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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At midday today, the Holy Father 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 Holy Father's words of introduction to the Marian prayer:

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

Today's Gospel narrates a particular prodigious deed of Jesus: He walks at night on the waters of the lake of Galilee toward his disciples who are crossing the lake in a boat (cf. *Mt* 14:22-33). The question is: Why did Jesus do this? Like a show? No! But why? Maybe because of an urgent, unforeseeable need to help his disciples who were blocked by a headwind? No, because he himself had planned everything, He had made them depart that evening. The text even says he "made them" (cf. v. 22). Maybe he did it to give them a demonstration of his greatness and power? But it is not that simple with him. So, why did he do it? Why did he want to walk on the waters?

There is a message that is not evident, a message we need to grasp. In fact, at that time, great expanses of water were held to be the haunts of evil powers that man was not able to master. Particularly when storms made them turbulent, these abysses were symbols of chaos and recalled the darkness of the underworld. Now, the disciples found themselves in the middle of the lake when it was dark. They are afraid of sinking, of being sucked in by evil. And comes Jesus here, walking on the waters, that is, over the powers of evil. He walks on top of the powers of evil and says to his disciples: "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid" (v. 27). This is the message Jesus gives us. This is the meaning of the sign: the powers of evil that frighten us, that we cannot master, take on smaller proportions immediately with Jesus. By walking on the waters, He wants to say, "Do not be afraid. I put your enemies under my feet" – a beautiful message – I put your enemies under my feet – not people! – not that type of enemy, but death, sin, the devil – these are the enemies of the people, our enemies. And Jesus

tramples on these enemies for us.

Today, Christ repeats to each of us, “*Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid!*” Take heart because I am here, because you are no longer alone on the turbulent waters of life. And so, what should we do when we find ourselves on the open sea at the mercy of headwinds? What should we do when we face the fear of the open sea, when we see only darkness and we feel we are going under? We need to do two things that the disciples do in the Gospel. What do the disciples do? They *call on* and *welcome* Jesus. At the worst moments, in the darkest of storms, call on Jesus and welcome Jesus.

The disciples *call on* Jesus: Peter walks a little on the waters toward Jesus, but then gets frightened. He sinks and then cries out: “Lord, save me!” (v. 30). Invoke Jesus, call on Jesus. This prayer is beautiful. It expresses the certainty that the Lord can save us, that he conquers our evil and our fears. I invite you to repeat it now all together. Three times together: *Lord, save me! Lord, save me! Lord, save me!*

And then the disciples *welcome*, first they call on, then they welcome Jesus into the boat. The text says that as soon as he got into the boat, “the wind ceased” (v. 32). The Lord knows that the boat of our life, as well as the boat of the Church, is threatened by headwinds, and that the sea on which we sail is often turbulent. He does not spare us the hard work of sailing, rather – the Gospel emphasizes – he pushes his disciples to depart. He invites us to face difficulties so they too might become *salvific places*, so Jesus can conquer them, so they become opportunities to meet him. In fact, in our moments of darkness, he comes to meet us, asking to be welcomed like that night on the lake.

So, let us ask ourselves: How do I react when I am afraid, in difficulties? Do I go ahead alone, with my own strength, or do I call on the Lord with trust? And what is my faith like? Do I believe that Christ is stronger than the adversarial waves and winds? But above all: Am I sailing with him? Do I welcome him? Do I make room for him in the boat of my life – never alone, always with Jesus? Do I hand the helm over to Jesus?

In the dark crossings, may Mary, the mother of Jesus, Star of the Sea, help us to seek the light of Jesus.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

Another tragic shipwreck happened a few days ago in the Mediterranean – forty-one people lost their lives. I have prayed for them. And, sadly and shamefully, we must say that from the beginning of this year, almost two thousand men, women and children have already died trying to reach Europe. This is an open wound on our humanity. I encourage the political and diplomatic powers that are trying to heal this in a spirit of solidarity and fraternity, as well as the dedication of all those who are working to prevent shipwrecks and are aiding migrants.

Tomorrow, in Bafoussam in Cameroon, still afflicted by violence and war, on the eve of the Feast of Mary Most Holy, Assumed into Heaven, a pilgrimage for peace in the country will take place. Let us unite ourselves in prayer to our brothers and sisters of Cameroon so that, through the Virgin’s intercession, God might sustain the hope of the people who have been suffering for years, and open paths of dialogue so that peace and harmony might be achieved.

And let us pray for the people of Ukraine who are suffering so much because of this war.

I also want to assure my prayers for the victims of the fires that have devastated the Hawaiian Island of Maui.

I now I extend my greetings to all of you, people from Rome and pilgrims from various countries. In particular, I

greet several groups who participated in World Youth Day in Lisbon – and there are many!...I see flags – Poland, Mexico, Argentina, Italy, many, El Salvador, many...the priests and young people from El Salvador who are so loud; the students from Universidad Iberoamericana, Puebla, Mexico; and the young people from Taiwan. Enjoy your trip!

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