

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 171224a

Sunday 24.12.2017

The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

Before the Angelus

After the Angelus

At midday today, Eve of the Nativity of the Lord, 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 is the Pope's introduction to the Marian prayer:

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

On this Sunday which immediately preceding Christmas, we hear the Gospel of the Annunciation (cf. *Lk* 1: 26-38).

In this passage from the Gospel we note a contrast between the Angel's promises and Mary's response. This contrast is manifested in the *dimension* and the *content* of the expressions of the two protagonists. The Angel says to Mary: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord will give to Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there will be no end" (vv. 30-33). It is a long revelation, which opens unheard-of prospects. The child that will be born of this humble girl of Nazareth will be called the Son of the Most High: it is not possible to conceive of higher dignity than this. And, after Mary's question, in which she asks for explanation, the Angel's revelation becomes even more detailed and surprising.

Instead, Mary's response is a brief phrase, which does not speak of glory or of privilege, but only of willingness and service: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (v. 38). The content is also different. Mary does not exalt herself in face of the prospect of becoming indeed the Mother of the Messiah, but remains modest and expresses her own adherence to the Lord's plan. Mary does not boast. She is humble, modest. She remains as before.

This contrast is significant. It shows us that Mary is truly humble and does not want to show off. She acknowledges that she is little before God and is happy to be so. At the same time, she is aware that the realization of God's plan depends on her answer, and that therefore she is called to adhere to it with her whole self.

In this circumstance, Mary presents herself with an attitude that corresponds perfectly to that of the Son of God when He comes into the world: He wants to become the Servant of the Lord, to place Himself in the service of humanity to fulfil the plan of the Father. Mary says: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord", and the Son of God, entering the world, says: "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God" (*Heb 10: 7-9*). Mary's attitude fully mirrors this declaration of the Son of God, Who also becomes the son of Mary. In this way Our Lady reveals herself to be the perfect collaborator in God's plan, and she also shows herself to be a disciple of her Son, and in the *Magnificat* she will be able to proclaim that God has "exalted those of humble estate" (*Lk 1, 52*), because with this humble and generous response she has obtained the greatest joy and also the loftiest glory.

As we admire our Mother for this, her response to the calling and to the mission of God, let us ask her to help each one of us to welcome God's plan in our life, with sincere humility and courageous generosity.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

As we prayerfully await the birth of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, we invoke the gift of peace for the whole world, especially for the populations that suffer most as a result of ongoing conflicts. I reiterate, in particular, my appeal that, on the occasion of holy Christmas, kidnapped persons – priests, men and women religious and lay faithful – be released and allowed to return to their homes. Let us pray for them.

I also wish to assure my prayer to the population of the Island of Mindanao in the Philippines, affected by a storm that has caused numerous victims and destruction. May merciful God receive the souls of the deceased and comfort those who suffer because of this disaster. Let us pray for these people.

I greet you all with affection: Roman faithful and pilgrims from various countries, families, parish groups and associations.

In these hours that separate us from Christmas, remember to find a moment to stop in silence and in prayer before the crib, to adore in your heart the mystery of the true Nativity, that of Jesus, who draws close to us with love, humility and tenderness.

And, in those moments, remember also to pray for me. Thank you! Have a Happy Sunday and a good lunch! Goodbye!
