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## The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

Following the celebration of Holy Mass in the Vatican Basilica on the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, at midday 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 St. Peter's Square.

These are the words with which the Pope introduced the Marian prayer:

### Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Today we celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord, that is the *manifestation of Jesus* Who shines like a light for all peoples. The symbol of this light that shines in the world and seeks to illuminate the life of each one of us is the star, that guided the Magi to Bethlehem. The Gospel tells us that they saw "His star" (Matthew 2:2) and chose to follow it: they chose to be guided by Jesus' star.

In our life too there are different stars, lights that shine and guide. It is for us to choose which to follow. For example, there are intermittent lights, that come and go, like the little satisfactions of life; although good, they are not enough, because they last for a short while and do not leave the peace we seek. Then there are the bright lights, the limelight, of money and success, that promise everything, and immediately; they are seductive but their strength is blinding and they make us pass from dreams of glory to the deepest darkness. The Magi, instead, invite us to follow a stable light, a gentle light, that does not go out, because it is not of this world: it comes from heaven and shines ... where? In the heart.

This true light is the Lord's light, or better, *it is the Lord Himself*. He is our light: a light that does not blind, but rather accompanies and gives a unique joy. This light is for all, and calls to every one of us: we can thus feel that today the invitation of the prophet Isaiah is addressed to us: "Arise, shine" (60,1). So said Isaiah, prophesying this joy of today in Jerusalem: "Arise, shine". At the beginning of every day we can accept this invitation: rise,

shine, follow today, among the many shooting stars in the world, the luminous star of Jesus! In following it, we will have joy, as did the Magi, who “when they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy” (Matthew 2,10), because where there is God there is joy. Those who have encountered Jesus have experienced the miracle of light that pierces the darkness and know the light that illuminates and enlightens.

I would like, with great respect, to invite all not to be afraid of this light, and to open up to the Lord. Above all, I would like to say to those who have lost the strength to seek, to those who are tired, who are overwhelmed by the obscurities of life, whose desire is spent: arise, be courageous, the light of Jesus is able to defeat the darkest shadows; arise, courage!

And how can we find this divine light? We follow the example of the Magi, whom the Gospel describes as always in movement. Indeed, those who want the light, go out by themselves and search for it. They do not remain closed, still, looking at what is happening around, but instead put their own life in play; they come out of themselves. Christian life is a continuous journey, made up of hope, and made up of searching; a journey which, like that of the Magi, continues even when the star momentarily disappears from sight. In this journey there are also snares to be avoided: superficial and worldly chatter, that slows us down; the paralyzing whims of selfishness, the holes of pessimism that trap hope. These obstacles blocked the scribes, of whom today's Gospel speaks. They knew where the light was, but did not move. When Herod asked them, “Where will the Messiah be born?” “In Bethlehem”, they responded. They knew where, but they did not move. Their knowledge was in vain: they knew many things, but for nothing; it was in vain. It is not enough to know that God was born, if one does not experience this birth in the heart. God is born, but is He born in your heart? Is He born in my heart? Is he born in our heart? And in this way we will find Him, as the Magi did, with Mary and Joseph, in the stable.

The Magi did it: having found the Child, “they prostrated themselves and adored Him” (11). They did not merely look at Him; they did not just say a prayer of circumstance and then go away, no: they adored Him: they entered into a personal communion of love with Jesus. Then they gave gold, frankincense and myrrh, their most precious goods. Let us learn from the Magi not to dedicate to Jesus only the remains of our spare time and a thought every now and then, as otherwise we will not have His light. Like the Magi, let us set out on our journey, clothe ourselves in light following Jesus' star, and let us adore the Lord with our entire selves.

### After the Angelus

Tomorrow the ecclesial communities of the East who follow the Julian Calendar will celebrate their Christmas. In a spirit of joyful fraternity, I hope that the new birth of the Lord Jesus will fill them with light and peace.

The Epiphany is the Day of Missionary Childhood. I encourage all children and young people who in many parts of the world are engaged in witnessing the Gospel and helping their peers in difficulty. I greet those who have come here today from Lazio, Abruzzo and Molise, and I thank the Pontifical Work of Missionary Childhood for this educational service.

I greet the participants in the historic-folkloric procession, dedicated this year to the lands of southern Umbria, which aims to disseminate the values of solidarity and fraternity.

I greet the groups from Malta, California and Poland, and I extend my blessing to the participants in the great Procession of the Magi, taking place in Warsaw with many families and a great number of children.

I greet the faithful of Ferrara, Correggio, Ruvo di Puglia, Robecco sul Naviglio and Cucciago, as well as those preparing for Confirmation from Rosolina and Romano di Lombardia; altarboys from the diocese of Asti, young people from Cologno al Serio, and friends and volunteers from the *Fraterna Domus*.

The Magi offered Jesus their gifts, but in reality Jesus Himself is the true gift of God. He is indeed the God Who gives Himself to us, and in Him we see the merciful face of the Father Who awaits us, Who welcomes us, Who always forgives us; the face of God Who does not treat us according to our words or our sins, but only in accordance with the immensity of his inexhaustible mercy. And, speaking of gifts, I too have decided to give you a little gift ... there are no camels, but I will give you the gift of the book "*Icons of mercy*". The gift of God is Jesus, the Father's mercy; and for this reason, to remember this gift of God, I will give you this gift that will be distributed by the poor, the homeless and refugees along with many volunteers and religious whom I cordially greet and to whom I offer my heartfelt thanks.

I wish you a year of justice, of forgiveness, of serenity, and above all a year of mercy. It will help you to read this book: it is pocket-sized so you can carry it with you. Please, do not forget to give me the gift of your prayer. May the Lord bless you. Have a good feast day, a good lunch, and goodbye!

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