



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE BOLLETTINO

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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At midday today, the third 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 St. Peter's Square.

Among others, the young people of Catholic Action of the diocese of Rome were present in the square today, having recently concluded with the "Caravan of Peace" 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 parishes, invited to the papal apartment, read a message on behalf of *Azione Cattolica Ragazzi* (ACR) in Rome.

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

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Today's Gospel (cf. Mt 4:12-23) presents us with the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. This occurred in Galilee, a land on the periphery of Jerusalem that was looked upon with suspicion because the population was mixed with Gentiles. Nothing good and new was expected from that region. However, it was precisely there that Jesus, who had grown up in Nazareth in Galilee, began his preaching.

He proclaimed the central core of his teaching in his condensed appeal: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (v. 17). This announcement is like a powerful ray of light that pierces the darkness and splits the fog and evokes the the prophecy of Isaiah that is read on Christmas Eve: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them light has shined" (Is 9:2). With the coming of Jesus, Light of the world, God the Father showed his closeness and friendship to humanity. These [gifts] are freely given to us regardless of our merits. Closeness to God and friendship with God, are not deserved but gifts freely given by God. We must safeguard these gifts.

The appeal to conversion that Jesus addresses to all men and women of good will is fully understood, precisely in view of the event of the manifestation of the Son of God, on which we meditated on recent Sundays. It is often impossible to change life, to abandon the path of egotism, of evil, to abandon the way of sin because we centre our commitment to conversion only on ourselves and on our strengths, and not on Christ and his Spirit. However, our adherence to the Lord cannot be reduced to a personal effort, no. To think this would also be a sin of pride. Our adherence to the Lord cannot be reduced to a personal effort. Instead, it must express itself in a trusting opening of the heart and of the mind in order to welcome the Good News of Jesus. This is — the Word of Jesus, the Good News of Jesus, the Gospel — that changes the world and hearts! We are thus called to trust Christ's Word, to open ourselves to the Father's mercy and to allow ourselves to be transformed by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

This is where a true journey of conversion begins. Just as occurred to the first disciples: the encounter with the divine Teacher, with his gaze, with his Word spurred them to follow him, to change their lives by placing themselves concretely at the service of the Kingdom of God.

The surprising and decisive encounter with Jesus began the disciples' journey, transforming them into proclaimers and witnesses of God's love for his people. May each of us follow in the footsteps of the Saviour to offer hope to those who thirst for it, imitating these first heralds and messengers of the Word of God.

May the Virgin Mary whom we address in this prayer of the Angelus, support these intentions and strengthen them with her maternal intercession.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

Today, for the first time, we are celebrating the Sunday of the Word of God, instituted to celebrate and welcome ever better the gift of the Word that God has made and continues to make daily to His people. I thank the dioceses, I thank the communities that have implemented initiatives to recall the centrality of the Sacred Scriptures in the life of the Church.

Tomorrow is the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp. Before this terrible tragedy, this atrocity, indifference is unacceptable and remembrance is due. Tomorrow we are all called to spend a moment in prayer and recollection, each one saying in their own heart: never again, never again!

Today we are celebrating World Leprosy Day. We are close to all those affected [by the disease] and to those who care for them in various ways.

I also wish to be close to and to pray for the victims of the virus that has broken out in China. May the Lord receive the deceased in His peace, comfort the families and support the great commitment of the Chinese community, which has already been set in motion to fight this epidemic.

I greet you all, those of you who have come from Italy and from various countries, in particular the pilgrims from Valencia, Salamanca, Burgos, Santander and Valladolid, the students and teachers from Murcia, Cuenca, Badajoz and those from Panama.

I greet the faithful from Tursi and the Unitalsi group from Lazio who help disabled people attend the General Audience and the Angelus, and who today are distributing the Missal with the daily Word of God.

Now my companions have arrived [two children from Rome's Catholic Action stand at the window beside the

Pope]. I warmly greet the youth from Catholic Action, from the parishes and from the Catholic schools of the diocese of Rome. This year too, accompanied by the auxiliary Bishop Selvadagi, by your parents and teachers and by the assisting priests, you have come in large numbers at the end of the "Caravan of Peace". I thank you for this initiative. And now let us listen together to the message that your friends here beside me will read.

[After reading the message, balloons are released into the air].

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