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OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 161023b

Sunday 23.10.2016

New appeal for peace in Iraq

“In these dramatic hours, I am close to the entire population of Iraq, and in particular those of the city of Mosul”, said the Pope following the Angelus prayer. “Our hearts are shocked by the heinous acts of violence that for too long are being committed against innocent citizens, be they Muslims, Christians or members of other ethnic and religious groups. I am saddened to hear of the killing in cold blood of so many sons and daughters of that beloved land, including many children. This cruelty makes us weep, and leaves us speechless. My word of solidarity is accompanied by the assurance of my remembrance in prayer so that Iraq, although suffering, may remain strong and steadfast in the hope of being able to proceed towards a future of safety, reconciliation and peace. For this, I ask you to unite with me in silent prayer”.

After observing a minute of silence, the Pope prayed a Hail Mary and then affectionately greeted pilgrims from Italy and other countries, including those from Poland who commemorate the 1050th anniversary of the presence of Christianity in their homeland. He also welcomed the participants in the Jubilee of choral groups in Italy, runners from Assisi and young people from the confraternities of Italian dioceses. Finally, he gave special mention to the Peruvian community of Rome, present in St. Peter's Square with the image of the *Señor de los Milagros*.