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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

After the celebration of Holy Mass on the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord in the Vatican Basilica, at midday the Holy Father Francis appeared at the window of his study in the Vatican Apostolic Palace to pray the Angelus with the approximately thirty thousand faithful and pilgrims gathered in Saint Peter's Square.

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

Dear brothers and sisters, happy Feast of the Epiphany!

Today the Church celebrates the *manifestation* of Jesus, and the Gospel concentrates on the Magi, who at the end of a long journey reach Jerusalem to adore Jesus.

If we look closely, we will discover something a bit stranger: while these wise men from far away come to find Jesus, those who were close by do not take one step towards the grotto in Bethlehem. Drawn and guided by the star, the Magi face enormous expenses, make their time available, accept the many risks and uncertainties of which there was no shortage in those times. And yet they overcome every difficulty to get to see the King Messiah, because they know that something unique is happening in the history of humanity, and they do not want to miss the event. They had inspiration within, and they followed it.

Instead, those who live in Jerusalem, who should be the happiest and the most prompt to rush, stay still. The priests and theologians correctly interpret the Sacred Scriptures and provide directions to the Magi about where to find the Messiah, but they do not move from their "desks". They are satisfied with what they have, and they do not go seeking; they do not think it is worth the effort to leave Jerusalem.

This fact, sisters and brothers, makes us reflect and in a certain sense provokes us, because it raises a question: to what category do we, I, belong today? Are we more similar to the shepherds, who on the very night itself go in haste to the grotto, and the Magi from the east, who set out confidently in search of the Son of God made man; or are we more similar to those who, despite being physically very close to Him, do not open the

doors of their heart and their life, remaining closed and insensitive to Jesus' presence? Let us ask ourselves this question. To which group of people do I belong? According to a story, a fourth King arrives late in Jerusalem, precisely during Jesus' crucifixion – this is a beautiful story; it is not historical, but it is a beautiful story – because he stopped along the way to help those in need, giving them the precious gifts he had brought for Jesus. Finally, an old man arrived and said to him: "In truth I say to you, all that you have done for the least of your brothers, you have done it for me". The Lord knows everything that we have done for others.

Let us ask the Virgin Mary to help us so that, imitating the shepherds and the Magi, we are able to recognize Jesus close by, in the poor, in the Eucharist, in the abandoned, in our brother, in our sister.

After the Angelus

Dear sisters, brothers!

The Epiphany is World Mission Day for Children, which this year has the theme: "Go and invite everyone to the Banquet!". I greet missionary children and young people all over the world, and I encourage them in their commitment to prayer and solidarity towards their peers in other continents.

I am pleased to convey my warmest wishes to the ecclesial communities of the east, who celebrate Holy Christmas tomorrow. I assure in a special way my prayer for those who suffer as a result of ongoing conflicts. May Jesus, Prince of Peace, bring peace and serenity to all of them!

I welcome with joy the participants in the historical-folkloric pageant, which this year is dedicated to the town of Amelia and its neighbouring villages, to their human values, and to their religious values. Thank you!

And let us not forget to pray for peace in tormented Ukraine, Palestine, Israel, all the countries at war, and in Myanmar.

I greet the faithful of Massafra, the young people of the "Tra Noi" ("Among Us") Movement, the "Friends of history and tradition" of Carovilli and the Choir of Soriano nel Cimino. And I extend my greeting to the participants in the great "Procession of the Magi" in Poland, who with this initiative bear witness to the faith in the churches and streets of Warsaw and many Polish cities, but also abroad, even here in Rome! A greeting to all the Polish.

And I wish everyone a happy Feast of the Epiphany. Continue to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch, and *arrivederci!*
