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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 Saint Peter's Square.

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

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, good day!

In today's Gospel (cf *Mt* 13:24-43) we once again encounter Jesus who is intent on speaking to the crowd in parables about the Kingdom of Heaven. I will reflect only on the first one, that of the weeds, through which Jesus helps us understand *God's patience*, opening our hearts to *hope*. Jesus narrates that, in the field in which good seed was sown, weeds sprout up as well. This term sums up all the toxic vegetation that infests the soil. Among us, we can say that even today the soil has been devastated by so many herbicides and pesticides that, in the end, cause harm both to the weeds, to the earth, and to our health. This is in parentheses. The servants then go to the master to know where the weeds come from. He responds: "An enemy has done this!" (v. 28). Because we sowed good seed! An enemy, someone who is in competition, came to do this. They [the servants] want to go right away to pull them up, the weeds that are growing. Instead, the master says no, because that would risk pulling the vegetation – the weeds – up together with the wheat. It is necessary to wait for harvest time: only then, will the weeds be separated and burned. This is also a common-sense story.

A way of looking at history can be read in this parable. Alongside God – the master of the field – who only and always sows good seed, there is an adversary, who sows weeds to impede the wheat's growth. The master acts in the open, in broad daylight, and his goal is a good harvest. Instead, the other, the adversary, takes advantage of the darkness of night and works out of envy and hostility to ruin everything. The adversary has a name – the adversary that Jesus refers to has a name: it is the devil, God's quintessential opponent. The devil's intention is to hinder the work of salvation, to stonewall the Kingdom of God through wicked workers, sowers of scandal. In

fact, the good seed and the weeds do not represent good and bad in the abstract, no; but we human beings, who can follow God or the devil. Many times we have heard that a peaceful family begins to be at war, or envious... a neighbourhood that was peaceful, then nasty things begin to happen... And we are used to saying: "Eh, someone went and sowed weeds there", or "that person in the family sowed weeds by gossiping". Destruction always happens by sowing evil. It is always the devil who does this or our own temptations: when we fall into the temptation to gossip to destroy others.

The servants' intention is to eliminate evil immediately, that is, evil people. But the master is wiser, he sees farther. They must learn to wait because enduring persecution and hostility is part of the Christian vocation. Certainly, evil must be rejected, but those who do evil are people with whom it is necessary to be patient. This does not mean that type of hypocritical tolerance that hides ambiguity; but rather, justice tempered by mercy. If Jesus came to seek sinners more than the righteous, to cure the sick first before the healthy (cf *Mt 9:12-13*), so must the actions of His disciples be focused not on suppressing the wicked, but on saving them. Patience lies here.

Today's Gospel presents two ways of acting and of living history: on the one hand, the master's vision who sees far; on the other, the vision of the servants who just see the problem. What the servants care about is a field without weeds; the master cares about good wheat. The Lord invites us to adopt His own vision, one that is focused on good wheat, that knows how to protect it even amidst the weeds. Those who are always hunting for the limitations and defects of others do not collaborate well with God, but, rather, those who know how to recognise the good that silently grows in the field of the Church and history, cultivating it until it becomes mature. And then, it will be God, and He alone, who will reward the good and punish the wicked. May the Virgin Mary help us to understand and imitate God's patience, who wants none of His children to be lost, whom He loves with the love of a Father.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

In this time in which the pandemic shows no signs of coming to an end, I want to assure my nearness to all those suffering from the illness and its economic and social repercussions. My thought goes out especially to the populations whose sufferings are heightened due to situations of conflict. On the basis of a recent United Nations resolution, I renew the appeal for a global and immediate cease fire that would allow the peace and safety that are indispensable in order to provide the necessary humanitarian assistance.

In particular, I am following and am concerned about the renewed armed tensions in the past few days in the Caucasus region between Armenia and Azerbaijan. While I assure my prayers to the families of those who have lost their lives during the clashes, I hope that, with the dedication of the international community, and through dialogue and good will, there may be a lasting peaceful solution for the good of those beloved peoples.

I extend my heartfelt greeting to you, members of the faithful from Rome and pilgrims who are from Italy and other countries.

I wish all of you a blessed Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch, and *arrivederci*.
