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Visit to the “Salus Populi Romani” in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major and Act of veneration of Mary Immaculate in Piazza di Spagna

This afternoon, *Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, the Holy Father Francis visited the Basilica of Saint Mary Major, where he paused in prayer before the image of the *Salus Populi Romani*, offering the gift of a gold rose.

Immediately afterwards the Pope proceeded to Piazza di Spagna for the traditional Act of veneration of Mary Immaculate.

The following is the prayer recited by the Holy Father during the Act of veneration of Mary Immaculate at Piazza di Spagna:

Prayer of the Holy Father

Immaculate Virgin!

We come to you with hearts divided between hope and anguish.

We need you, our Mother!

But above all, we want to thank you,

because in silence, which is your style, you watch over this city

that today covers you with flowers to express their love.

In silence, day and night, you watch over us:

over its families, with their joys and worries – you know them well;
over its study and work places; over its institutions and public offices;
over its hospitals and nursing homes; over its prisons; over those who live on the streets;
over its parishes and all the communities of the Church of Rome.

Thank you for your discreet and constant presence
that gives us comfort and hope.

We need you, Mother,
because you are the Immaculate Conception.
Your person, the fact itself that you exist,
reminds us that evil has neither the first nor the last word;
that our destiny is not death but life,
not hatred but fraternity, not conflict but harmony,
not war but peace.

Looking at you, we feel confirmed in this faith
that is tested dearly by events.

And you, Mother, turn your eyes of mercy
on all the people oppressed by injustice and poverty,
tried by war; look on the battered Ukrainian people,
the Palestinian people and the Israeli people,
plunged in a spiral of violence.

Today, holy Mother, we bring here, under your gaze,
many mothers who, as happened to you, are filled with sorrow.

The mothers who weep for their children killed by war and terrorism.

The mothers who watch them depart on journeys of desperate hope.

And also the mothers who try to free them from the bonds of addiction,
and those who watch over them through long and difficult illnesses.

Today, Mary, as a woman, we need you
to entrust to you every woman who have suffered violence,
and those are still victims of violence,
in this city, in Italy and in every part of the world.

You know them one by one; you know their faces.

We beg you to dry their tears and those of their dear ones.

And help us to embark on a path of education and purification,
recognizing and countering the violence that lurks
in our hearts and in our minds,
asking God to deliver us from it.

Show us once again, O Mother, the path of conversion,
for there is no peace without pardon,
and there is no pardon without repentance.

The world changes if hearts change;
and everyone must say: beginning with mine.

But only God can change the human heart
with his grace, the grace in which you, Mary,
were immersed from the first instant.

The grace of Jesus Christ, Our Lord,
whom you generated in your flesh,

who died and rose for us, and to whom you always direct us.

He is salvation for every person, and for the world.

Come, Lord Jesus!

May your kingdom of love, justice and peace come!

Amen.
