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
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N. 240825a

Sunday 25.08.2024

The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At midday today, the Holy Father appeared at the window of his study in the Vatican Apostolic Palace to pray the Angelus with the approximately twelve thousand 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, happy Sunday!

Today the Gospel of the liturgy (*Jn* 6:60-69) relates to us the famous response of Saint Peter, who says to Jesus: "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life." (*Jn* 6:68). It is a very beautiful expression that gives witness to the friendship and manifests the trust that bind him to Christ, along with the other disciples. "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life." Beautiful.

Peter speaks these words at a critical moment. Jesus has just finished a discourse in which he said he was the "bread come down from heaven" (*cf. Jn* 6:41). It is a difficult language for people to understand and many, even disciples who were following Him, abandon Him because they did not understand.

The Twelve, however, remained with Him. They stayed because in Him they found "words of eternal life." They heard Him preach, they saw the miracles He performed, and they continue to share with Him public moments and the intimacy of daily life (*cf. Mk* 3:7-19).

The disciples do not always understand what the Master says and does. At times they struggle to accept the paradoxes of His love (*cf. Mt* 5:38-48), the extreme demands of His mercy (*cf. Mt* 18:21-22), the radical nature of His way of giving Himself to all. It is not easy for them to understand, but they are faithful. Jesus' choices often go beyond common thinking, beyond the very canons of institutional religion and traditions to the point of

creating provocative and embarrassing situations (*cf. Mt* 15:12). It is not easy to follow Him.

Yet, among the many teachers of that time, Peter and the other apostles found only in Him the answer to the thirst for life, for joy, for love that animates them. Only thanks to Him did they experience the fullness of life they seek, beyond the limits of sin and even death. Therefore, they do not leave. Indeed, all but one, even amidst many falls and times of repentance will remain with Him to the end (*cf.* Jn 17:12).

And, brothers and sisters, this also concerns us. Even for us it is not easy to follow the Lord, to understand His way of acting, to make His criteria and His example our own. It is not easy for us. However, the closer we are to Him - the more we adhere to His Gospel, receive His grace in the Sacraments, stay in His company in prayer, imitate Him in humility and charity - the more we experience the beauty of having Him as our Friend and realise that He alone has the "words of eternal life."

Then we can ask ourselves: how much is Jesus present in my life? How much do I let myself be touched and moved by His words? Can I say that they are also "words of eternal life" for me? To you, my brother, my sister, I ask: Are the words of Jesus, for you - also for me - words of eternal life?

May Mary, who received Jesus, the Word of God, in her flesh, help us to listen to Him and never leave Him.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters!

I wish to express my solidarity with the thousands of people affected by Mpox (monkeypox), which is now a global health emergency. I pray for all those infected, especially the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo suffering greatly. I express my sympathy to the local Churches in the countries most affected by this disease and I encourage governments and private industries to share available technology and treatments so that no one lacks adequate medical care.

To the beloved people of Nicaragua: I encourage you to renew your hope in Jesus. Remember that the Holy Spirit always guides history towards higher projects. May the Immaculate Virgin protect you in times of trial and help you feel her motherly tenderness. May Our Lady accompany the beloved people of Nicaragua.

I continue to follow with sorrow the fighting in Ukraine and the Russian Federation. And in thinking about the laws recently adopted in Ukraine, I fear for the freedom of those who pray, because those who truly pray always pray for all. A person does not commit evil because of praying. If someone commits evil against his people, he will be guilty for it, but he cannot have committed evil because he prayed. So let those who want to pray be allowed to pray in what they consider their Church. Please, let no Christian Church be abolished directly or indirectly. Churches are not to be touched!

And let us continue to pray for an end to wars, in Palestine, in Israel, in Myanmar and in every other region. The people are asking for peace! Let us pray that the Lord will give us all peace.

I greet all of you, Romans and pilgrims from Italy and from many countries. In particular, I greet the new seminarians of the North American College and wish them a good formative journey; and I also wish them to live their priesthood with joy, because true prayer gives us joy. I greet the young people with motor and cognitive disabilities, who are taking part in the "relay of inclusion" to affirm that barriers can be overcome. I greet my friends, the young people of the Immaculata.

And I wish everyone a good Sunday. Please do not forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch and arrivederci!