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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At midday today, third Sunday of Lent, 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!*

Today the Gospel shows us a harsh scene: Jesus drives the merchants out of the temple (cf. *Jn 2:13-25*), Jesus who expels the sellers, overturns the money changers' tables, and admonishes everyone, saying, "Stop making my Father's house a marketplace" (v. 16). Let us focus a little on the contrast between *house* and *market*: indeed, these are two different ways of approaching the Lord.

In the temple conceived as a *market*, in order to be right with God, all one had to do was to buy a lamb, to pay for it, and to consume it on the altar coals. One *bought, paid, consumed*, and then everyone went home. In the temple understood as a *house*, on the other hand, the opposite happens: we go there to encounter the Lord, to be close to Him, to be close to our brothers and sisters, to share joys and sorrows. Moreover: in a market, all prices are negotiated, whereas at home, there is no calculating; in the market, one seeks one's own interests, at home, one gives freely. And Jesus is harsh today because He does not accept that the *market-temple* replaces the *house-temple*, He does not accept that our relationship with God is distant and commercial instead of intimate and trusting, He does not accept that selling stalls take the place of the family table, that prices take the place of hugs, and coins replace caresses. And why does Jesus not accept this? Because in this way, a barrier is created between God and man and between brother and brother, whereas Christ came to bring communion, to bring mercy, that is, forgiveness, and to bring closeness.

The invitation today, also for our Lenten journey, is to build a *greater sense of home* and less of a *sense of the*

market in ourselves and around us. First of all, towards God, by praying a lot, like children who knock confidently at the Father's door without getting tired, and not like greedy and distrustful merchants. So, firstly, by praying. And then by spreading fraternity: there is great need for fraternity!

So, let us ask ourselves: first of all, what is my prayer like? Is it a price to be paid, or is it a moment of trusting abandonment, without looking at the clock? And how are my relationships with others? Am I capable of giving without expecting anything in return? Can I take the first step to break down the walls of silence and the voids of distance? We must ask ourselves these questions.

May Mary help us to "build a home" with God, among us, and around us.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters!

I carry daily in my heart, with sorrow, the suffering of the populations in Palestine and in Israel, due to the ongoing hostilities. The thousands of dead, wounded, displaced, and the immense destruction cause suffering, and this has tremendous consequences on the small and the defenceless, who see their future compromised. I ask myself: do we really think we can build a better world in this way? Do we really think we can achieve peace? Enough, please! Let us all say it: enough, please! Stop! I encourage the continuation of negotiations for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and in the entire region, so that the hostages may be freed immediately and return to their anxiously awaiting loved ones, and the civilian population can have safe access to urgently needed humanitarian aid. And please let us not forget tormented Ukraine, where so many die every day. There is so much pain there.

The 5th of March marks the second International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness. How many resources are wasted on military spending that, as a result of the current situation, sadly continues to increase! I sincerely hope that the international community understands that disarmament is first and foremost a duty: disarmament is a moral duty. Let us keep this clearly in our minds. And this requires the courage of all members of the great family of nations to move from an equilibrium of fear to an equilibrium of trust.

I greet you all, Romans and pilgrims from various countries. In particular, I greet the students of the *Universidade Sénior* of Vila Pouca de Aguiar in Portugal, the students of the "Rodríguez Moñino" Institute of Badajoz, and the parish groups from Poland.

I greet the confirmands from Rosolina, in the diocese of Chioggia, with their family members; the faithful from Padua, Azzano Mella, Capriano and Fenili, Taranto, and the parish of *Sant'Alberto Magno* in Rome.

I affectionately greet the young Ukrainians brought together by the *Sant'Egidio* Community on the theme "Conquer evil with good. Prayer, the poor, peace". Dear young people, thank you for your commitment towards those who suffer most as a result of war. Thank you!

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