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

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

The Gospel of this first Sunday of Lent presents to us Jesus in the desert, tempted by the devil (cf. *Mt* 4:1-11). "Devil" means "divider". The devil always wants to create division, and it is what he sets out to do by tempting Jesus. Let us see, then, *from whom* he wants to divide him, and *how* he tempts him.

From whom does the devil want to divide Jesus? After receiving Baptism from John in the Jordan, Jesus was called by the Father "my beloved Son" (*Mt* 3:17), and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove (cf. v. 16). The Gospel thus presents us the three divine Persons joined in love. Then Jesus himself will say that he came into the world to make us, too, partake in the unity between him and the Father (cf. *Jn* 17:11). The devil, instead, does the opposite: he enters the scene to divide Jesus from the Father and to distract him from his mission of unity for us. He always divides.

Let us now see *how* he tries to do it. The devil wants to take advantage of the human condition of Jesus, who is weak as he has fasted for forty days and is hungry (cf. *Mt* 4:2). The evil one then tries to instil in him three powerful "poisons", to paralyse his mission of unity. These poisons are *attachment*, *mistrust*, and *power*. First and foremost, the poison of attachment to material goods, to needs; with persuasive arguments the devil tries to convince Jesus: "You are hungry, why must you fast? Listen to your need and satisfy it, you have the right and the power: transform the stones into bread". Then the second poison, *mistrust*: "Are you sure the Father wants what is good for you? Test him, blackmail him! Throw yourself down from the highest point of the temple and

make him do what you want". Finally, *power*: "You have no need for your Father! Why wait for his gifts? Follow the criteria of the world, take everything for yourself, and you will be powerful!". The three temptations of Jesus. And we too live among these temptations, always. It is terrible, but that is just how it is, for us too: attachment to material things, mistrust and the thirst for power are three widespread and dangerous temptations, which the devil uses to divide us from the Father and to make us no longer feel like brothers and sisters among ourselves, to lead us to solitude and desperation. He wanted to do this to Jesus, he wants to do it to us: to lead us to desperation.

But Jesus defeats the temptations. And how does he defeat them? By avoiding discussion with the devil and answering with the Word of God. This is important: you cannot argue with the devil, you cannot converse with the devil! Jesus confronts him with the Word of God. He quotes three phrases from the Scripture that speak of freedom from goods (cf. *Dt* 8:3), trust (cf. *Dt* 6:16), and service to God (cf. *Dt* 6:13), three phrases that are opposed to temptation. He never enters into dialogue with the devil, he does not negotiate with him, but he repels his insinuations with the beneficent Words of the Scripture. It is an invitation to us too; one cannot defeat him by negotiating with him, he is stronger than us. We defeat the devil by countering him in faith with the divine Word. In this way, Jesus teaches us to defend unity with God and among ourselves from the attacks of the divider. The divine Word that is Jesus' answer to the temptation of the devil.

And we ask ourselves: what place does the Word of God have in my life? Do I turn to it in my spiritual struggles? If I have a vice or a recurrent temptation, why do I not obtain help by seeking out a verse of the Word of God that responds to that vice? Then, when temptation comes, I recite it, I pray it, trusting in the grace of Christ. Let us try, it will help us in temptation, it will help us a great deal, so that, amid the voices that stir within us, the beneficent one of the Word of God will resound. May Mary, who welcomed the Word of God and with her humility defeated the pride of the divider, accompany us in the spiritual struggle of Lent.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

Distressing news continues to arrive from the Holy Land: many people killed, even children... How can this spiral of violence be stopped? I renew my appeal to make dialogue prevail over hatred and vengeance, and I pray to God for the Palestinians and Israelis, that they may find the path to fraternity and peace, with the help of the international community.

I am also very concerned about the situation in Burkina Faso, where terrorist attacks continue. I invite you to pray for the people of that dear country, so that the violence they have suffered does not make them lose faith in the path of democracy, justice and peace.

This morning I learned with sorrow of the shipwreck off the Calabrian coast, near Crotone. Forty dead have already been recovered, including many children. I pray for each one of them, for the missing and for the other surviving migrants. I thank those who have brought relief and those who are providing shelter. May Our Lady sustain these brothers and sisters of ours. And let us not forget the tragedy of the war in Ukraine; the war has already continued for a year. And let us not forget the suffering of the Syrian and Turkish people due to the earthquake.

I address my greeting to all of you who have come from Italy and from other countries. I greet the pilgrims from Spain, Portugal, Mexico and Croatia. I greet the faithful of Palermo, Montelepre, Termini Imerese and Riese Pio X; the students of the Interregional Seminary of Campania in Naples; teenagers from various parishes of the diocese of Milan; the young candidates for Confirmation from Cavaion and Segà, Verona; the group from Limbadi and the children about to receive their First Communion, from Sant'Aurea in Ostia Antica.

I welcome the Italian Organ Donors' Association, which is celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of its founding: I thank you for your commitment to social solidarity, and I urge you to continue to promote life through the donation of organs. A special greeting goes to those who have come on the occasion of World Rare Diseases Day, which will take place the day after tomorrow; I reiterate my encouragement to the Associations of the sick and their relatives; may our closeness never be lacking, especially to children, to let them feel God's love and tenderness.

And I wish you all a happy Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your meal, and *arrivederci*!
