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## The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

### Before the Angelus

### After the Angelus

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 is the Pope's introduction to the Marian prayer:

### Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

This Sunday we return to the reading of the Gospel of Mark. In today's passage (cf. *Mk* 7: 1-8.14-15.21-23), Jesus addresses an important subject for all of us believers: the authenticity of our obedience to the Word of God, against every worldly contamination or legalistic formalism. The account begins with the objection the scribes and Pharisees address to Jesus, accusing His disciples of not following the ritual precepts according to the traditions. In this way the interlocutors intended to strike at the credibility and authority of Jesus as Teacher because they said: "But this Teacher allows the disciples not to fulfil the prescriptions of the tradition". However, Jesus replies strongly, saying: "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men'" (vv. 6-7). So says Jesus, in clear and strong words! Hypocrite is, so to speak, one of the strongest adjectives that Jesus uses in the Gospel and He pronounces it addressing the teachers of religion: doctors of the law, scribes . . . "Hypocrite," says Jesus.

Jesus, in fact, wants to shake the scribes and the Pharisees from the error which they have committed, and what is this error? That of distorting the Will of God, neglecting His commandments to observe human traditions. Jesus' reaction is severe because much is at stake: it regards the truth of the relationship between man and God, the authenticity of religious life. A hypocrite is a liar; he is not genuine.

Today too the Lord invites us to flee from the danger of giving more importance to form than to substance. He calls us to recognize ever anew what is the true centre of the experience of faith, namely, love of God and love of neighbour, purifying it from the hypocrisy of legalism and ritualism.

The message of today's Gospel is also reinforced by the voice of the Apostle James, who tells us in synthesis what true religion must be, and he says thus: true religion is "to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world" (*James 1:27*).

"To visit orphans and widows," means to practice charity towards one's neighbour beginning with the most needy, most fragile and most marginalized people. They are the people that God takes care of in a special way and asks us to do likewise.

"To keep oneself unstained from the world" does not mean to isolate and close oneself to reality. No. Here too the attitude must not be exterior but interior, of substance: it means watching that our way of thinking and of acting is not polluted by a worldly mentality, that is, by vanity, avarice, and pride. In reality, a man or a woman who lives in vanity, in avarice, in pride and at the same time believes and makes him- or herself appear to be religious, even to the point of condemning others, is a hypocrite.

Let us examine our conscience to see how we receive the Word of God. We hear it on Sunday at Mass. If we listen to it in a distracted or superficial way, it will not be of much use to us. Instead, we must receive the Word with an open mind and heart, as a good terrain, so that it may be assimilated and bear fruit in real life. Jesus says that the Word of God is like a seed; it is a seed that must grow in concrete works. So the Word itself purifies the heart and actions, and our relationship with God and with others is freed from hypocrisy.

May the example and intercession of the Virgin Mary help us to honour the Lord always with our heart, witnessing our love for Him in concrete choices for the good of brothers.

### **After the Angelus**

Dear brothers and sisters,

Yesterday in Košice, Slovakia, Anna Kolesárová was proclaimed Blessed. Virgin and martyr, she was killed for resisting the violation of her dignity and chastity, like our Italian Maria Goretti. May this courageous girl help young Christians to remain steadfast in their faith to the Gospel, even when it means going against the grain and paying in person. Applause for Blessed Anna Kolesárová!

This is very painful: the winds of war continue to blow and disturbing news arrives of the risks of a possible humanitarian catastrophe in beloved Syria, in the Province of Idlib. I renew my heartfelt appeal to the international Community and to all those involved to use the tools of diplomacy, dialogue and negotiations, with respect for international humanitarian law and to safeguard the lives of civilians.

I greet you all, dear pilgrims from Italy and various countries. In particular, I greet the catechists of Caerano San Marco, young people from Montirone and from Rovato, and those from various cities in Spain after a long journey, and the participants in the gathering of Vespa scooter riders. I can see your banner there, welcome!

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

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