



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHL
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
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N. 230730a

Sunday 30.07.2023

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 tells the parable of a merchant in search of precious gemstones, who, Jesus says, "on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it" (*Mt 13:46*). Let us pause a little on the actions of this merchant, who first *seeks*, then *finds* and finally *buys*.

This man's first action: to *seek*. He is an enterprising merchant, who does not stand still, but leaves his house and sets out in search of precious pearls. He does not say: "I am satisfied with the ones I have"; he looks for more beautiful ones. And this is an invitation for us not to close ourselves up in habit, in the mediocrity of those who are complacent, but to *revive desire*: to revive the desire, so that the desire to seek, to go on, is not extinguished; to cultivate dreams of good, to seek the newness of the Lord, because the Lord is not repetitive, He always brings newness, the newness of the Spirit; He always makes the realities of life new (cf. *Rev 21:5*). And we must have this attitude: to seek.

The merchant's second action is to *find*. He is a shrewd person who "has a keen eye" and knows how to recognize a pearl of great value. This is not easy. Let us think, for example, of the fascinating oriental bazaars, where the stalls, full of goods, are crowded along the walls of streets full of people; or of some of the stalls one sees in many cities, full of books and various objects. Sometimes in these markets, if one stops to look closely, one can discover treasures: precious things, rare volumes that, mixed in with everything else, one does not notice at first glance. But the merchant in the parable has a sharp eye and knows how to find, he knows how to

“discern” to find the pearl. This too is a teaching for us: every day, at home, on the street, at work, on holiday, we have the possibility of discerning good. And it is important to know how to find what counts: to train ourselves to recognize the precious gems of life and to distinguish them from junk. Let us not waste time and freedom on trivial things, pastimes that leave us empty inside, while life offers us every day the precious pearl of the encounter with God and with others! It is necessary to know how to recognize it: to discern in order to find it.

And the merchant's last action: he *buys* the pearl. Realizing its immense value, he sells everything, he sacrifices all his goods just to have it. He radically changes the inventory of his warehouse; there is no longer anything other than that pearl: it is his only wealth, the meaning of his present and his future. This too is an invitation for us. But what is this pearl for which one can renounce everything, the one of which the Lord speaks to us? This pearl is Him: it is the Lord! Seeking the Lord and finding the Lord, encountering the Lord, living with the Lord. The pearl is Jesus: He is the precious pearl of life, to be sought, found and made one's own. It is worth investing everything in Him because, when one encounters Christ, life changes like this, doesn't it? Your life ... you meet Christ and in this way your life changes.

Let us then resume the merchant's three actions: seeking, finding and buying – and ask ourselves some questions. *Seeking*: am I searching, in my life? Do I feel fine, accomplished, am I satisfied, or do I exercise my desire for good? Am I in spiritual retirement? How many young people are in retirement! The second action, *finding*: do I practise discerning what is good and comes from God, knowing how to renounce what leaves me with little or nothing? Finally, *buying*: do I know how to spend myself for Jesus? Is He in first place for me, is He the greatest good in life? It would be nice to say to Him today: “Jesus, You are my greatest good”. Each one of you in your heart, say now: “Jesus, you are my greatest good”.

May Mary help us to seek, find and embrace Jesus with all of ourselves.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters!

Today we observe two World Days declared by the UN: International Friendship Day and the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons. The first promotes friendship between peoples and cultures; the second combats the crime that turns people into commodities. Trafficking is a terrible reality, affecting too many people: children, women, workers..., so many exploited people; all living in inhuman conditions and suffering indifference and rejection by society. There is so much trafficking in the world today. God bless those who work to fight against trafficking.

Let us not cease to pray for beleaguered Ukraine, where the war is destroying everything, even grain. This is a grave offense to God, because grain is His gift to feed humanity; and the cry of millions of brothers and sisters who suffer hunger rises to Heaven. I appeal to my brothers, the authorities of the Russian Federation, that the Black Sea Initiative may be restored and grain may be transported safely.

The coming 4 August will mark three years since the devastating explosion in the port of Beirut. I renew my prayer for the victims and their families, who are seeking truth and justice, and I hope that Lebanon's complex crisis may find a solution worthy of the history and values of that people. Let us not forget that Lebanon is also a message.

I ask you to accompany me with prayer in my journey to Portugal, which will begin next Wednesday, on the occasion of World Youth Day. A great many young people, from all continents, will experience the joy of the encounter with God and with their brothers and sisters, guided by the Virgin Mary, who after the annunciation “arose and went with haste” (Lk 1:39). I entrust the World Youth Day pilgrims and all young people of the world to Her, shining star of the Christian path.

And now I greet you all, Romans and pilgrims from Italy and many countries. In particular, I greet the choir of children from Veliko Tarnovo, in Bulgaria, and the group of young Mexicans, as well as the teenagers from Biadene and Caonada. And I greet the young people of the *Immacolata*.

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