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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, *buongiorno!*

This Second Sunday of Lent invites us to contemplate *the transfiguration* of Jesus on the mountain, before three of his disciples (cf. *Mk 9:2-10*). Just before, Jesus had announced that in Jerusalem he would suffer a greatly, be rejected and put to death. We can imagine what must have happened in the heart of his friends, of those close friends, his disciples: the image of a strong and triumphant Messiah is put into crisis, their dreams are shattered, and they are beset by anguish at the thought that the Teacher in whom they had believed would be killed like the worst of wrongdoers. And in that very moment, with that anguish of soul, Jesus calls Peter, James and John and takes them up the mountain with him.

The Gospel says: He "led them up a high mountain" (v. 2). In the Bible, the mountain always has a special significance: it is the elevated place where heaven and earth touch each other, where Moses and the prophets had the extraordinary experience of encountering God. Climbing the mountain is drawing somewhat close to God. Jesus climbs up with the three disciples and they stop at the top of the mountain. Here, he is transfigured before them. His face radiant and his garments glistening, providing a preview of the image as the Risen One, offer to those frightened men *the light*, the light of hope, the light *to pass through the shadows*: death will not be the end of everything, because it will open to the glory of the Resurrection. Thus, Jesus announces his death; he takes them up the mountain and shows them what will happen afterwards, the Resurrection.

As the Apostle Peter exclaimed (cf. v. 5), it is good to pause with the Lord on the mountain, to live this "preview"

of light in the heart of Lent. It is a call to remember, especially when we pass through a difficult trial – and so many of you know what it means to pass through a difficult trial – that the Lord is Risen and does not permit darkness to have the last word.

At times we go through moments of darkness in our personal, family or social life, and of fear that there is no way out. We feel frightened before great enigmas such as illness, innocent pain or the mystery of death. In the same journey of faith, we often stumble encountering the scandal of the cross and the demands of the Gospel, which calls us to spend our life in service and to lose it in love, rather than preserve it for ourselves and protect it. Thus, we need a different outlook, of a light that illuminates the mystery of life in depth and helps us to move beyond our paradigms and beyond the criteria of this world. We too are called to climb up the mountain, to contemplate the beauty of the Risen One who enkindles glimmers of light in every fragment of our life and helps us to interpret history beginning with his paschal victory.

Let us be careful, however: that feeling of Peter that “it is well that we are here” must not become *spiritual laziness*. We cannot remain on the mountain and enjoy the beauty of this encounter by ourselves. Jesus himself brings us back to the valley, amid our brothers and sisters and into daily life. We must beware of spiritual laziness: we are fine, with our prayers and liturgies, and this is enough for us. No! Going up the mountain does not mean forgetting reality; praying never means avoiding the difficulties of life; the light of faith is not meant to provide beautiful spiritual feelings. No, this is not Jesus’ message. We are called to experience the encounter with Christ so that, enlightened by his light, we might take it and make it shine everywhere. Igniting little lights in people’s hearts; being little lamps of the Gospel that bear a bit of love and hope: this is the mission of a Christian.

Let us pray to Mary Most Holy, that she may help us to welcome the light of Christ with wonder, to safeguard it and share it.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters! I join my voice with that of the Bishops of Nigeria to condemn the vile abduction of 317 girls, taken away from their school, to Jangebe, in the northwest of the country. I pray for these girls, that they may return home soon. I am close to their families and to the girls themselves. Let us pray to Our Lady that she safeguard them. Hail Mary....

Today is World Rare Disease Day.... [*looking at the Square*] You are here. I greet the members of several associations committed in this field, who have come to the Square. In the case of rare diseases the support network among family members, favoured by these associations, is more important than ever. It helps not to feel alone and to exchange experiences and advice. I encourage the initiatives that support research and treatment, and I express my closeness to the sick, to the families, but especially to children. Being close to sick children, suffering children, praying for them, helping them feel God’s loving caress, tenderness.... Taking care of children with prayer, even.... When there are these diseases that no one knows what they are, or there is a somewhat brutal prognosis. Let us pray for all the people who have these rare diseases; let us pray especially for children who are suffering. I wholeheartedly greet you all, faithful of Rome and pilgrims from various countries. I wish everyone a good journey in this Season of Lent. And I recommend you fast, a fast that will not make you hungry: a fast from gossip and slander. It is a special way. In this Lent I will not speak ill of others; I will not gossip.... And we can all do this, everyone. This is a good fast. And do not forget that it will also be helpful to read a passage of the Gospel, to carry a small Gospel in your pocket, in your purse, and pick it up when you can, any passage. This will make the heart open to the Lord.

And please, do not forget to pray for me. Happy Sunday. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci!*

