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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 faithful and pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square.

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

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

Good day!

In this Sunday's Gospel (cf. *Mt* 10:26-33) the invitation Jesus addresses to His disciples resonates: to have no fear, to be strong and confident in the face of life's challenges, as He forewarns them of the adversities that await them. Today's passage is part of the missionary discourse, with which the Teacher prepares the Apostles for their first experience of proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Jesus persistently exhorts them "not to be afraid", "do not be afraid", and Jesus describes three tangible situations that they will find themselves facing.

First and foremost, the first, the hostility of those who would like to stifle the Word of God by sugar-coating it, by watering it down or by silencing those who proclaim it. In this case, Jesus encourages the Apostles to spread the message of salvation that He has entrusted to them. For the moment, He has transmitted it cautiously, somewhat covertly within the small group of the disciples. But they are to utter His Gospel "in the light", that is, openly; and are to proclaim it "from the housetops" - as Jesus says - that is, publicly.

The second difficulty that Christ's missionaries will encounter is the physical threat against them, that is, direct persecution against them personally, to the point of being killed. Jesus's prophecy is fulfilled in every age: it is a painful reality, but it attests to the faithfulness of the witnesses. How many Christians are persecuted even today

throughout the world! They suffer for the Gospel with love, they are the martyrs of our day. And we can say with certainty that there are more of them than the martyrs of the early times: so many martyrs, merely for the fact of being Christians. Jesus advises these disciples of yesterday and today who suffer persecution: “do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul” (v. 28). There is no need to be frightened of those who seek to extinguish the evangelising force with arrogance and violence. Indeed, they can do nothing against the soul, that is, against their union with God: no one can take this away from the disciples, because it is a gift from God. The only fear that a disciple should have is to lose this divine gift, this closeness to and friendship with God, to stop living according to the Gospel, thereby experiencing moral death, which is the effect of sin.

The third type of trial that Jesus indicates the Apostles will find themselves facing is the sensation, which some may feel, that God Himself has abandoned them, remaining distant and silent. Here too, Jesus exhorts them not to fear, because even while experiencing these and other pitfalls, the lives of the disciples rest firmly in the hands of God, who loves us and looks after us. They are like the three temptations: to sugar-coat the Gospel, to water it down; second, persecution; and third, the sensation that God has abandoned us. Even Jesus suffered this trial in the garden of olives and on the cross: “Father, why have you forsaken me?”, says Jesus. At times one feels this spiritual aridness. We must not be afraid of it. The Father takes care of us, because we are greatly valued in His eyes. What is important is the frankness, the courage of our witness, of our witness of faith: “recognising Jesus before others” and continuing to do good.

May Mary Most Holy, model of trust and abandonment in God in the hour of adversity and danger, help us never to surrender to despair, but rather always to entrust ourselves to Him and to His grace, since the grace of God is always more powerful than evil.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

Yesterday the United Nations celebrated World Refugee Day. The coronavirus crisis has highlighted the need to ensure the necessary protection for refugees too, in order to guarantee their dignity and safety. I invite you to join me in praying for a renewed and effective commitment, on the part of us all, to the effective protection of every human being, especially those who have been forced to flee as a result of situations of grave danger to them or their families.

Another aspect on which the pandemic has made us reflect is the relationship between man and the environment. The lockdown has reduced pollution and revealed once more the beauty of so many places free from traffic and noise. Now, with the resumption of activities, we should all be more responsible for looking after the common home. I appreciate the many “grass roots” initiatives that are emerging in this regard all over the world. For example, in Rome today there is an initiative dedicated to the river Tiber. But there are many others in other places! May they foster a citizenship that is increasingly aware of this essential common good.

Today, in my homeland and in other places, we celebrate the day dedicated to the father, to dads. I assure my closeness and prayer to all fathers. We all know that being father is not an easy task: therefore, let us pray for them. I remember in a special way also our fathers who continue to protect us from heaven.

And I greet all of you, dear Roman faithful and pilgrims who have come from various parts of Italy - now we start to see them, the pilgrims, from other countries, some of them: I see the flags, there... I greet young people in particular: today we remember Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, a young man full of love for God and for his neighbour; he died very young, here in Rome, as a result of caring for plague victims. I entrust young people throughout the world to his intercession.

And I wish everyone a good Sunday. Please do not forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch and arrivederci!

