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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 young people of *Azione Cattolica Ragazzi* (Youth Catholic Action) of the diocese of Rome, who have just concluded their "Caravan of Peace", the month of January they traditionally dedicate to theme of peace, were present. At the end of the Angelus prayer, they read out a message on behalf of ACR Rome.

The following are the Pope's words of introduction to the Marian prayer:

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

In today's liturgy, the Beatitudes according to the Gospel of Matthew are proclaimed (cf. *Mt* 5:1-12). The first is fundamental. This is what it says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (v. 3).

Who are the "poor in spirit"? They are the ones who know they cannot rely on themselves, that they are not self-sufficient, and they live as "beggars before God". They feel their need for God and recognize every good comes from him as a gift, as a grace. Those who are poor in spirit treasure what they receive. Therefore, they desire that *no gift should go to waste*. Today, I would like to pause on this typical aspect of the poor in spirit: *not to waste*. The poor in spirit try not to waste anything. Jesus shows us the importance of not wasting. For example, after the multiplication of the loaves and the fish, he asks that the leftover food be gathered so that nothing would be wasted (cf. *Jn* 6:12). Not wasting allows us to appreciate the value of ourselves, of people and of things. Unfortunately, however, this is a principle that is often disregarded, above all in more affluent societies where the culture of waste, the throw-away culture is predominant. Both are a plague. So, I would like to propose to you *three challenges* against the waste mentality, the throw-away mentality.

The first challenge: *not to waste the gift that we are*. Each one of us is a good, independent of the gifts we have. Every woman, every man, is rich not only in talents, but in dignity. He or she is loved by God, is valuable, is precious. Jesus reminds us that we are blessed not for what we have, but for who we are. And when a person lets go and throws him or herself away, he or she wastes themselves. Let us struggle, with God's help, against the temptations of believing ourselves inadequate, wrong, and to feel sorry for ourselves.

Then, the second challenge: *not to waste the gifts we have*. It is a fact that about one-third of total food production goes to waste in the world each year, while so many die of hunger! Nature's resources cannot be used like this. Goods should be taken care of and shared in such a way that no one lack what is necessary. Rather than waste what we have, let us disseminate an ecology of justice and charity, of sharing!

Lastly, the third challenge: *not to throw people away*. The throw-away culture says, "I use you in as much as I need you. When I am not interested in you anymore, or you are in my way, I throw you out". It is especially the weakest who are treated this way – unborn children, the elderly, the needy and the disadvantaged. But people are never to be thrown out, the disadvantaged cannot be thrown away! Every person is a sacred gift, each person is a unique gift, no matter what their age or condition. Let us always respect and promote life! Let's not throw life away!

Dear brothers and sisters, let us ask ourselves some questions. Above all: How do I live poverty of spirit? Do I know how to make room for God? Do I believe that he is my good, my true and great wealth? Do I believe that he loves me, or do I throw myself away in sadness, forgetting that I am a gift? And then – Am I careful not to waste? Am I responsible about how I use things, goods? Am I willing to share things with other, or am I selfish? Lastly: Do I consider the weakest as precious gifts whom God asks me to care for? Do I remember the poor, those who are deprived of what is necessary?

May Mary, the Woman of the Beatitudes, help us witness the joy that life is a gift and the beauty of making a gift of ourselves.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and Sisters!

It is with great sorrow that I learn of the news arriving from the Holy Land, in particular of the death of ten Palestinians, among whom is a woman, killed during Israeli military anti-terrorist action in Palestine; and of what happened near Jerusalem on Friday evening when seven Israeli Jews were killed by a Palestinian and three others were wounded as they were leaving the synagogue. The spiral of death that increases day after day does nothing other than close the few glimpses of trust that exist between the two peoples. From the beginning of the year, dozens of Palestinians have been killed during firefights with the Israeli army. I appeal to the two governments and to the international community so that, immediately and with delay, other paths might be found that include dialogue and a sincere search for peace. Brothers and sisters, let us pray for this.

I renew my appeal regarding the serious humanitarian situation in the Lachin Corridor, in the South Caucasus. I am near to all those who, in the dead of winter, are forced to cope with these inhumane conditions. Every effort must be made on the international level to find peaceful solutions for the good of the people.

Today is the 70th World Leprosy Day. Unfortunately, the stigma associated with this disease continues to cause serious violations of human rights in various parts of the world. I express my closeness to those who suffer from it and I encourage the commitment toward the complete integration of these brothers and sisters.

I extend my greetings to all of you who have come from Italy and from other countries. I greet the group of Quinceañeras from Panama and the students from Badajoz, Spagna. I greet the pilgrims from Moiano and

Monteleone di Orvieto, those from Acqui Terme and the boys and girls of the Agesci Cercola Primo Group.

And now I greet with great affection the boys and girls from Catholic Action from the Diocese of Rome! You have come on the "Peace Caravan". I thank you for this initiative which is so precious this year because, thinking of the war-torn Ukraine, our commitment and our prayer for peace must be even more strong. Let us think of Ukraine and pray for the Ukrainian people, who are so badly treated. Let us listen now to the message that your friends here beside me will read to us.

[Their message is read.]

Dear brothers and sisters, the day after tomorrow, I will depart on an Apostolic Journey to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to the Republic of South Sudan. I thank the civil authorities and the local bishops for their invitations and for the preparations they have made for these visits, and I greet with affection those beloved peoples who await me.

These lands have suffered greatly from lengthy conflicts. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially in the east of the country, suffers from armed clashes and exploitation. South Sudan, wracked by years of war, longs for an end to the constant violence that forces many people to be displaced and to live in conditions of great hardship. In South Sudan, I will arrive together with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Together, as brothers, we will make an ecumenical pilgrimage of peace.

I ask everyone, please, to accompany this Journey with their prayers.

And I wish everyone a good Sunday. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch and *arrivederci!*
