and in witness of life. Mercy is the way of salvation for every one of us, and for the entire world. And let us ask the Lord for special mercy, mercy and pity for the martyred Ukrainian people.

I wish you all a blessed Sunday. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch, and *arrivederci*, also the young people of the *Immacolata*.

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