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Celebration of Holy Mass at the Rome War Cemetery

At 10.00 this morning, on the day of commemoration of all the departed faithful, the Holy Father Francis presided over Holy Mass at the Rome War Cemetery, Rome.

Upon arrival, the Pope was welcomed by the Vice Chairman Peter Hudson CBE, the Area Director Geert Bekaert, the Country Manager for Italy, Claudia Scimonelli, and the cemetery staff.

Along the way he left some white flowers on some of the tombs, and paused a moment in prayer.

At the end of the Eucharistic celebration, Pope Francis stopped briefly in front of the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome. He then returned to the Vatican.

The following is the impromptu homily delivered by the Pope after the proclamation of the Gospel:

Homily of the Holy Father

The celebration of a day such as today leads us to two thoughts: *remembrance* and *hope*.

Remembrance of those who preceded us, who have led their life, who have concluded this life; remembrance of the many people who have done good: in the family, among friends... And also remembrance of those who did not manage to do so much good, but who have been received in God's memory, in God's mercy. It is the mystery of the Lord's great mercy.

And then *hope*. Today's memorial is for looking forward, for looking at our journey, our path. We walk towards an encounter, with the Lord and with everyone. And we must ask the Lord for this grace of hope: the hope that never lets us down; the hope that is the everyday virtue that carries us forward, that helps us to solve problems and to look for ways out. But always forward, forward. That fruitful hope, that theological virtue of every day, of

every moment: I call it the “kitchen sink” theological virtue, because it is at hand and always comes to our aid. Hope never disappoints: we live in this tension between memory and hope.

I would like to consider something that happened to me at the entrance. I was looking at the age of the fallen. The majority were between 20 and 30 years old. Lives cut short, lives without a future. And I thought of the parents, of the mothers who received that letter: “Madam, I have the honour of informing you that your son is a hero”. “Yes, a hero, but they have taken him away from me!”. So many tears in those lives cut short. And I could not but think of today’s wars. Today too, the same thing happens: so many people, young and not so young... In the wars of the world, even in those closest to us, in Europe and outside: so many dead! Life is destroyed without awareness.

Today, thinking of the dead, preserving the memory of the dead and preserving hope, let us ask the Lord for peace, that people may no longer kill in wars. So many innocent dead, so many soldiers who leave their lives behind. But why is this? Wars are always a defeat, always. There is no total victory, no. Yes, one conquers the other, but beneath there is always the defeat of the price that is paid. Let us pray to the Lord for our departed, for everyone, for everyone: may the Lord receive them all. And let us also pray for the Lord to have pity on us and give us hope: the hope to go forward and to be able to find them all together with Him, when He calls us. So be it.
