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

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

The words Jesus addresses to us in this Sunday's Gospel are demanding, and seem paradoxical: he invites us to turn the other cheek and to love even our enemies (cf. *Mt 5:38-48*). It is normal for us to love those who love us, and to be friends of those who are friends to us; yet Jesus provokes us by saying: if you act in this way, "what more are you doing than others?" (v. 47). *What more are you doing?* Here is the point to which I would like to draw your attention today, to what you do that is extraordinary.

"More", "extraordinary", is what goes beyond the limits of the usual, what exceeds the habitual practices and normal calculations dictated by prudence. Instead, in general we try to have everything more or less in order and under control, so as to correspond to our expectations, to our measure: fearing not to be reciprocated or to expose ourselves too much and then be disappointed, we prefer to love only those who love us in order to avoid disappointments, to do good only to those who are good to us, to be generous only to those who can return a favour; and to those who treat us badly, we respond in kind, so that we are even. But the Lord warns us: this is not enough! We would say: this is not Christian! If we remain in the ordinary, in the balance between giving and receiving, things do not change. If God were to follow this logic, we would have no hope of salvation! But, fortunately for us, God's love is always "extraordinary", it goes beyond the usual criteria by which we humans live out our relationships.

Jesus' words challenge us, then. While we try to remain within the ordinary of utilitarian reasoning, he asks us to

open ourselves up to the extraordinary, to the extraordinary of a freely-given love; while we always try to balance the books, Christ encourages us to live the *unbalance of love*. Jesus is not a good book-keeper, no! He always leads us to the imbalance of love. We should not be surprised at this. If God had not “unbalanced” himself, we would never have been saved: it was the imbalance of the cross that saved us! Jesus would not have come to seek us out when we were lost and distant; he would not have loved us up to the end, he would not have embraced the cross for us, who did not deserve all this and could not give him anything in return. As the Apostle Paul writes, “One will hardly die for a righteous – though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (*Rm 5:7-8*). So, God loves us while we are sinners, not because we are good or able to give something back to him. Brothers and sisters, God's love is a love always in excess, always beyond calculation, always disproportionate. And today he also asks us to live in this way, because only in this way will we truly bear witness to him.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord invites us to step out of the logic of self-interest and not to measure love on the scales of calculations and convenience. He invites us not to respond to evil with evil, to dare to do good, to risk in the gift, even if we receive little or nothing in return. For it is this love that slowly transforms conflicts, shortens distances, overcomes enmities and heals the wounds of hatred. And so, we can ask ourselves, each one of us: do I, in my life, follow the logic of recompense, or that of gratuitousness, as God does? The extraordinary love of Christ is not easy, but it is possible; it is possible because He Himself helps us by giving us His Spirit, His love without measure.

Let us pray to Our Lady, who by answering “yes” to God without calculation, allowed him to make her the masterpiece of his Grace.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

Jesus' love asks us to let ourselves be touched by the situations of those who are in difficulty. I think especially of Syria and Turkey, of the very many victims of the earthquake, but also of the daily tragedies of the dear Ukrainian people and the many populations who suffer as a result of war or because of poverty, the lack of freedom or environmental devastation: many peoples... In this regard, I am close to the people of New Zealand, struck in recent days by a devastating cyclone. Brothers and sisters, let us not forget those who suffer, and let our charity be attentive, let it be real charity!

I address my greeting to you all, from Italy and other countries. I greet the pilgrims from Oviedo, Spain, and the students of Vila Pouca de Aguiar in Portugal.

Then, I greet the groups of Catholic Action from Rimini and Saccolongo; the faithful of Lentiai, Turin and Bolzano; candidates for confirmation from Valvasone and Almenno San Salvatore; the teenagers and young people of Tricesimo, Leno, Chiuppano and Fino Mornasco; the altar servers from Arcene and the students of the Saint Ambrose School of Milan.

I wish you all a good Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch, and *arrivederci*.
