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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At midday today, the Holy Father Francis led the recitation of the Angelus prayer from the Library of the Vatican Apostolic Palace.

The young people of Catholic Action of the diocese of Rome were present today, having concluded with the "Caravan of Peace" the month of January which they traditionally dedicate to the theme of peace. At the end of the Angelus prayer, the young people read a message on behalf of *Azione Cattolica Ragazzi* (ACR) in Rome.

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

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

Today's Gospel passage (cf. *Mk* 1:21-28) tells of a typical day in Jesus' ministry; in particular, it is the Sabbath, a day dedicated to repose and prayer: people went to the synagogue. In the synagogue of Capernaum, Jesus reads and comments on the Scriptures. Those present are attracted by His manner of speaking; their astonishment is great because He demonstrates an authority different to that of the scribes (v. 22). Furthermore, Jesus shows Himself to be powerful also in His deeds. Indeed, a man of the synagogue turns to Him, addressing Him as God's Envoy: He recognises the evil spirit, orders him to leave that man, and so drives him out (vv. 23-26).

Two characteristic elements of Jesus' work can be seen here: preaching, and the *therapeutic action* of healing: He preaches and heals. Both of these aspects stand out in the passage of the evangelist Mark, but preaching is emphasised the most; exorcism is presented as a confirmation of His singular "authority" and His teaching. Jesus preaches with His own authority, as someone who possesses a doctrine derived from Himself, and not like the scribes who repeated previous traditions and laws. They repeated words, words, words, only words: as

the great singer Mina sang, [*“Parole, parole, parole”*]; that is how they were. Just words. Instead Jesus, His word has authority, Jesus is authoritative. And this touches the heart. Jesus' teaching has the same authority as God who speaks; for with a single command He easily frees the possessed man from the evil one, and heals him. Why? Because his word does what He says. Because He is the definitive prophet. But why do I say this, that He is the definitive prophet? Remember Moses' promise: Moses says, “After me, long after, a prophet like me will come - like me! - who will teach you”. Moses proclaimed Jesus as the definitive prophet. The teaching of Jesus has the same authority as God who speaks: indeed, with a single command he easily frees the possessed man from the evil one, and heals him. This is why he speaks not with human, but with divine authority, because he has the power to be the definitive prophet, that is, the Son of God who saves us, who heals us all.

The second aspect, healing, shows that Christ's preaching is intended to defeat the evil present in humankind and the world. His word is pointedly directed at the kingdom of Satan: it puts him in crisis and makes him recoil, obliging him to leave the world. Touched by the Lord's command, this possessed, obsessed man is freed and transformed into a new person. In addition, Jesus' preaching conforms to a logic contrary to that of the world and of the evil one: His words reveal the upheaval of a mistaken ordering of things. In fact, the demon present in the possessed man cries out as Jesus approaches: “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?” (v. 24). These expressions indicate the total extraneousness between Jesus and Satan: they are on completely different planes; there is nothing in common between them; they are the opposite of each other. Jesus, authoritative, who attracts people by his authority, and also the prophet who liberates, the promised prophet who is the Son of God who heals. Let us listen to the words of Jesus, which are authoritative: always, do not forget!

Carry a small copy of the Gospel in your pocket or in your bag, in order to read it during the day, to listen to that authoritative word of Jesus. And then, we all have our problems, we all have our sins, we all have spiritual malaises; ask Jesus: “Jesus, you are the prophet, the Son of God, He who was promised to us to heal us. Heal me!” Ask Jesus for healing, from our sins, from our ills.

The Virgin Mary always kept Jesus' words and deeds in her heart, and followed Him with complete availability and faithfulness. May she help us too to listen to Him and follow Him, to experience the signs of His salvation in our lives.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

The day after tomorrow, 2 February, we will celebrate the feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, when Simeon and Anna, both elderly, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, recognised Jesus as the Messiah. The Holy Spirit still stirs up thoughts and words of wisdom in the elderly today: their voice is precious because it sings the praises of God and safeguards the roots of peoples. They remind us that old age is a gift and that grandparents are the link between generations, passing on the experience of life and faith to the young. Grandparents are often forgotten and we forget this wealth of preserving roots and passing on. For this reason, I have decided to establish *World Grandparents' and Elders' Day*, which will be held in all the Church every year on the fourth Sunday of July, close to the feast of Saints Joachim and Anne, Jesus' “grandparents”. It is important for grandparents to meet their grandchildren and for grandchildren to meet their grandparents, because - as the prophet Joel says - grandparents, before their grandchildren, will dream, and have great desires, and young people, taking strength from their grandparents, will go forward and prophesy. And 2 February is indeed the feast of the encounter between grandparents and their grandchildren.

Today we celebrate *World Leprosy Day*, initiated more than sixty years ago by Raoul Follereau and continued by the associations inspired by his humanitarian work. I express my closeness to those who suffer from this disease, and I encourage the missionaries, health care workers and volunteers who are engaged in their service. The pandemic has confirmed how vital it is to protect the right to health for the most fragile people: I

hope that the leaders of nations will unite in their efforts to treat those suffering from Hansen's disease and to ensure their social inclusion.

I greet with affection the boys and girls of Catholic Action in this diocese of Rome - some of them are here -, gathered in safety in their parishes or connected online, on the occasion of the *Caravan of Peace*. Despite the health emergency, this year too, with the help of parents and educators and assisting priests, they have organised this wonderful initiative. They are going ahead with the initiatives, well done to you! Keep up the good work! Well done to you all, thank you. And now let us listen together to the message that some of them here beside us, on behalf of us all, will read.

[Reading of the Message]

Normally, these young people would bring balloons to throw into the air from the window, but today we're locked in here, so it won't be possible. But next year you will certainly do it!

I extend my cordial greetings to all of you who are connected through the various media. I wish you all a good Sunday. Please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your meal and *arrivederci!*
