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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer6a

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 from today's Liturgy concludes with a troubling question posed by Jesus: "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (*Lk* 18:8) It's almost like he was saying, "When I come again at the end of time" – or we could also think, even now, at this time of life – "will I find a bit of faith in you, in your world?" This is a serious question. Let us imagine that the Lord came today on earth. Unfortunately, he would see many wars, much poverty and many inequalities. At the same time, he would see tremendous technical conquests, modern means, and people who are always running, who never stop. But would he find someone who dedicates time and affection to him, someone who would put him in first place? Above all, let us ask ourselves, "What would he find in me, if the Lord were to come today, what would he find in me, in my life, in my heart? What priorities would he see in my life?"

We often focus on so many urgent but unnecessary things. We occupy and preoccupy ourselves with so many secondary realities. And perhaps without even recognizing it, we neglect what counts the most and we allow our love for God to grow cold, to grow cold bit by bit. Today, Jesus offers us the remedy to rekindle a tepid faith. And what is the remedy? Prayer. Yes, prayer is the medicine for faith, it is the restorative of the soul. It needs to be *constant prayer*, however. If we must undergo treatment to get better, it is important to follow the treatment plan well, to take the medicine faithfully and regularly in the right way and at the right times. This is necessary in all of life. Let us think of a houseplant: we need to water it consistently every day. We cannot soak it and then leave it without giving it water for a week! Even more so with prayer. We cannot live only on strong moments of prayer or

occasional intense encounters, and then “go into hibernation”. Our faith would dry up. We need the daily water of prayer, we need time dedicated to God, so that he can enter into our time, into our lives; we need consistent moments in which we open our hearts to him so that he can daily pour out on us love, peace, joy, strength, hope, thus nourishing our faith.

This is why Jesus tells his disciples – to everyone, not only to some! – “that they ought *always to pray* and not lose heart” (v. 1). Now someone might object: “But, how can I do that? I don’t live in a convent. I don’t have much time to pray!” Perhaps a wise spiritual practice for this real difficulty that the elderly, especially our grandparents, know well can come to our aid, which is a bit forgotten today. These are so-called *aspirations*. The name is a bit outdated, but the substance is good. What are they? They are very short, easy to memorize prayers that can be repeated often throughout the day, in the course of various activities, to remain “in tune” with the Lord. For example, as soon as we awaken, we can say: “Lord, I thank you and I offer this day to you”. This is a short prayer. Then, before an activity, we can repeat, “Come, Holy Spirit”. Between one thing and another, we can pray thus, “Jesus, I trust in you. Jesus, I love you”. Really short prayers that help us stay in contact with the Lord. How often we send instant messages to the people we love! Let’s do this with the Lord as well so that our hearts remain connected to him. And let’s not forget to read his responses. The Lord always responds. Where do we find them? In the Gospel which should always be kept at hand and should be opened several times every day, to receive a Word of life directed to us.

And let’s go back to the advice I have given many times – carry a pocket-size Gospel in your pocket in your purse. And when you have a minute, open it and read something, and the Lord will respond.

May the Virgin Mary, faithful listener, teach us the art of praying always, without losing heart.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

On 10 October last year, the first phase opened of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the theme, “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission”. Since then, the first phase of the Synod is being carried out in the local Churches through listening and discernment. The fruits of the synodal process under way are many, but so that they might come to full maturity, it is necessary not to be in a rush. Therefore, in order to have a more relaxed period of discernment, I have established that this Synodal Assembly will take place in two sessions. The first from 4 to 29 October 2023, and the second in October of 2024. I trust that this decision will promote the understanding of synodality as a constitutive dimension of the Church, and help everyone to live it as the journey of brothers and sisters who proclaim the joy of the Gospel.

Today, in Boves (Cuneo), Fathers Giuseppe Bernardi and Mario Ghibaudo – pastor and assistant pastor, killed in hatred of the faith in 1943 – will be proclaimed Blessed. In extreme danger they did not abandon the people entrusted to them, but assisted them even to the point of shedding their blood, sharing the tragic destiny of other fellow townspeople killed by the Nazis. May their example enkindle in priests the desire to be pastors after Christ’s heart, always alongside their people. A round of applause for the new Blesseds!

This Tuesday, 18 October, the Foundation “Aid to the Church in Need” is promoting the “A million children praying the Rosary” campaign. I thank all the children who are participating! Let us unite ourselves to them and entrust the suffering people of Ukraine, and other people who are suffering due to war and any form of violence and misery, to Our Lady’s intercession.

Regarding misery, tomorrow is the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Everyone can give a hand toward a society where no one feels excluded because they are poor.

I greet all of you, people from Rome and pilgrims from various countries: families, parish groups, associations. In particular, I greet the musical band from Freiburg that I heard playing. You are really good! The “Comelico” Choir from Santo Stefano di Cadore and the Association of the Militia of the Immaculata, and the representatives of the Spanish Confederation of Business Organizations and the Spanish Federation of the Self-Employed. I also greet those who are here from Chajarí, Entre Ríos Province (Argentina). May God bless you!

I hope all of you have a good Sunday. And, please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch and *arrivederci!*