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Angelus: Christ's Cross is not ideological, it is the Cross of Life

Vatican City, 19 June 2016 – "Who is Jesus for the people of our time? Who is Jesus for each one of us? And what is meant by the invitation He addressed to the apostles, to carry His cross?". These were the questions the Pope posed to the thousands of faithful gathered in St. Peter's Square today, to pray the Angelus.

Francis commented on the reading from the Gospel of St. Luke which describes one of Jesus' few moments of tranquillity when, alone with the disciples, He asks them who the people say He is, and they answer, "John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen". That is, the people hold him in high esteem and consider him a great prophet, but they are not aware of his true identity, as the Messiah, the Son of God sent by the Father for the salvation of all.

Jesus then directly addresses the apostles, "because this is what He is most interested in", noted Francis, "and asks, 'But who do you say that I am? And Peter answered, 'The Christ of God', or rather, you are the Messiah, the Consecrated, sent by Him to save the people in accordance with the Covenant and the promise. Jesus thus realises that the Twelve, and Peter in particular, have received from the Father the gift of faith, and he therefore begins to speak to them openly ... of what will awaits Him in Jerusalem: 'The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised'.

"These same questions are presented to each one of us today too: 'Who is Jesus for the people of our time? But the other is more important: 'Who is Jesus for each one of us?', the Pope reiterated. "We are called to make Peter's answer our own, professing with joy that Jesus is the Son of God, the eternal Word of the Father made man to redeem humanity, on whom He pours the abundance of His divine mercy. The world is in need of Christ more than ever; in need of His salvation, His merciful love. Many people feel that there is emptiness around them and within them. ... Others live with restlessness and insecurity due to precariousness and conflicts. We all need adequate answers to our questions. In Christ, only in Him, is it possible to find true peace and the fulfilment of all human aspirations. Jesus knows the heart of man like no other. Therefore He is able to heal it, giving life and consolation".

After concluding His dialogue with the apostles, Jesus addresses all of them, saying "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me". "This is not an ornamental or ideological cross", Francis explained. "It is the cross of life, the cross of duty, the cross of sacrificing oneself for others with

love – for parents, for children, for the family, for friends, even for enemies – to cross of the willingness to be in solidarity with the poor, to commit oneself to justice and peace. When we take on this attitude, these crosses, we always lose something. We must never forget that 'whoever loses his life for my sake will save it'. It means losing in order to gain. Let us remember all our brethren who still put into practice these words of Jesus today, offering their time, their work, their efforts and even their life so as not to deny their faith in Christ. Jesus, through His Holy Spirit, gives us the strength to go ahead on the journey of faith and witness; to do what we believe in, not to say one thing and do something else. And on this journey Our Lady is always near to us and precedes us; let her take us by the hand when we go through our darkest and most difficult moments".
