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## The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At midday today, Solemnity of the Saints Apostles Peter and Paul, the Holy Father Francis appeared at the window of his study in the Vatican Apostolic Palace to pray the Angelus with the faithful 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, good morning!

Today we celebrate the patron saints of Rome, the Apostles Peter and Paul. And it is a gift to find ourselves praying here, near the place where Peter died a martyr and is buried. However, today's liturgy recalls an entirely different episode: it tells us that several years earlier Peter was freed from death. He had been arrested, he was in prison, and the Church, fearing for his life, prayed incessantly for him. Then an angel came down to free him from prison (cf. *Acts* 12:1-11). But years later, too, when Peter was a prisoner in Rome, the Church would certainly have prayed. On that occasion, however, his life was not spared. How come he was first spared the trial, and then not?

Because there is a journey in Peter's life that can illuminate the path of our own. The Lord granted him many graces and freed him from evil: He does this with us too. Indeed, often we go to Him only in moments of need, to ask for help. But God sees further and invites us to go further, to seek not only His gifts, but to look for Him, the Lord of all gifts; to entrust to Him not only our problems, but to entrust to Him our life. In this way He can finally give us the greatest grace, that of *giving life*. Yes, giving life. The most important thing in life is to make life a gift. And this is true for everyone: for parents towards their children and for children towards their elderly parents. And here many elderly people come to mind, who have been left alone by their family, as if - I dare say - as if they were discarded material. And this is a tragedy of our times: the solitude of the elderly. The life of children and grandchildren is not given as a gift to the elderly. Giving ourselves for those who are married and for those

who are consecrated; it is true everywhere, at home and at work, and towards everyone close to us. God desires making us grow in giving: only in this way can we become great. We grow if we give ourselves to others. Look at Saint Peter: he did not become a hero because he was freed from prison, but because he gave his life here. His gift transformed a place of execution into the beautiful place of hope in which we find ourselves.

Here is what to ask of God: not only the *grace of the moment*, but *the grace of life*. Today's Gospel shows us the very dialogue that changes Peter's life. He hears Jesus ask him: "Who do you say I am?". And he answers, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God". And Jesus continues, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah" (Mt 16: 16-17). Jesus says "blessed", that is, literally, happy. You are happy for having said this. Take note: Jesus says *You are blessed* to Peter, who had said to Him, "*You are the living God*". What is the secret of a blessed life, then, what is the secret of a happy life? Recognising Jesus, but Jesus as the *living* God, not like a statue. Because it is not important to know that Jesus was great in history, it is not so important to appreciate what He said or did; what matters is the place I give Him in my life, the place I give to Jesus in my heart. It is at this point that Simon hears Jesus say: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church" (v. 18). He was not called "Peter", "*rock*", because he was a solid and trustworthy man. No, he will make many mistakes afterwards, he was not so reliable, he will make many mistakes; he will even reach the point of denying the Master. But he chose to *build his life on Jesus*, the rock; not - as the text says - "on flesh and blood", that is, on himself, on his capacities, but on Jesus (cf. v. 17), who is rock. And Jesus is the *rock on which Simon became stone*. We can say the same of the Apostle Paul, who gave himself totally to the Gospel, considering all the rest to be worthless, so as to earn Christ.

Today, before the Apostles, we can ask ourselves: "And I, how do I arrange my life? Do I think only of the needs of the moment or do I believe that my real need is Jesus, who makes me a gift? And how do I build life, on my capacities or on the living God?". May Our Lady, who entrusted everything to God, help us to put Him at the base of every day, and may she intercede for us so that, with the grace of God, we may make a gift of our life.

### After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

I first greet all the Romans and those who live in this city, on the feast of the Patron saints, the Apostles Peter and Paul. By their intercession, I pray that in Rome every person may live with dignity and may encounter the joyful witness of the Gospel.

On this occasion it is traditional for a delegation from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople to come to Rome, but this year it is not possible due to the pandemic. Therefore, I spiritually embrace my dear brother, the Patriarch Bartholomew, in the hope that our reciprocal visits may resume as soon as possible.

As we celebrate the solemnity of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, I would like to remember the many martyrs who have been decapitated, burned alive and killed, especially in the time of the Emperor Nero, on this very land where you are now. This is the bloodstained land of our Christian brothers. Tomorrow we will commemorate them.

I greet you, dear pilgrims present here: I see flags from Canada, Venezuela, Colombia and others... Many greetings! May the visit to the tombs of the Apostles strengthen your faith and your witness.

And I wish you all a good feast day. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch, and *arrivederci*.

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