SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 231231a

Sunday 31.12.2023

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!*

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The Gospel shows us the temple of Jerusalem, for the presentation of the Baby to the Lord (cf. *Lk* 2:22-40).

The Holy Family arrives in the temple bearing the humblest and simplest among the prescribed offerings as a gift, a testimony to their poverty. In the end, Mary receives a prophecy: "And a sword will pierce through your own soul" (v. 35). They arrive in poverty, and set out again loaded with suffering. This is surprising – but how is it that, the Family of Jesus, the only family in history who could boast of having God present in flesh and blood among them, instead of being rich, was poor! Instead of having things easy, it seems this family meets obstacles! Instead of being free from hardship, this family is immersed in tremendous sorrows!

What does this tell our families, the way the Holy Family lived their life, poor, facing obstacles, with such sorrow? It tells us something very beautiful: God, whom we often imagine to be beyond problems, came to live our life with its problems. He saved us in this way. He did not come already an adult, but really little. As the son of a mother and father, he lived in a family where he spent most of his time growing, learning, an everyday life, in hiddenness and silence. And he did not avoid difficulties. Rather, in choosing a family, a family that was "expert in suffering", he says this to our families: "If you are facing difficulties, I know what you are experiencing. I experienced it. I, my mother and my father, we experienced it so we can say to your family too: You are not alone!"

Joseph and Mary “marveled at what was said about Jesus” (cf. *Lk* 2:33) because they never would have thought that the elderly Simeon and the prophetess Anna would say these things. They marvel. I want to reflect on this today, on their ability to marvel. Being able to marvel is a secret for moving forward well as a family, not getting used to the ordinariness of things; knowing, instead how to marvel before God who accompanies us. And then marveling in our families. And I think it is good for couples to know how to marvel at one’s own spouse, taking him or her by the hand, for example, and looking the other tenderly in the eyes for a few seconds in the evening. Tenderly – marveling always brings us to tenderness. Tenderness is beautiful in a marriage. And then, to marvel at the miracle of life, of children, taking time to play with them and to listen to them. And I ask you, fathers and mothers: Do you find time to play with your children? To take them for a walk? Yesterday, I heard from someone on the telephone, and I asked her: “Where are you?” “Oh, I’m in the park. I brought my children for a walk”. This is a good parenting. And then, to marvel at the wisdom of grandparents: many times, we shut grandparents out of our lives. No: grandparents are a source of wisdom. Let us learn how to marvel at the wisdom of our grandparents, their stories. Grandparents bring us back to what is essential. Lastly, to marvel at our own story of love – each of us has our own, and the Lord made us walk in love – to marvel at this. And also, certainly, our lives have negative aspects. But marveling also at God’s goodness as he has walked with us, even though we are not such expert at it.

May Mary, Queen of the family, help us marvel. Today, let us ask for the grace of being able to marvel. May Our Lady help us marvel every day at what is good, and to know how to teach others the beauty of marveling.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

Unfortunately, the celebration of Christmas in Nigeria was marked by serious violence in the State of Plateau, with many victims. I am praying for them and their families. May God free Nigeria from these atrocities! And I am also praying for all those who lost their lives in the explosion of the tanker truck in Liberia.

Let us continue to pray for the people who are suffering because of war: the beleaguered people of Ukraine, the people of Palestine and Israel, the people of Sudan and many others. At the end of a year, let us have the courage to ask ourselves: How many human lives have been broken by armed conflict? How many dead? And how much destruction, suffering, poverty? May those who have interests in these conflicts listen to the voice of their conscience. And let us not forget the suffering Rohingya!

A year ago, Pope Benedict XVI ended his early journey, after having lovingly and wisely served the Church. We feel so much affection, gratitude and admiration for him. He blesses and accompanies us from Heaven. A round of applause for Benedict XVI!

I greet all the people from Rome, the pilgrims, parish groups, associations and young people. Today, I extend a particular greeting to all the families present and those connected through television and other means of communication. Let us not forget that the family is the basic cell of society: it always needs to be defended and sustained, always!

I greet the Italian national men’s under-18 volleyball team, and I greet the “figures” of the live Nativity from Marcellano in Umbria.

And I wish everyone a good Sunday – a blessing to your families – and I also wish you a serene end of year. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch and *arrivederci*!