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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, first Sunday of Lent, the Gospel presents us with Jesus tempted in the desert (cf. *Mk* 1:12-15). The text says: "He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan". We too, during Lent, are invited to "enter the wilderness", that is, silence, the inner world, listening to the heart, in contact with the truth. In the desert, today's Gospel adds, Christ "was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him" (v. 13). *Wild beasts* and *angels* were His company. But, in a symbolic sense, they are our company too: indeed, when we enter the inner wildness, we can encounter *wild beasts* and *angels* there.

Wild beasts. In what sense? In the spiritual life we can think of them as the disordered passions that divide the heart, trying to take possession of it. They entice us, they seem seductive, but if we are not careful, we risk being torn apart by them. We can give a name to these "beasts" of the soul: the various vices, the coveting of wealth, which imprisons us in connivance and dissatisfaction, the vanity of pleasure, which condemns us to restlessness and solitude, and the craving for fame, which gives rise to insecurity and a continuous need for confirmation and prominence – let us not forget these things that we can encounter within – covetousness, vanity and greed. They are like "wild" beasts, and as such they must be tamed and fought; otherwise, they will devour our freedom. And let helps us to enter the inner wilderness to correct these things.

And then, in the desert, there were the *angels*. These are God's messengers, who help us, who do us good: indeed, their characteristic, according to the Gospel, is *service* (cf. v. 13): the exact opposite of *possession*,

typical of the passions. Service against possession. The angelic spirits instead recall the good thoughts and sentiments suggested by the Holy Spirit. While temptations tear us apart, the good divine inspirations unify us and let us enter into harmony: they quench the heart, infuse the taste of Christ, “the flavour of Heaven”. And in order to grasp the inspiration of God, one must enter into silence and prayer. And Lent is the time to do this.

We can ask ourselves, first, what are the disordered passions, the “wild beasts” that agitate in my heart? Second question: to permit the voice of God to speak to my heart and to preserve it in goodness, am I thinking of retreating a little into the “wilderness”, am I trying to dedicate space in the day to this?

May the Holy Virgin, who kept the Word and did not let herself be touched by the temptations of the evil one, help us on our Lenten journey.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters!

Ten years have passed now since the outbreak of the armed conflict in Sudan, which has caused a very grave humanitarian situation. I once again ask the conflicting sides to stop this war, which inflicts a great deal of harm to the people and the future of the country. Let us pray that paths of peace can be found soon, to build the future of dear Sudan.

The violence against defenceless populations, the destruction of infrastructure, and insecurity are again rampant in the province of Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, where the Catholic mission of Our Lady of Africa in Mazezeze was also set on fire in recent days. Let us pray for peace to return to that tormented region. And let us not forget so many other conflicts that stain the African continent and many parts of the world with blood: also Europe, Palestine, Ukraine...

Let us not forget: war is a defeat, always. Wherever there is warfare, the populations are exhausted, they are tired of war, which is always pointless and inconclusive, and brings only death, only destruction, and will never lead to the solution to problems. Instead, let us pray tirelessly, because prayer is effective, and let us ask the Lord for the gift of minds and hearts that dedicate themselves to peace in a concrete way.

I greet the faithful of Rome and of different parts of Italy and the world, especially the pilgrims from the United States of America, the Neocatechumenal Communities of various parishes of the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Spain, students from the “Carolina Coronado” Institute of Almendralejo and the voluntary association “In the footsteps of the Servants – towards the World”. And I greet the growers and livestock farmers in the square!

This afternoon, together with collaborators of the Curia, we will begin the spiritual Exercises. I invite the communities and faithful to dedicate specific moments to gather themselves in the presence of the Lord during this Lenten time and throughout this year of preparation for the Jubilee, which is the “Year of Prayer”.

And I wish you all a good Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. *Arrivederci!*
