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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At midday today, fourth 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!*

On this fourth Sunday of Lent, the Gospel presents us with the figure of Nicodemus (cf. *Jn* 3:14-21), a pharisee, "a ruler of the Jews" (*Jn* 3:1). He saw the signs Jesus performed, he recognized in Him a teacher sent by God, and he went to meet Him by night, so as not to be seen. The Lord welcomes him, converses with him and reveals to him that He came not to condemn, but to save the world (cf. v. 17). Let us pause to reflect on this: *Jesus came not to condemn, but to save. This is beautiful!*

Often in the Gospel we see Christ revealing the intentions of the people He meets, at times unmasking their false attitudes, such as with the pharisees (cf. *Mt* 23:27-32), or making them reflect on the disorder of their life, as with the Samaritan woman (cf. *Jn* 4: 5-42). There are no secrets before Him: He reads them in the heart. This ability could be disturbing because, if used badly, harms people, exposing them to merciless judgements. Indeed, no-one is perfect: we are all sinners, we all make mistakes, and if the Lord were to use His knowledge of our weaknesses to condemn us, no-one could be saved.

But it is not like this. Indeed, He does not need them in order to point the finger at us, but to embrace our life, to free us from sins and to save us. Jesus is not interested in putting us on trial or subjecting us to judgement; He wants none of us to be lost. The Lord's gaze upon every one of us is not a blinding beacon that dazzles us and puts us in difficulty, but rather the gentle glimmer of a friendly lamp, that helps us to see the good in ourselves and to be aware of the evil, so that we may be converted and healed with the support of His grace.

Jesus came not to condemn, but to save the world. Think of us, who very often condemn others; many times, we like to speak badly, to go in search of gossip against others. Let us ask the Lord to give us, all of us, this merciful gaze, to look at others as He looks at us.

May Mary help us to wish good for one another.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters!

Two days ago, International Women's Day was celebrated. I would like to address a thought and to express my closeness to all women, especially those whose dignity is not respected. There is still a lot of work that each one of us must do in order for the equal dignity of women to be genuinely recognized. Institutions, social and political, have the fundamental duty to protect and promote the dignity of every human being, offering to women, the bearers of life, the necessary conditions to be able to welcome the gift of life and assure their children of a worthy existence.

I follow with concern and sorrow the grave crisis afflicting Haiti, and the violent episodes which occurred in recent days. I am close to the Church and to the dear Haitian population, which has been plagued by many sufferings for years. I invite you to pray, by the intercession of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, that every sort of violence may cease, and that everyone may offer their contribution to the growth of peace and reconciliation in the country, with the renewed support of the international community.

This evening, our Muslim brothers and sisters will commence Ramadan: I express my closeness to them all.

I greet all of you who have come from Rome, from Italy and from many parts of the world. In particular, I greet the students of the Irabia-Izaga College of Pamplona, and the pilgrims from Madrid, Murcia, Malaga and Saint Mary's Plainfield, New Jersey.

I greet the young people preparing for their First Communion and Confirmation from the parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe and Saint Philip the Martyr in Rome, the faithful of Reggio Calabria, Quartu Sant'Elena, and Castellamonte.

I affectionately welcome the Catholic community of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Rome. Let us pray for peace in this country, as well as in tormented Ukraine and in the Holy Land. May the hostilities that cause immense suffering among the civilian population cease as soon as possible.

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