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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!*

Today, the Gospel depicts Jesus giving sight to a man blind from birth (cf. *Jn* 9:1-41). But this wonder is badly welcomed by various people or groups. Let us look at the details.

But I would like to say: today, take the Gospel of John and read about this miracle of Jesus. The way John recounts it in chapter 9 is really beautiful. It only takes two minutes to read it. It makes us see how Jesus proceeds and how the human heart proceeds: the good human heart, the tepid human heart, the fearful human heart, the courageous human heart. Chapter 9 of the Gospel of John. Read it today. It will help you a lot. And what are the ways that these people welcome it?

First of all, there are Jesus' disciples who, faced with the man born blind, engage in small talk and ask whether his parents or he was to blame (cf. v. 2). They look for a culprit. And we fall into this many times which is so convenient – to look for a culprit rather than asking challenging questions in life. And today, we can say: What does the presence of this man mean for us, in my life? What is this person asking of us?

Then, once the healing takes place, the reactions intensify. The first are from his neighbours who are sceptical: "This man was always blind. It is not possible that he now sees – it can't be him! It's someone else" – scepticism (cf. vv. 8-9). This is unacceptable to them. Better to leave everything like it was before so we do not need to face

this problem (cf. v. 16). They are afraid, they fear the religious authorities and do not pronounce themselves (cf. vv. 18-21).

In all these reactions, for various reasons, there emerge hearts closed in front of the sign of Jesus: because they seek a culprit, because they do not know how to be surprised, because they do not want to change, because they are blocked by fear. Today there are many similar situations. Faced with something that is truly a testimony of a person, a message about Jesus, we fall into this – we look for another explanation, we do not want to change, we look for a more elegant way out rather than accepting the truth.

The only person who reacts well is the blind man. Happy to see, he testifies to what happened to him in the simplest way: “I was blind, now I see” (v. 25). He tells the truth. Before, he had been forced to ask for alms to live on, and suffered from the prejudice of the people: “He is poor and blind from birth. He has to suffer. He has to pay for his sins or those of his forebears”. Now free in body and spirit, he bears witness to Jesus – he neither invents nor hides anything. “I was blind and now I see”. He is not afraid of what the others will say. He had already known the bitter taste of marginalization his whole life. He had already personally experienced the indifference, the contempt of the passers-by, of those who considered him to be an outcast in society, useful at best for the pious practice of giving some alms. Now healed, he no longer fears those contemptuous attitudes because Jesus has given him his full dignity. And this is clear, it always happens when Jesus heals us. He gives us back our dignity, the dignity of the healing of Jesus, complete, a dignity that comes forth from the depths of the heart, that takes hold of one’s entire life. And, on the sabbath in front of everyone, Jesus liberated him and gave him sight without asking him for anything, not even a thank you, and he bears witness to this. This is the dignity of a noble person, of a person who knows he is healed and begins again, is reborn. That rebirth in life that they spoke about today on “A Sua Immagine”: to be reborn.

Brothers, sisters, through all these characters, today’s Gospel puts us too in the midst of the scene, so we might ask ourselves: What position do we take? What would we have said then? And above all, what will we do today? Like the blind man, do we know how to see the good and to be grateful for the gifts we receive? I ask myself: How is my dignity? How is your dignity? Do we bear witness to Jesus, or do we spread criticism and suspicion instead? Are we free when faced with prejudices or do we associate ourselves with those who spread negativity and small talk? Are we happy to say that Jesus loves us, that he saves us, or, like the parents of the man born blind, do we allow ourselves to be caged in by the fear of what others will think? Tepid hearts who do not accept the truth and do not have the courage to say, “No, it’s like this”. And further, how do we welcome the difficulties and indifference of others. How do we welcome people who have so many limitations in life? Whether they be physical, like this blind man; or social, like the beggars we find on the street? Do we welcome them like an inconvenience or as an occasion to draw near to them with love?

Brothers and sisters, today, let us ask the grace to be surprised every day by God’s gifts and to see the various circumstances of life, even the most difficult ones to accept, as occasions to do good, as Jesus did with the blind man. May Our Lady help us in this, together with Saint Joseph, the just and faithful man.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters!

Yesterday in Ecuador, an earthquake caused deaths, injuries and considerable damage. I am near to the Ecuadorian people and I assure you of my prayers for the deceased and for all who are suffering.

I greet all of you, people from Rome and pilgrims from many countries – I see flags: Colombian, Argentinian, Polish...many, many countries.... I greet those from Spain who have come from Murcia, Alicante and Albacete.

I greet the parishes of Saint Raymond Nonnato and the Canadian Martyrs in Rome, and that of Christ the King in

Civitanova Marche; the Association of Salesian Cooperators; the boys and girls from Arcore, the confirmation candidates from Empoli and those from the parish of Our Lady of the Rosary in Rome. I greet the young people of the Immaculate, they are great!

It's a pleasure to greet the participants in the Rome Marathon! I congratulate you because, spurred on by "Vatican Athletics" you are making this important sporting event an occasion for solidarity in favour of the poorest.

And today, we extend best wishes to all fathers! May they find in Saint Joseph a model, support and consolation to live their fatherhood well. And all together, for fathers, let us pray to the Father [Our Father...].

Brothers and sisters, let us not forget to pray for the battered Ukrainian people, who continue to suffer due to war crimes.

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