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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's Gospel (cf. *Lk* 19: 1-10) places us in the footsteps of Jesus Who, on His way to Jerusalem, stopped in Jericho. There was a great crowd to welcome Him, including a man named Zacchaeus, the head of the "publicans", that is, of those Jews who collected taxes on behalf of the Roman Empire. He was rich not from honest earnings, but because he asked for "bribes", and this increased contempt for him. Zacchaeus "was seeking to see who Jesus was" (v. 3); he didn't want to meet Him, but he was curious: he wanted to see that character about whom he had heard extraordinary things. He was curious. And being short in stature, "to see him" (v. 4) he climbs up a tree. When Jesus comes close, he looks up and sees Him (cf. v. 5).

And this is important: the first glance is not from Zacchaeus, but from Jesus, who among the many faces that surrounded Him – the crowd – seeks precisely that one. The merciful gaze of the Lord reaches us before we ourselves realize that we need it in order to be saved. And with this gaze of the divine Master there begins the miracle of the conversion of the sinner. Indeed, Jesus calls to him, and He calls him by his name: "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today" (v. 5). He does not reproach him, He does not deliver

a “sermon” to him; He tells him that he must go to Him: “he must”, because it is the will of the Father. Despite the murmuring of the people, Jesus chose to stay at the home of that public sinner.

We too would have been scandalized by this behaviour of Jesus. But contempt for and rejection of the sinner only isolate him and cause him to harden in the evil he commits against himself and the community. Instead, God condemns sin, but tries to save the sinner; He goes looking for him to bring him back on the right path. Those who have never felt they are sought by God’s mercy find it difficult to grasp the extraordinary greatness of the gestures and words with which Jesus approaches Zacchaeus.

Jesus’ acceptance and attention to him lead him to a clear change of mentality: in just a moment he realized how petty life is when it revolves around money, at the cost of stealing from others and receiving their contempt. Having the Lord there, in his house, makes him see everything with different eyes, even with a little of the tenderness with which Jesus looked at him. And his way of seeing and using money also changes: the gesture of grabbing is replaced by that of giving. Indeed, he decides to give half of what he possesses to the poor and to return four times the sum to those from whom he has stolen (cf. v. 8). Zacchaeus discovers from Jesus that it is possible to love gratuitously: until this moment he was mean, but now he becomes generous; he had a taste for amassing wealth, now he rejoices in distributing. By encountering Love, by discovering that he is loved despite his sins, he becomes capable of loving others, making money a sign of solidarity and communion.

May the Virgin Mary obtain for us the grace always to feel Jesus’ merciful gaze upon us, to go with mercy towards those who have erred, so that they too may welcome Jesus, Who “came to seek and to save the lost” (v. 10).

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

I am saddened by the violence against Christians in the Tewahedo Orthodox Church of Ethiopia. I express my closeness to this Church and to the Patriarch, dear brother Abuna Matthias, and I ask you to pray for all the victims of violence in that land.

Let us pray together: “*Hail Mary...*”.

I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to the municipality and the diocese of San Severo in Puglia for the signing of the memorandum of understanding on Monday 28 October last, which will allow the workers of the so-called “ghettos of the Capitanata” in the Foggia area, to obtain a domicile in the parishes and registration in the municipal registry office. The possibility of having identity and residence documents will offer them new dignity and will allow them to leave behind the condition of irregularity and exploitation. Many thanks to the municipality and to all those who have worked on this plan.

I extend my cordial greetings to all of you, Romans and pilgrims. In particular, I greet the historical Corporations of the Schützen and the Knights of Saint Sebastian from various European countries; and the faithful from Lordelo de Ouro, Portugal.

I greet the groups from Reggio Calabria, Treviso, Pescara and Sant’Eufemia di Aspromonte; I greet the young people from Modena who have received Confirmation, those from Petosino, diocese of Bergamo, and the scouts who have come by bicycle from Viterbo. I greet the members of the Hakuna movement from Spain.

I wish you all a good Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch, and *arrivederci*.

