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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

Before the Angelus

After the Angelus

At midday today, 13th Sunday of Ordinary Time, 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!

In today's Gospel (see *Lk* 9: 51-62), Saint Luke begins the account of Jesus' last journey towards Jerusalem, which concludes at chapter 19. It is a long march, not only geographic and spatial, but also spiritual and theological, towards the fulfilment of the mission of the Messiah. Jesus' decision is radical and total, and those who follow Him are called to measure themselves against it. Today the Evangelist presents to us three characters – three cases of vocation, we might say – that highlight what is required of those who want to follow Jesus fully and completely.

The first character promises Him: "I will follow you wherever you go" (v. 57). Generous! But Jesus responds that the Son of man, unlike the foxes which have dens and the birds which have nests, "has no place to lay his head" (v.58). The absolute poverty of Jesus. Indeed, Jesus left his father's house and renounced every security to proclaim the Kingdom of God to the lost sheep of His people. In this way Jesus indicated to us, His disciples, that our mission in the world is not to be static, but to be *itinerant*. The Christian is an itinerant. The Church by nature is in movement, she does not remain sedentary and calm in her own enclosure. She is open to more vast

horizons, sent – the Church is sent! – to take the Gospel into the streets and to reach the human and existential peripheries. This is the first character.

The second character Jesus meets receives the calling directly from Him, but responds, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father” (v. 59). It is a legitimate request, founded on the commandment to honour one’s father and mother (see *Ex 20: 12*). However Jesus replies, “Let the dead bury their own dead” (v. 60). With these words, deliberately provocative, He intends to affirm the primacy of discipleship and of the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, even above the most important matters such as the family. The urgency of communicating the Gospel, which breaks the chain of death and inaugurates eternal life, does not permit delays, but requires readiness and availability. So, the Church is itinerant, and here the Church is decisive, acts readily, immediately, without waiting.

The third character also wants to follow Jesus, but on one condition: that he does so after going to say farewell to his relatives. And he hears the Master reply: “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God” (v. 62). Following Jesus excludes regrets and looking back, but requires the virtue of *decision*.

The Church, to follow Jesus, is itinerant, acts immediately, in a hurry, and is decisive. The value of these conditions placed by Jesus – itinerancy, readiness and decision – is not found in a series of the word “no” said to the good and important things in life. The emphasis, rather, is placed on the main objective: to become a disciple of Christ! A free and informed choice, made out of love, to reciprocate the priceless grace of God, and not as a way of promoting oneself. This is sad! Woe to those who think they can follow Jesus to promote themselves, that is to further their career, to feel important or to acquire a position of prestige. Jesus wants us to be passionate about Him and about the Gospel. A passion of the heart that is translated into concrete gestures of proximity, closeness to those brothers who are most in need of welcome and care. Just as He Himself lived.

May the Virgin Mary, icon of the outbound Church, help us to follow with joy the Lord Jesus and to announce to our brothers, with renewed love, the Good News of salvation.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

In the last few hours we have seen in Korea a good example of the culture of encounter. I greet the protagonists, with the prayer that this meaningful gesture may constitute a further step in the path of peace, not only on the peninsula but to the benefit of the entire world.

On this last day of June, I hope that all workers may have during the summer a period of rest, that may revive them and their families.

I pray for those who in these days have most suffered the consequences of the heat: the sick, the elderly, and those who have to work in the open air, on worksites... May no-one be abandoned or exploited.

And now I address a cordial greeting to you all, Romans and pilgrims: families, parish groups, associations.

I greet in particular the group of the Sisters of Saint Elizabeth and the pilgrims who have come by bicycle from Sartirana Lomellina. I see there are many Polish people – I greet the Polish. Well done!

I wish you all a good Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch, and goodbye.

