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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!*

The Gospel of today's Liturgy presents us a parable with two protagonists, a pharisee and a publican (Lk 18:9-14), that is, a religious man and an avowed sinner. Both of them go up to the Temple to pray, but only the publican truly lifts himself up to God, because he humbly descends into the humility of himself and he presents himself as he is, without masks, with his poverty. We might say, then, that the parable lies between two movements, expressed by two verbs: *to rise* and *to descend*.

The first movement is *to rise*. Indeed, the text begins by saying: "Two people went up to the temple area to pray" (v. 10). This aspect recalls many episodes in the Bible, where in order to encounter the Lord, one goes up to the mountain of his presence: Abraham goes up on the mountain to offer the sacrifice; Moses goes up Mount Sinai to receive the Commandments; Jesus goes up the mountain where he is transfigured. To rise, therefore, expresses the need of the heart to detach itself from a flat life in order to go towards the Lord; to rise up from the plateau of our ego to ascend towards God, freeing oneself of one's own "I"; to gather what we live in the valley to bring it before the Lord. This is "rising", and when we pray, we rise.

But to live the encounter with him and to be transformed by prayer, to rise up to God, a second movement is necessary: *to descend*. How come? What does this mean? In order to rise towards him, we must descend within ourselves: to cultivate the sincerity and humility of the heart that give us an honest outlook on our frailties and our inner poverty. Indeed, in humility we become capable of bringing what we really are to God, without

pretense: the wounds, the sins and the miseries that weigh on our hearts, and to invoke his mercy so that he may heal us, restore us and raise us up. It will be he who raises us up, not us. The more we descend with humility, the more God raises us up.

Indeed, the publican of the parable humbly stops at a distance (cf. v. 13) – he does not come close, he is ashamed – he asks for forgiveness, and the Lord raises him up. Instead, the pharisee exalts himself, self-assured, convinced that he is fine: standing up, he begins to speak with the Lord only of himself, praising himself, listing all the good religious works he does, and disdainful of others: “I am not like that person there...”. Because this is what spiritual arrogance does. “But father, why are you talking to us about spiritual arrogance?” Because we all risk falling into this trap. It leads you to believe yourself righteous and to judge others. This is spiritual arrogance: “I am fine, I am better than the others: this person does this, that one does that...”. And in this way, without realizing, you adore your own ego and obliterate your God. It revolves around oneself. This is prayer without humility.

Brothers, sisters, the pharisee and the publican concern us closely. Thinking of them, let us look at ourselves: let us confirm whether, in us, as in the pharisee, there is the conviction of one’s own righteousness (cf. v. 9) that leads us to despise others. It happens, for instance, when we seek compliments and always make a list of our own merits and good works, when we concern ourselves with how we appear rather than how we are, when we let ourselves be trapped by narcissism and exhibitionism. Let us beware of narcissism and exhibitionism, based on vainglory, that lead even us Christians, priests and bishops, always to have one word on our lips. Which word? “I”: “I did this, I wrote that, I said it, I understood it before you”, and so on. Where there is too much “I”, there is too little God. In my country, these people are called “Me, with me, for me, only me”, this is the name of those people. And once upon a time they used to talk about a priest who was like that, self-centred, and the people, jokingly, used to say, “When he incenses, he does it backwards, he incenses himself”. It is like that; it even makes you seem ridiculous.

Let us ask the intercession of Mary Most Holy, the humble servant of the Lord, the living image of what the Lord loves to accomplish, overthrowing the powerful from their thrones and raising the humble (cf. *Lk* 1: 52).

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

Today is World Missionary Day, on the theme: “You shall be my witnesses”. It is an important opportunity to reawaken in all baptized persons the desire to participate in the universal mission of the Church, through witness and the proclamation of the Gospel. I encourage everyone to support missionaries with prayer and concrete solidarity, so that they may continue their work of evangelization and human promotion throughout the world.

Today registration opens for *World Youth Day*, which will take place in Lisbon in August 2023. I have invited two Portuguese youngsters to be here with me while I register too, as a pilgrim. I will do it now [clicks on tablet]. There, I have registered. You, have you registered? Do it... And you, have you registered? Do it... There, stay here. Dear young people, I invite you to register for this meeting in which, after a long period of staying at a distance, we will rediscover the joy of the fraternal embrace between peoples and between generations, which we need so much!

Yesterday, Vicente Nicasio Renuncio Toribio and eleven companions of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, killed in hatred of the faith in Spain in 1936, were beatified in Madrid. The example of these witnesses of Christ, who even shed their blood, spur us to be consistent and courageous; may their intercession sustain those who strive today to sow the Gospel in the world. Let us applaud the new Blessed!

I follow the persistent situation of conflict in Ethiopia with trepidation. Once again, I repeat with heartfelt concern

that violence does not resolve discord, but only increases the tragic consequences. I appeal to those who hold political responsibility to put an end to the suffering of the defenceless population and to find equitable solutions for lasting peace throughout the country. May the efforts of the parties for dialogue and the search for the common good lead to a genuine path of reconciliation. May our prayers, our solidarity and the necessary humanitarian aid not fail our Ethiopian brothers and sisters, who are so sorely tried.

I am saddened by the floods that are affecting various countries in Africa and which have caused death and destruction. I pray for the victims, and am close to the millions of displaced persons, and I hope for a greater concerted effort to prevent these calamities.

I greet you all, Romans and pilgrims from various countries. In particular, I greet the Indonesian clerics and religious resident in Rome; the Peruvian community which is celebrating the feast of the *Señor de los Milagros*, the *Fundación* Roman Academic Centre and the group from the Polish diocese of Tarnow. I greet the faithful from San Donà di Piave, Padua, Pontedera and Molfetta, candidates for Confirmation from Piacenza, the “Tiberiade” group from Carrobbio degli Angeli and the Nonviolent Movement from Verona. And today, at the start of a new government, let us pray for unity and peace in Italy.

The day after tomorrow, Tuesday 25 October, I will go to the Colosseum to pray for peace in Ukraine and in the world, together with representatives of the Christian Churches and Communities and world religions, gathered in Rome for the “Cry of Peace” meeting. I invite you to join spiritually in this great invocation to God: prayer is the strength of peace. Let us pray, let us continue to pray for martyred Ukraine.

I wish you all a blessed Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch, and *arrivederci!*
