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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

Before the Angelus

After the Angelus

At midday today, Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time, 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.

Among others, the youth of Catholic Action of the diocese of Rome were present today; with the "Caravan of Peace" they concluded the month of January, traditionally dedicated to the theme of peace. At the end of the Angelus prayer, two young people from two different Roman dioceses, invited into the papal apartment, read a message on behalf of Catholic Action Youth Rome.

The following is the Pope's introduction to the Marian prayer:

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

This Sunday's Gospel reading (*Mk 1: 21-28*) forms part of the extensive narrative indicated as the "day at Capernaum". At the centre of today's account there is the event of the exorcism, through which Jesus is presented as a *powerful prophet in words and deeds*.

He enters the synagogue of Capernaum on Saturday and begins to teach; the people are astounded by his *words*, because they are not ordinary words, they do not resemble what they usually listen to. Indeed, the scribes teach but without authority. And Jesus teaches with authority. Jesus, instead, teaches like one who has

authority, revealing Himself in this way to be God's Envoy, and not a simple man who must base his teaching only on previous traditions. Jesus has full authority. His doctrine is new and the Gospel says that the people commented: "A new teaching with authority" (v. 27).

At the same time, Jesus reveals Himself to be powerful also in *deeds*. In the synagogue of Capernaum there is a man possessed by an unclean spirit, which manifests itself by crying these words: "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God" (v. 24). The devil speaks the truth: Jesus came to destroy the devil, to destroy the demon, to defeat him. This unclean spirit knows Jesus' power and also proclaims His holiness. Jesus rebukes him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" (v. 25). Jesus' few words are enough to obtain victory over Satan, who leaves the man, "convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice", says the Gospel (v. 26).

This makes an impression on those present; they are all afraid, and ask themselves, "What is this? ... He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him" (v. 27). Jesus' power confirms the authority of His teaching. Not only does He pronounce words, He also acts. In this way He makes manifest God's plan with words and with the power of deeds. In the Gospel, indeed, we see that Jesus, in His earthly mission, reveals God's love both with preaching and with the countless gestures of care and assistance to the sick, the needy, children, and sinners.

Jesus is our Teacher, powerful in words and deeds. Jesus communicates to us all the light that illumines the paths, often dark, of our existence; He also communicates the strength necessary to overcome difficulties, trials, temptations. Think of what a great grace it is for us to have known this God, so powerful and so good! A teacher and a friend, Who shows us the way and takes care of us, especially when we are in need.

May the Virgin Mary, a woman of listening, help us attain silence around and within us, to listen, amid the din of messages from the world, to the most authoritative word there is: that of her Son Jesus, Who proclaims the meaning of our existence and frees us from every slavery, also that of the Evil One.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

Yesterday there arrived from Afghanistan the painful news of the terrible terrorist attack in the capital Kabul, with more than a hundred deaths and many wounded. A few days ago another serious attack, again in Kabul, disseminated terror and death in a large hotel. For how long must the Afghan people endure this inhuman violence? Let us pray in silence for all the victims and for their families; and let us pray for those, in that country, who continue to work to build peace.

Today is World Leprosy Day. This disease unfortunately still strikes, especially the most disadvantaged and the poorest. Let us assure these brothers and sisters our closeness and solidarity, and let us pray also for those who assist them and work for their reintegration in society.

I greet the families, parishes, associations, and all those who have come from Italy and many other parts of the world, in particular students from Badajoz, Spain; the faithful of Ljubljana, Slovenia; and those from Venice and Veglie.

I greet with affection the boys and girls of Catholic Action of Youth of the diocese of Rome! I hope that even though you are noisy, you are able to do good things, no? Dear young people, this year too you many of you have come at the end of your "Caravan of Peace", accompanied by the Vicar Archbishop, your parents and teachers, and assistant priests. Thank you for this initiative. Never tire of being instruments of peace and joy among your peers! We will now listen to your the message, which your friends, here next to me, will read to us.

[Reading of the Message]

[The Pope addresses the two young people who read the Message]:

Thank you; thank you. Stay here. Say hello, say hello, say hello, don't be afraid!"

And now, together with our prayers for peace, let each one of us, in his heart, pray for peace. Together with these prayers the balloons will go up to Heaven!

[The balloons are released]

Have you seen these balloons? When we pray badly, when we lead a life that is not the life Jesus wants, our prayers do not reach Heaven and so we need help to make them go up. When you feel that your prayers do not ascend, seek help from someone.

I wish you all a happy Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch and goodbye!
