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Appeal for the return of missing children and for peace in Syria

Vatican City, 25 May 2016 – Today, International Missing Children's Day, the Pope commented that it is the duty of all to protect children, especially those who are most at risk of exploitation, trafficking and deviant behaviour, and launched an appeal to the civil and religious authorities all over the world to "raise awareness, to avoid indifference to children who are alone, exploited and far from their families and their social context, children who cannot grow serenely and look with hope to the future", and he invited those present to pray for each one of these children, so that they might be returned to the affections of their loved ones.

The Holy Father also spoke about "beloved Syria", where on Monday around one hundred helpless civilians were killed in a number of terrorist attacks. "I exhort all of you to pray, to pray to the merciful Father, to pray to the Virgin", he said, "to grant eternal repose to the victims, consolation to their families, and conversion to the hearts of those who sow death and destruction".

At the end of the audience, Pope Francis remarked that the traditional Corpus Christi procession will be held in Rome tomorrow, starting from Piazza San Giovanni Laterano, where the Pope will preside at Holy Mass, and continuing with the adoration of the Most Holy Sacrament, to the Basilica of St. Mary Major. He urged all Romans and pilgrims to participate in this "solemn public act of faith and love for Jesus, truly present in the Eucharist".