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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, happy Sunday!

Today the Gospel presents Jesus' encounter with the first disciples (cf. *Jn* 1:35-42). This scene invites us to remember our first encounter with Jesus. Each one of us has had the first encounter with Jesus, as a child, as an adolescent, as a young person, as an adult... When did I encounter Jesus for the first time? Try to remember this a bit. And after this thought, this memory, to renew the joy of following Him and to ask ourselves – following Jesus means being a disciple of Jesus – what does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus? According to today's Gospel we can take three words: to *seek* Jesus, to *stay* with Jesus, and to *proclaim* Jesus. To seek, to stay, to proclaim.

First of all, *to seek*. Two disciples, thanks to the Baptist's witness, start to follow Jesus; He "saw them following, and said to them, 'What do you seek?'" (v. 38). They are the first words Jesus addresses to them: first of all, He invites them to look within, to ask themselves about the desires they carry in their heart. "What are you seeking?". The Lord does not want to make proselytes, He does not want to gain superficial followers; the Lord wants people who question themselves and let themselves be challenged by His Word. Therefore, to be disciples of Jesus, it is necessary first of all to seek Him, it is necessary to seek Him, then to have an open, searching heart, not a satiated or complacent heart.

What were the first disciples seeking through the second verb: *to stay*? They were not seeking news or information about God, or signs or miracles, but they wished to meet Jesus, to meet the Messiah, to talk with

Him, to stay with Him, to listen to Him. What is the first question they ask? “Where are you staying?” (v. 38). And Christ invites them to stay with Him: “Come and see” (v. 39). To stay with Him, to remain with Him: this is the most important thing for the disciple of the Lord. In short, faith is not a theory, no; it is an encounter – it is an encounter. It is going to see where the Lord stays, and dwelling with Him. Encountering the Lord and staying with Him.

To seek, to stay, and finally, to *proclaim*. The disciples sought Jesus, then they went with Him and stayed the entire evening with Him. And now, to *proclaim*. Then, they return and they proclaim. *To seek, to stay, to proclaim*. Do I seek Jesus? Do I stay with Jesus? Do I have the courage to proclaim Jesus? The disciples’ first encounter with Jesus was such a powerful experience that the two disciples always remembered the time: “it was about the tenth hour” (v. 39). This lets us see the power of that encounter. And their hearts were so full of joy that straight away they felt the need to communicate the gift they had received. Indeed, one of the two, Andrew, hastens to share it with his brother.

Brothers and sisters, let us too recall today our first encounter with the Lord. Each one of us has had the first encounter, either within the family or outside... When did I encounter the Lord? When did the Lord touch my heart? And let us ask ourselves: are we still disciples, enamoured of the Lord, do we *seek* the Lord, or do we settle into a faith made up of habits? Do we *stay* with Him in prayer, do we know how to stay in silence with Him? Do I know how to stay in prayer with the Lord, to stay in silence with Him? And then, do we feel the desire to share, to proclaim this beauty of the encounter with the Lord?

May Mary Most Holy, first disciple of Jesus, give us the desire to seek Him, the desire to stay with Him, and the desire to proclaim Him.

After the Angelus

I greet all of you, Romans and pilgrims from Italy and many parts of the world. In particular I greet the members of the *Hermandad Sacramental de Nuestra Señora de los Remedios* from Villarrasa, Spain.

Let us not forget to pray for the victims of the landslide in Colombia, which has claimed many victims.

And let us not forget those who suffer the cruelty of war in so many parts of the world, especially in Ukraine, Palestine and Israel. At the beginning of the year, we exchanged wishes of peace, but weapons continue to kill and destroy. Let us pray that those who have power over these conflicts reflect on the fact that war is not the way to resolve them, because it sows death among civilians and destroys cities and infrastructure. In other words, *today war is in itself a crime against humanity*. Let us not forget this: war is in itself a crime against humanity. Peoples need peace! The world needs peace! I heard, a few minutes ago, on the programme “A Sua Immagine”, Father Faltas, vicar of the Custody of the Holy Land in Jerusalem: he spoke about *educating for peace*. We must educate for peace. We can see that we – humanity as a whole – are not yet educated enough to stop all war. Let us always pray for this grace: to educate for peace.

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