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## The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

Following the celebration of Holy Mass on the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord in the Vatican Basilica, at midday the Holy Father Francis appeared at the window of his study in the Vatican Apostolic Palace to recite 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*, Happy Feast!

Today, the Solemnity of the Epiphany, we contemplate the episode of the Magi (cf. *Mt 2:1-12*). They faced a long and difficult journey to go and adore "the king of the Jews" (v. 2). They were guided by the wondrous sign of a star, and when they finally reached their destination, rather than finding something spectacular, they found a baby with his mamma. They could have protested: "How many roads and how many sacrifices, only to find a poor child?" And they did not protest. Neither were they scandalized or disappointed. They did not complain. What did they do? They *prostrated themselves*. "Going into the house", the Gospel says, "they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him" (v. 11).

Let us think about these wise, rich, educated men whom everyone knew who had come from afar who prostrate themselves, that is, they bow down on the ground to adore a baby! This seems to be such a contradiction. Such a humble action performed by such illustrious men is surprising. To prostrate oneself before a leader who presented himself with the trappings of power and glory was something normal at that time. And even today this would not be strange. But before the Babe of Bethlehem, it was not that easy. It is not easy to adore this God, whose divinity remains hidden and who does not appear triumphant. It means accepting God's greatness that manifests itself in littleness. This is the message. The Magi humbled themselves before the unheard-of logic of God. They accepted the Saviour not the way they had imagined him to be – someone grand – but as he was, the Lord is small, poor. Their prostration is the sign of those who place their own ideas aside and make room for

God. It takes humility to do this.

The Gospel stresses this: it does not only say that the Magi worshipped, it emphasizes that *they fell down and worshipped*. Let us understand this detail: their worship and prostration go together. Performing this action, the Magi manifest their humble acceptance of the One who presented himself in humility. And so it is that they are open to worship God. The treasures they open are images of their open hearts: their true wealth does not consist in their fame, it does not consist in their success, but in their humility, their awareness of *their need of salvation*. This is the example the Magi give us today.

Dear brothers and sisters, if we always remain at the centre of everything with our ideas, and if we presume to have something to boast of before God, we will never fully encounter him, we will never end up worshipping him. If our pretensions, vanity, stubbornness, competitiveness do not fall by the wayside, we may well end up worshipping someone or something in life, but it will not be the Lord! If instead, we abandon our pretence of self-sufficiency, if we make ourselves little inside, we will then rediscover the wonder of worshipping Jesus because *adoration comes from humility of heart*: those who are obsessed with winning will never be aware of the Lord's presence. Jesus passes nearby and is ignored, as happened to many at that time, but not to the Magi.

Brothers and sisters, looking at them, let us ask ourselves today: what is my humility like? Am I convinced that pride impedes my spiritual progress? That pride, apparent or hidden, but that pride that always dampers the drive toward God. Am I working on docility to be open to God and others, or am I rather centred on myself and my pretences, that hidden selfishness which is pride? Do I know how to set aside my own perspective to embrace that of God and others? Finally: do I pray and worship only when I need something, or do I consistently do so because I believe that I am always in need of Jesus? The Magi began their journey looking at a star, and they found Jesus. They walked a lot. Today, we can take this piece of advice: look at the star and walk. Never stop walking, but, do not stop looking at the star. This is the strong advice for today: look at the star and walk, look at the star and walk.

May the Virgin Mary, the servant of the Lord, teach us to rediscover our vital need for humility and the vibrant desire to worship. May she teach us to look at the star and walk.

### **After the Angelus**

Dear brothers and sisters,

Today my thought turns to our brothers and sisters of the Eastern Churches, both Catholic and Orthodox, who celebrate the Nativity of the Lord tomorrow. I extend my heartfelt best wishes of peace and every good to them. May Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, enlighten your families and your communities! Brothers and sisters, many blessings, many blessings!

Epiphany in a special way is the feast of the Holy Child Missionaries, that is, of those children and boys and girls – there are many in various countries of the world – who dedicate themselves to pray and to donate their savings so that the Gospel might be proclaimed to those who do not know it. I want to say to them: “Thank you, boys and girls: thank you!” and I would like to recall that mission begins with the daily witness of Christian life.

Regarding this, I encourage the initiatives of evangelization that stem from the traditions of Epiphany and which, due to the current situation, use various means of communication. I recall in particular the “Three Kings Procession” that takes place in Poland.

And today I greet all of you from Rome, pilgrims from Italy and from various countries. I greet the confirmation students from Romano in Lombardy with their parents and catechists.

I wish all of you a Happy Feast. Please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch and *arrivederci*.

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