



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

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Dear brothers and sisters, happy Sunday!

The Gospel of today's liturgy (Lk 21:25-28, 34-36), first Sunday of Advent, speaks to us about cosmic upheavals and anxiety and fear in humanity. In this context, Jesus addresses a word of hope to His disciples: "Stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand" (v. 28). The Master's concern is that their hearts do not grow drowsy (cf. v. 34) and that they await the coming of the Son of Man with vigilance.

Jesus' invitation is this: *raise your head high and keep your hearts light and awake.*

Indeed, many of Jesus' contemporaries, faced with the catastrophic events they saw happening around them – persecutions, conflicts, natural disasters – are gripped by anxiety and think that the end of the world is coming. Their hearts are weighed down with fear. Jesus, however, wants to free them from present anxieties and false convictions, showing them how to stay awake in their hearts, how to read events from the plan of God, who works salvation even within the most dramatic events of history. That is why He suggests that they turn their

gaze to Heaven to understand the things of earth: “Stand erect and raise your heads” (v. 28). It is beautiful... “Stand erect and raise your heads”.

Brothers and sisters, for us too Jesus’ recommendation is important: “Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy” (v. 34). All of us, in many moments of life, ask ourselves: what can I do to have a light heart, a wakeful heart, a free heart? A heart that does not let itself be crushed by sadness? And sadness is awful, it is awful. Indeed, it can happen that the anxiety, fears and worries about our personal lives or about what is happening in the world today weigh down on us like boulders and throw us into discouragement. If worries weigh down our hearts and induce us to close in on ourselves, Jesus, on the contrary, invites us to lift up our heads, to trust in His love that wants to save us and that draws close to us in every situation of our existence, He asks us to make room for Him in order to find hope again.

And so, let us ask ourselves: is my heart weighed down by fear, worries and anxieties about the future? Do I know how to look at daily events and the vicissitudes of history with God’s eyes, in prayer, with a broader horizon? Or do I let myself be overcome by despondency? May this Advent season be a precious opportunity to lift our gaze to Him, who lightens our hearts and sustains us on our way.

Let us now invoke the Virgin Mary, who even in times of trial was ready to accept God’s plan.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters!

In recent days the fortieth anniversary of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Argentina and Chile was commemorated. With the mediation of the Holy See, it put an end to a terrible dispute that had led Argentina and Chile to the brink of war. This shows that, when one renounces the use of weapons and engages in dialogue, a good path is taken.

I welcome the ceasefire that has been reached in recent days in Lebanon, and I hope that it may be respected by all parties, thus enabling the population of the regions involved in the conflict – both Lebanese and Israeli – to return home soon and safely, also with the valuable help of the Lebanese army and the United Nations peacekeeping forces. In this situation, I address an urgent call to all Lebanese politicians, so that the President of the Republic may be elected immediately and the institutions return to their normal functioning, so as to proceed to the necessary reforms and assure the country of its role as an example of peaceful coexistence between different religions. It is my hope that the glimmer of peace that has appeared may lead to a ceasefire on all fronts, especially in Gaza. I very much have at heart the liberation of the Israelis who are still held hostage, and access to humanitarian aid for the stricken Palestinian population. And let us pray for Syria, where unfortunately war has flared up again, claiming many victims. I am very close to the Church in Syria. Let us pray!

I express my concern, my sorrow, for the conflict that continues to cause bloodshed in tormented Ukraine. For almost two years we have witnessed a terrible sequence of deaths, injuries, violence, and destruction... Children, women, the elderly, and the weak are the first victims. War is a horror, war is an affront to God and to humanity, war spares no-one, war is always a defeat, a defeat for the whole of humanity. Think that winter is around the corner, and risks exacerbating the conditions of millions of displaced persons. They will be extremely difficult months for them. The coincidence of war and the cold is tragic. I renew once again my appeal to the international community, and to every man and woman of good will, to make every effort to stop this war, and to make dialogue, fraternity and reconciliation prevail. Let there be a renewed commitment at every level. And as we prepare for Christmas, as we await the birth of the King of Peace, let these peoples be given concrete hope. The quest for peace is the responsibility not of a few, but of all. If habituation and indifference to the horrors of war prevail, the whole, entire human family is defeated. The whole human family is defeated. Dear brothers and sisters, let us not tire of praying for that population so sorely tried, and let us implore from God the gift of peace.

I affectionately greet all of you, faithful of Rome and pilgrims who have come from Italy and from various countries. In particular, I greet the groups from Barcelona, Murcia and Valencia – and think of Valencia, how it is suffering – and from Gerovo in Croatia. I greet the faithful of Arco di Trento and those from Sciacca, and the Roman group of Gioventù Ardente Mariana. And I greet the young people of the *Immacolata*.

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