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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At midday today, 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 are the Pope's words of introduction to the Marian prayer:

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, good day!

When man set foot on the moon, he said a phrase that became famous: "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind". In essence, humanity had reached a historical goal. But today, in Mary's Assumption into Heaven, we celebrate an infinitely greater conquest. The Madonna has set foot in paradise: she went there not only in spirit, but with her body as well, with all of herself. This step of the lowly Virgin of Nazareth was the huge leap forward for humanity. Going to the moon serves us little if we do not live as brothers and sisters on Earth. But that one of us dwells in the flesh in Heaven gives us hope: we understand that we are precious, destined to rise again. God does not allow our bodies to vanish into nothing. With God, nothing is lost! In Mary, the goal has been reached and we have before our eyes the reasons why we journey: not to gain the things here below, which vanish, but to achieve the homeland above, which is forever. And Our Lady is the star that guides us. She went there first. She, as the Council teaches, shines "as a sign of sure hope and solace to the People of God during its sojourn on earth" (*Lumen gentium*, 68).

What does our Mother advise us? Today in the Gospel the first thing she says is: "My soul magnifies the Lord" (*Lk* 1:46). We, accustomed to hearing these words, perhaps we no longer pay attention to their meaning. To "magnify" literally means "to make great", to enlarge. Mary "aggrandises the Lord": not problems, which she did not lack at the time, but the Lord. How often, instead, we let ourselves be overwhelmed by difficulties and absorbed by fears! Our Lady does not, because she puts *God as the first greatness of life*. From here the *Magnificat* springs forth, from here joy is born: not from the absence of problems, which come sooner or later,

but joy is born from the presence of God who helps us, who is near us. Because God is great. And, above all, God looks on the lowly ones. We are His weakness of love: God looks on and loves the lowly.

Mary, in fact, acknowledges that she is small and exalts the “great things” (v. 49) the Lord has done for her. What are they? First and foremost, the unexpected gift of life: Mary is a virgin yet she becomes pregnant; and Elizabeth, too, who was elderly, is expecting a child. The Lord works wonders with those who are lowly, with those who do not believe that they are great but who give ample space to God in their life. He enlarges His mercy to those who trust in Him, and raises up the humble. Mary praises God for this.

And we - we might ask ourselves - do we remember to praise God? Do we thank Him for the great things He does for us? For every day that He gives us, because He always loves us and forgives us, for His tenderness? In addition, for having given us His Mother, for the brothers and sisters He puts on our path, and because He opened Heaven to us? Do we thank God, praise God for these things? If we forget the good, our hearts shrink. But if, like Mary, we remember the great things that the Lord does, if at least once a day we were to “magnify” Him, then we would take a great step forward. One time during the day to say: “I praise the Lord”, to say, “Blessed be the Lord”, which is a short prayer of praise. This is praising God. With this short prayer, our hearts will expand, joy will increase. Let us ask Our Lady, the Gate of Heaven, for the grace to begin each day by raising our eyes to Heaven, toward God, to say to Him: “Thank you!” as the lowly ones say to the great ones. “Thank you”.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

The Virgin Mary, whom we contemplate today in heavenly glory, is the “Mother of hope”. This title of hers has been recently included in the Litany of Loreto. Let us invoke her intercession for all the situations in the world that are most in need of hope: hope for peace, for justice, hope for a dignified life. Today I would like to pray in particular for the population of the northern region of Nigeria, victim of violence and terrorist attacks.

I am following with particular attention the situation of the difficult negotiations regarding the Nile between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan. I invite all parties to continue on the path of dialogue so that the Eternal River might continue to be a source of life that unites, not divides, that always nourishes friendship, prosperity, fraternity, and never enmity, misunderstanding or conflict. Let dialogue, dear brothers and sisters of Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan, let dialogue be your only choice, for the good of your dear populations and of the entire world.

I greet you all, people from Rome and pilgrims from various countries: families, parish groups, associations. In particular, I greet the young people of Catholic Action of San Gerolamo in Trieste.

I wish all of you here present a happy Feast of the Assumption, to those who are on vacation, and those who do not have this possibility, especially the sick, those who are alone and those who ensure indispensable services to us all.

Today it would be a beautiful gesture to visit a Shrine to venerate the Madonna. Those who live in Rome and those who are in Rome could go to Saint Mary Major to pray before the image of the *Salus Populi Romani*. Happy Feast to all of you!

And please, do not forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch, and see you tomorrow!
