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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!*

From the Gospel of today's liturgy, we hear some of Jesus' words about the scribes and pharisees, the religious leaders of the people. Regarding these people in authority, Jesus uses very severe words, "for they preach, but do not practice" (*Mt 23:3*) and "they do all their deeds to be seen by others" (v. 5). This is what Jesus says – they preach and don't practice and everything they do they do to be seen.

So, let us pause on these two aspects: *the distance between saying and doing*, and *the primacy of the exterior over the interior*.

The distance between saying and doing. Jesus contests the duplicity of the lives of these teachers of Israel, who claimed to teach others the Word of God and to be respected as Temple authorities. They preached one thing, but then lived another. These words of Jesus recall those of the prophets, in particular the prophet Isaiah: "This people draw near with their mouth and honour me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me" (*Is 29:13*). This is the danger to be on guard for: duplicity of heart. We too have this danger. This duplicity of heart puts the authenticity of our witness as well as our credibility as persons and as Christians at risk.

Because of our weakness, we all experience a certain distance between what we say and what we do. But having a duplicitous heart is something else instead. It is living with "one foot on both sides of the fence" without

any problem. Let us remember this, especially when we are called to exercise a role of responsibility – in life, in society or in the Church – no to duplicity! This rule is always valid for a priest, a pastoral worker, a politician, a teacher, or a parent: be committed to living first yourself what you say, what you preach to others. To be authentic teachers, we first need to be credible witnesses.

The second aspect follows as a consequence: *the primacy of the exterior over the interior*. In fact, living in duplicity, the scribes and pharisees were concerned about having to hide their inconsistency to save their outward reputation. Indeed, if the people knew what was truly in their hearts, they would have been ashamed, losing all credibility. And so, they performed works to appear righteous, to “save face”, as we say. This trick is very common – they put make-up on their faces, make-up on their life, make-up on their hearts... And these “made-up” people do not know how to live the truth. And many times, even we experience the temptation of duplicity.

Brothers and sisters, accepting this warning from Jesus, let us too ask ourselves: Do we try to practice what we preach, or do we live duplicitously? Do we say one thing and do something else? Are we concerned only about showing how impeccable we are on the outside, made-up, or do we also cultivate our interior life in sincerity of heart?

Let us turn to the Holy Virgin. May she who lived in integrity and humility of heart according to the will of God help us to become credible witnesses of the Gospel.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters!

I continue to think about the serious situation in Palestine and in Israel where many, many people have lost their lives. In God’s name, I beg you to stop: cease using weapons! I hope that avenues will be pursued so that an escalation of the conflict might be absolutely avoided, so that the wounded can be rescued and help might get to the population of Gaza where the humanitarian situation is extremely serious. May the hostages be freed immediately. There are also many children among them – may they return to their families! Yes, let’s think of the children, of all the children affected by this war, as well as in Ukraine and by other conflicts: this is how their future is being killed. Let us pray that there might be the strength to say, “enough”.

I am near to the population of Nepal who is suffering because of an earthquake, as well as the Afghan refugees who have found refuge in Pakistan but now do not know where to go. I pray also for the victims of the storms and floods in Italy and other countries.

I warmly greet all of you, people from Rome and pilgrims from various countries. In particular, I greet the members of the faithful from Vienna and from Valencia, the parish group from Cagliari, the Band and Choir from Longomoso in Upper Adige. I greet the young people from Rodengo Saiano, Ome and Padergnone; the catechists from Cassina de’ Pecchi and those from Saint John Bosco parish in Trieste; I greet the “Stop the war” Council.

I hope you all have a good Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your meal and *arrivederci!*
