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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

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

Before the Angelus

Dear Brothers and Sisters, *Buongiorno!*

Today in the Gospel (cf. Mk 5:21-43) Jesus encounters our two most dramatic situations, death and disease. He frees two people from them: a little girl, who dies just as her father has gone to ask Jesus' help; and a woman, who has blood loss for many years. Jesus lets himself be touched by our suffering and our death, and he works two signs of healing to tell us that neither suffering nor death have the last word. He tells us that death is not the end. He defeats this enemy, from which alone we cannot free ourselves.

However, in this period in which illness is still at the centre of the news, we will focus on the other sign, the healing of the woman. More than her health, her affections were compromised. Why? She had blood loss and therefore, according to the mindset of the time, she was deemed impure. She was a marginalized woman; she could not have stable relationships; she could not have a husband; she could not have a family, and could not have normal social relationships, because she was "impure", an illness that rendered her "impure". She lived alone, with a wounded heart. What is the greatest illness of life? Tuberculosis? The pandemic? No. The greatest illness of life is a lack of love; it is not being able to love. This poor woman was sick, yes, with blood loss, but as a result, with a lack of love, because she could not be with others socially. And the healing that counts the most is that of affections. But how do we find it? We can think of our affections: are they sick or are they in good health? Are they sick? Jesus is able to heal them.

The story of this nameless woman – let us call her as such, "the nameless woman" –, in whom we can all see

ourselves, is exemplary. The text says that she had tried many treatments, “had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse” (v. 26). We too, how often do we throw ourselves into mistaken remedies to sate our lack of love? We think that success and money make us happy, but love cannot be bought; it is free. We hide in the virtual, but love is tangible. We do not accept ourselves as we are and we hide behind external facades, but love is not an appearance. We look for solutions from magicians and from gurus, to then find ourselves without money and without peace, like that woman. Finally, she chooses Jesus and throws herself into the crowd to touch Jesus’ garment. In other words, that woman seeks direct contact, physical contact with Jesus. Especially in this time, we understand how important contact and relationships are. The same counts with Jesus: at times we are content to observe some precepts and to repeat prayers – many times, like parrots –, but the Lord waits for us to encounter him, to open our hearts to him, for us, like the woman, to touch his garment in order to heal. Because, by becoming intimate with Jesus, we are healed in our affections.

Jesus wants this. In fact, we read that, even while pressed by the crowd, He looks around to find who touched Him. The disciples were saying: “But you see the crowd pressing around you...”. No: “Who touched me?”. This is Jesus’ gaze: there are many people, but He goes in search of a face and a heart full of faith. Jesus does not look at the whole, like we do, but he looks at the individual. He does not stop at the wounds and mistakes of the past, but goes beyond sins and prejudices. We all have a history, and each of us, in our secret, knows well the ugly matters of our history. But Jesus looks at it in order to heal it. We, instead, like to look at the ugly matters of others. How often when we speak, do we fall into chattering, which is speaking ill of others, “flaying” others. But look: what horizon of life is this? Not like Jesus, who always looks at how to save us; he looks at today; good will is not the ugly history that we have. Jesus goes beyond sins. Jesus goes beyond prejudices. Jesus does not stop at appearances, but reaches the heart. And He heals precisely her, who had been rejected by everyone, an impure woman. He tenderly calls her “daughter” (v. 34) – Jesus’ style was closeness, compassion and tenderness: “Daughter...” – and he praises her faith, restoring her self-confidence.

Sister, brother, you are here, let Jesus look at and heal your heart. I too have to do this: let Jesus look at my heart and heal it. And if you have already felt His tender gaze upon you, imitate Him, and do as He does. Look around: you will see that many people who live beside you feel wounded and alone; they need to feel loved: take the step. Jesus asks you for a gaze that does not stop at the outward appearance, but that goes to the heart: a gaze not judgmental, but welcoming – let us stop judging others – Jesus asks us for a non- judgmental gaze. Because love alone heals life. May Our Lady, Consoler of the suffering, help us to bring a caress to those with wounded hearts whom we meet on our journey. And do not judge; do not judge the personal, social reality of others. God loves everyone! Do not judge; let others live and try to approach them with love.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters! Today, in proximity to the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, I ask you to pray for the Pope. Pray in a special way: the Pope needs your prayers! Thank you. I know you will do so.

On the occasion of today’s *Day of prayer for peace in the Middle East*, I invite everyone to implore God’s mercy and peace in that region. May the Lord support the efforts of those who strive for dialogue and fraternal coexistence in the Middle East, where the Christian faith was born and is alive, despite the suffering. To those dear populations may God always grant peace, perseverance and courage.

I assure my closeness to the populations of South-west of the Czech Republic struck by a strong hurricane. I pray for the departed and the injured and for those who have had to leave their seriously damaged homes.

I address a cordial welcome to all of you, coming from Rome, from Italy and from other countries. I see Poles, Spanish people.... So many are there and there.... May the visit to the Tombs of Saints Peter and Paul strengthen in you love for Christ and for the Church.

I wish everyone a happy Sunday. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. Arrivederci! Well

done, youth of the Immaculate!
