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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At midday today, Solemnity of the Saints Apostles Peter and Paul, the Holy Father Francis appeared at the window of his study in the Vatican Apostolic Palace to pray the Angelus with the pilgrims and faithful gathered in Saint Peter's Square.

The following are the Pope's words of introduction to the Marian prayer:

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

The Gospel of today's Liturgy, the Solemnity of the Patron Saints of Rome, reports the words that Peter addresses to Jesus: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt 16:16). It is a profession of faith, which Peter pronounces not on the basis of his human understanding, but because God the Father inspired it in him (cf. v. 17). For the fisherman Simon, called Peter, it was the beginning of a journey: it would indeed have to be a long time before the scope of those words entered deeply into his life, involving him entirely. There is an "apprenticeship" of faith, similar to ours, that also affected the apostles Peter and Paul. We too believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God, but it takes time, patience, and much humility for our way of thinking and acting to fully adhere to the Gospel.

The apostle Peter experienced this immediately. Just after having declared his own faith to Jesus, when Jesus announces that He will have to suffer and be condemned to death, Peter rejects this prospect, which he considers incompatible with the Messiah. He even feels compelled to rebuke the Master, who in turn says to him: "Get behind me, Satan! You are a scandal to me, because you do not think according to God, but according to men!" (v. 23).

Let us consider: does not the same thing happen to us? We repeat the Creed, we say it with faith, but when faced with the harsh trials of life, everything seems to falter. We are inclined to protest to the Lord, telling him

that it is not right, that there must be other, more direct, less strenuous ways. We experience the laceration of the believer, who believes in Jesus, trusts in him; but at the same time feels that it is difficult to follow him and is tempted to seek paths other than those of the Master. St Peter experienced this inner drama, and he needed time and maturity. At first he was horrified at the thought of the cross; but at the end of his life he courageously bore witness to the Lord, even to the point of being crucified—according to tradition—upside down, in order to not be equal to the Master.

The Apostle Paul also had his own path, and he too passed through a slow maturation of faith, experiencing moments of uncertainty and doubt. The apparition of the Risen One on the road to Damascus, which changed him from a persecutor into a Christian, must be seen as the beginning of a journey during which the Apostle came to terms with the crises, failures, and constant torments of what he calls a “thorn in the flesh” (cf. 2 Cor 12:7). The journey of faith is never a walk in the park, for anyone, not for Peter nor for Paul, not for any Christian. The journey of faith is not a walk in the park, but is instead demanding, sometimes arduous. Even Paul, who became a Christian, had to learn how to be a Christian in a gradual manner, especially through times of trial.

In the light of this experience of the holy apostles Peter and Paul, each of us can ask ourselves. When I profess my faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, do I do so with the awareness that I must always be learning, or do I assume that I “already have it all figured out”? And again: In difficulties and trials do I become discouraged, do I complain, or do I learn to make them an opportunity to grow in trust in the Lord? For He, in fact— as Paul writes to Timothy—delivers us from all evil and brings us safely to heaven (cf. 2 Tim 4:18). May the Virgin Mary, Queen of the Apostles, teach us to imitate them by progressing day by day on the path of faith.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

Every day I carry in my heart the dear and tormented Ukraine, which continues to be scourged by barbaric attacks, like the one that struck the Kremenchuk shopping centre. I pray that this insane war may soon see an end, and I renew the invitation to persevere, without tiring, in prayer for peace: may the Lord open those paths of dialogue that men are unwilling or unable to find! And let us not neglect to come to the aid of the Ukrainian people, who are suffering so much.

In recent days, several fires have broken out in Rome, fanned by the very high temperatures, while in many places drought is now a serious problem that is causing serious damage to agricultural activities and to the environment. I hope that the necessary measures will be put in place to deal with these emergencies and to prevent future emergencies. All this should cause us to reflect on the protection of creation, which is our responsibility, the responsibility of each one of us. It is not a fad, it is a responsibility: the future of the earth is in our hands and with our decisions!

Today the first issue of ‘L'Osservatore di strada’, the new monthly magazine of ‘L'Osservatore Romano’, is being distributed here in the square. In this newspaper those who are least become protagonists: in fact, poor and marginalised people participate in the editorial work, writing, allowing themselves be interviewed, brightening the pages of this monthly magazine, which is offered free of charge. If anyone wants to give something they can give it voluntarily, but take it freely because it is a beautiful work that comes from the grassroots, from the poor, as an expression of those who are marginalised.

On this feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, the principle Patrons of Rome, I extend my best wishes to the people of Rome and to all who stay in this city, hoping that all may find in it a fitting welcome worthy of its beauty. Rome is beautiful!

I renew my gratitude to the Delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, sent by His Holiness

Bartholomew, my dear brother, and I send him cordial and fraternal greetings.

I greet with affection the pilgrims who have come to celebrate the Metropolitan Archbishops, for whom I blessed the Pallia this morning.

I greet all of you, dear pilgrims, especially those from the United States of America and the Czech Republic, from Berlin and London. I greet the young Confirmandi from Barbara, near Ancona; and those from Grest in Zagarolo; as well as the participants in the pilgrimage that came in Aquileia and was promoted by the Associazione Europea Romea Strata; and I greet the young people of the Immacolata.

I wish everyone a happy feast day! Please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch, and see you soon!
