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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At midday today, the Holy Father Francis appeared at the balcony of the tenth floor of the "A. Gemelli" University Hospital and led the recitation of the Angelus prayer with the faithful and pilgrims gathered in the forecourt of the Roman hospital.

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

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

I am glad to be able to keep the Sunday Angelus appointment, even here from "*Gemelli*" *Policlinico*. I thank you all: I have felt your closeness and the support of your prayers. Thank you from the bottom of my heart!

The Gospel passage we read today in the Liturgy recounts that Jesus' disciples, sent by Him, "anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them" (*Mk 6:13*). This "oil" also makes us think of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, which gives comfort to spirit and body. But this "oil" is also listening, the closeness, the care, the tenderness of those who take care of the sick person: it is like a caress that makes you feel better, soothes your pain and cheers you up. All of us, everyone, sooner or later, we all need this "anointing" of closeness and tenderness, and we can all give it to someone else, with a visit, a phone call, a hand outstretched to someone who needs help.

Let us remember that, in the protocol of the final judgment – Matthew 25 – one of the things they will ask us will be about closeness to the sick.

In these days of being hospitalised, I have experienced once again how important good health care is, accessible to all, as it is in Italy and in other countries. Free health care, that assures good service, accessible to

everyone. This precious benefit must not be lost. It needs to be kept! And for this everyone needs to be committed, because it helps everyone and requires everyone's contribution. In the Church it also happens at times that some healthcare institution, due to poor management, does not do well economically, and the first thought that comes to mind is to sell it. But the vocation, in the Church, is not to have money; it is to offer service, and service is always freely given. Do not forget this: to save free institutions.

I would like to express my appreciation and my encouragement to the doctors and all the healthcare workers and staff of this and of other hospitals. They work so hard! And let us pray for all the sick. Here there are some friends, sick children.... Why do children suffer? Why children suffer is a question that touches the heart. Accompany them with prayer and pray for all those who are sick, especially for those in the most difficult conditions: may no one be left alone, may everyone receive the anointing of listening, closeness, tenderness and care. Let us ask this through the intercession of Mary, our Mother, Health of the Sick.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

In recent days my prayer has often been aimed at Haiti, following the assassination of its President and the wounding of his wife. I join in the heartfelt appeal of the country's Bishops to "lay down weapons, choose life, choose to live together fraternally in the interest of all and in the interest of Haiti". I am close to the beloved Haitian people; I hope that the spiral of violence will cease and the nation can resume the journey toward a future of peace and harmony.

Today is "Sea Sunday", dedicated in a particular way to seafarers and to those whose source of work and sustenance is the sea. I pray for them and exhort everyone to take care of the oceans and seas. Take care of the health of the seas: no plastic in the sea!

I remember and bless those who today in Poland are participating in the pilgrimage of Radio Maria Family to the Shrine of Czestochowa.

Today we celebrate the Feast of Saint Benedict, Abbot and Patron of Europe. An embrace to our protector Saint! Let us offer our prayerful good wishes to the men and women Benedictines throughout the world. And best wishes to Europe, that it be united in its founding values.

And happy Sunday to everyone! Do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch! *Arrivederci!*
