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BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

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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 approximately thirty thousand faithful and pilgrims gathered in Saint Peter's Square.

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

Dear brothers and sisters, good Sunday!

The Gospel of today's liturgy (*Mk 12:28-34*) tells us about one of the many discussions Jesus had at the temple of Jerusalem. One of the scribes approaches Him and questions Him: "Which is the first of all the commandments?" (v. 28). Jesus responds by putting together two fundamental words of the Mosaic law: "You shall love the Lord your God" and "You shall love your neighbour" (vv. 30-31).

With his question, the scribe looks for "the first" of the commandments, that is, a principle at the basis of all the commandments; the Jews had many precepts and sought the basis of all of them, one that was fundamental; they tried to agree on a fundamental one, and there was discussion between them, good discussions because they were looking for the truth. And this question is essential for us too, for our life and for the journey of our faith. Indeed, we too at times feel lost among so many things, and ask ourselves: but, in the end, what is the most important thing of all? Where can I find the centre of my life, of my faith? Jesus gives us the answer, putting together two commandments that are the primary ones: the love of God and the love of neighbour. And this is the heart of our faith.

We all – as we know – need to return to the heart of life and faith, because the heart is "the radical source of their strengths, convictions" (Encyclical *Dilexit nos*, 9). And Jesus tells us that the source of everything is love, that we must never separate God from man. The Lord says to the disciple of every time: in your journey, what counts are not the exterior practices, such as burnt offerings and sacrifices (v. 33), but the readiness of heart with which you open yourself to God and to brethren in love. Brothers and sisters, we can do many things, but do them only for ourselves and without love, and this will not do; we do them with a distracted heart or even with

a closed heart, and this will not do. All things must be done with love.

The Lord will come, and He will ask us first and foremost about love: "How did you love?". It is important, then, to fix in our hearts the most important commandment. What is it? Love the Lord your God, and love your neighbour as yourself. And to carry out every day an examination of conscience and ask ourselves: is love for God and neighbour the centre of my life? Does my prayer to God impel me to go out to my brothers and sisters and love them gratuitously? Do I recognize the presence of the Lord in the faces of others?

May the Virgin Mary, who bore the law of God imprinted in her immaculate heart, help us to love the Lord and our brothers and sisters.

After the Angelus

I greet you all, Romans and pilgrims from Italy and many other countries!

I greet the Carmelite Missionary Sisters of the Holy Spirit, who are celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of their secular Fraternity; I greet the faithful of Venice, Pontassieve, Barberino del Mugello, Empoli and Palermo, and of Santa Maria alle Fornaci in Rome; as well as the teenagers of Catanzaro with their parish educators.

I greet the blood donors from Coccaglio, Brescia, and the group from *Emergency* Rome South, committed to recalling Article 11 of the Italian Constitution, which says: "Italy rejects war as an instrument of aggression against the freedom of other peoples and as a means for the settlement of international disputes". Remember this article! Keep on going!

And may this principle be implemented all over the world: may war be banished and issues be addressed through law and negotiations. Let weapons be silenced and space be made for dialogue. Let us pray for tormented Ukraine, Palestine, Israel, Myanmar, and South Sudan.

And let us continue to pray for Valencia, and the other communities in Spain, who are suffering so much in these days. What do I do for the people of Valencia? Do I pray? Do I offer something? Think about this question.

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