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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

Before the Angelus

After the Angelus

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 is the Pope's introduction to the Marian prayer:

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Today begins Advent, the liturgical time that prepares us for Christmas, inviting us to raise our eyes and to open our heart to receive Jesus. In Advent we live not only the expectation of Christmas; we are also invited to reawaken the expectation of the glorious return of Christ – when at the end of times he will return – preparing ourselves for the final encounter with Him, with consistent and courageous choices. Let us remember Christmas, let us await the glorious return of Christ, and also our personal encounter: the day in which the Lord will call us. In these four weeks we are called to come out from a resigned and habitual way of living, and to come out nurturing hopes, nurturing dreams for a new future. This Sunday's Gospel (cf. *Lk* 21: 2-28, 34-36) goes indeed in this direction and puts us on our guard against letting ourselves be oppressed by a selfish lifestyle or by the frenetic pace of our days. Jesus' words are particularly incisive: "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. ... Be always on the watch, and pray" (v. 34-36).

Be on the watch and pray: this is how to live this time from today until Christmas. Be on the watch and pray.

Inner slumber stems from turning in on ourselves and being closed up in our own life with its problems, its joys and its pains, but always circulating around ourselves. And this is tiring, it is boring, this closes us up to hope. Here we find the root of the torpor and the idleness the Gospel speaks of. Advent invites us to an effort of vigilance, looking outwards from ourselves, expanding the mind and the heart to open ourselves up to the needs of the people, of our brothers, and to the desire for a new world. It is the desire of many peoples, tormented by hunger, injustice, war; it is the desire of the poor, the weak, the abandoned. This time is opportune for opening our heart, to ask ourselves concrete questions on how and for whom we spend our life.

The second attitude for living well the time of expectation of the Lord is that of *prayer*. “Stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (v. 28), warns the Gospel of Luke. It is about getting up and praying, turning our thoughts and our heart to Jesus Who is about to come. One gets up when expecting something or someone. We await Jesus, we wish to await Him in prayer, which is closely linked to vigilance. Praying, awaiting Jesus, opening oneself up to others, being watchful, not wrapped up in ourselves. But if we think of Christmas in a climate of consumerism, of seeing what we can buy to do this or that, of worldly feasting, Jesus will pass by and will not find us. We await Jesus and we want to await Him in prayer, which is closely linked to watchfulness.

But what is the horizon of our prayerful waiting? It is indicated to us in the Bible, especially the voices of the *prophets*. Today it is that of Jeremiah, who speaks to the people who are harshly tried by exile and who risk losing their identity. We Christians too, who are also the people of God, risk becoming worldly and losing our identity, or rather, of “paganising” the Christian style. Therefore we need the Word of God which, through the prophet, announces to us: “The days are coming ... when I will fulfil the good promise I made ... I will make a righteous branch sprout from David’s line; and He shall do what is just and right in the land” (33: 14-15). And that righteous branch is Jesus, it is Jesus Who come and we who wait. May the Virgin Mary, who brings us Jesus, woman of expectation and prayer, help us strengthen our hope in the promises of her Son Jesus, to make us experience that, through the labour of history, God always remains faithful and also uses human errors to manifest His mercy.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

Advent is the time of hope. In this moment I would like to make mine the hope for peace for the children of Syria, of beloved Syria, tormented by a war that lasted eight years so far. Therefore, joining in the initiative of “Aid to the Church in Need”, I will now light a candle, along with many children who will do likewise, Syrian children and many faithful in the world who today light their candles. [*lights the candle*]

May this flame of hope, and many flames of hope, disperse the shadows of war! Let us pray and let us help Christians to stay in Syria and in the Middle East as witnesses of mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation. May the flame of hope also reach those who suffer in these days as a result of conflicts and tensions in various other parts of the world, near and far. May the prayer of the Church help them feel God’s closeness and touch every conscience for a sincere commitment to peace. And may God, our Lord, forgive those who make war, those who produce weapons to destroy, and convert their heart. Let us pray for peace in beloved Syria.

[“*Hail Mary...*”]

I address my greeting to you, Romans and pilgrims present here, especially those who have come from Linden, in the United States of America, Valencia and Pamplona; as well as the students and teachers of the “Claret” College of Madrid.

I greet the polyphonic choir of Modica, and the faithful of Altamura, Conversano and Laterza. I wish you all a

good Sunday and a good Advent journey. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch, and goodbye.
