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## The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

After the celebration of Holy Mass on the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, at midday 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* and Happy Feast Day!

Today, the Solemnity of the Epiphany, the Gospel speaks to us about the Magi who, arriving in Bethlehem, open their treasures and offer gold, incense and myrrh to Jesus (cf. *Mt* 2:11). These wise men from the East are famous because of the gifts they offered. Considering their story, however, we could say that, above all, *they receive three gifts*. They received three gifts, three precious gifts that regard us as well. They give gold, incense and myrrh, but what are the three gifts they received?

The first gift is the gift of the *call*. The Magi were not alerted because they had read the Scriptures or because they had seen a vision of angels, but they sensed it while they were studying the stars. This tells us something important – God calls us through our aspirations and our greatest desires. The Magi allowed themselves to be amazed and discomfited by the novelty of the star and they set out on a journey toward the unknown. Wise and educated, they were fascinated more by what they did not know than by what they already knew. They were open to what they did not know. They felt called to *go beyond*. They did not feel happy remaining there. No, they were called to go beyond. This is important for us as well – we are called not to be satisfied, to seek the Lord by stepping out of our comfort zone, journeying toward him with others, immersing ourselves in reality. For God calls every day, here and now. God calls us, each one of us, every day. He calls us here and he calls us now. He calls us in our world.

But the Magi speak to us about a second gift: *discernment*. Seeing they are looking for a king, they go to Jerusalem to speak with King Herod, who, however, is a man hungry for power and wants to use them to eliminate the baby Messiah. But the Magi are not stupid, they do not allow themselves to be taken in by Herod. They know how to distinguish between the goal of their journey and the temptations they find on the way. They could have remained there in Herod's court, serene. No, they move ahead. They leave Herod's palace and, attentive to the sign from God, do not pass that way again, but return by another route (cf. v. 12). Brothers and sisters, how important it is to know how to distinguish life's goal from the temptations along the way! Our goal in life is one thing, the temptations on the way are another. To know how to renounce what seduces, but leads down the wrong road, to understand and to choose God's ways! Discernment is a great gift and we should never tire of asking for it in prayer. Let us ask for this grace! Lord, grant us the ability to discern what is good from what is evil, what is better from what is not better.

Finally, the Magi speak to us about a third gift: *the surprise*. After a long journey, what do these high-ranking men in society find? A baby with his mother (cf. v. 11) – certainly, a tender scene, but not astonishing! They do not see angels like the shepherds did, but they meet God in poverty. Perhaps they were expecting a powerful and prodigious Messiah – and they find a baby. And still, they do not think they made a mistake, they know how to recognize him. They welcome God's surprise and experience their encounter with him with amazement, adoring him – in his littleness, they recognize God's face. Humanly, we are all inclined to seek greatness, but it is a gift to know how to truly find it – to know how to find greatness in the littleness that God loves. For the Lord is encountered like this: in humility, in silence, in adoration, in the smallest and in the poor.

Brothers and sisters, we are all *called* – the first gift, the call – we are all called by Jesus, we can all *discern* – the second gift, discernment – discern his presence, we can all experience his *surprises* – the third gift, the surprise. Today, it would be beautiful to remember these gifts: the call, discernment and the surprise, these gifts that we have already received – to think back to when we sensed God's call in our life; or even when, perhaps after quite a struggle, we succeeded in discerning his voice; or even still, of an unforgettable surprise he gave us, astounding us. May Our Lady help us remember and treasure the gifts received.

### After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

I extend my heartfelt best wishes to the communities of the Eastern Churches, both Catholic and Orthodox, who celebrate the Nativity of the Lord tomorrow. In a special way, I would like to it to reach the brothers and sisters of the suffering people of Ukraine. May the Lord's birth instill comfort, instill hope; and may it inspire concrete steps that can finally lead toward the end of the fighting and to peace. Let us pray a lot for Ukraine and for peace.

On the Feast of Epiphany, the World Missionary Childhood Day is celebrated. I greet all the children, boys and girls, who in every part of the world are spreading the joy of being Jesus' friends, and who are dedicated through prayer, sacrifice and offerings, to support the missionaries of the Gospel.

I greet all of you, members of the faithful from Rome and pilgrims from various countries.

In particular, I greet those participating in the historic, folkloristic *Viva la Befana* procession, organized this year by the Municipality of Foligno on the theme of peace, solidarity and brotherhood among peoples. I thank the mayor and the Bishop of Foligno, as well as the other authorities, associations, schools, musical bands and to all those who have made the historic *Giostra della Quintana* come alive. And a thought also goes to the Three King Processions that take place today in many cities and villages in Poland.

I greet the Confirmation candidates from Romano, Lombardy, the Association of Solidarity among Families from Podenzano (Diocese of Piacenza), and the friends and volunteers of *Fraternity Domus*. And I greet those in the

*Immacolata* group.

I wish everyone a Happy Feast Day. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch, and *arrivederci*.

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