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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, *buongiorno!*

In the Gospel of today's Liturgy we see Jesus react somewhat unusually: He is indignant. And what is most surprising is that his indignation is not caused by the pharisees who put him to the test with questions about the legality of divorce, but by his disciples who, to protect him from the crowd of people, rebuke some children who had been brought to Jesus. In other words, the Lord is not angry with those who argue with him, but with those who, in order to relieve him of his burden, make the children go away from him. Why? It is a good question: why does the Lord do this?

Let us remember – it was the Gospel reading two Sundays ago – that Jesus, performing the gesture of embracing a child, identified himself with the little ones: he taught that it is indeed the little ones, namely, those are dependent on others, who are in need and cannot reciprocate, who must be served first (see *Mk 9:35-37*). Those who seek God find him there, in the little ones, in those in need: in need not only of material goods, but of care and comfort, such as the sick, the humiliated, prisoners, immigrants, the incarcerated. He is there: in the little ones. This is why Jesus gets angry: any affront to a little one, a poor person, a child, a defenceless person, is done to Him.

Today the Lord picks up this teaching again and completes it. In fact, he adds: "Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it" (*Mk 10:15*). Here is what is new: the disciple must not only serve the little ones, but also *acknowledge himself as a little one*. And every one of us, do we recognise

ourselves as small before God? Let's think about it, it will help us. Awareness of being *little*, awareness of the need of salvation is indispensable for receiving the Lord. It is the first step in opening ourselves up to Him. Often, however, we forget about this. In prosperity, in wellbeing, we have the illusion of being self-sufficient, that we are enough, that we do not need God. Brothers and sisters, this is a deception, because each one of us is a person in need, a little one. We must seek out our smallness and recognise it. And there, we will find Jesus.

In life, recognising one's littleness is a starting point for becoming great. If we think about it, we grow not so much on the basis of our successes and the things we have, but above all in difficult and fragile moments. There, in our need, we mature; there we open our hearts to God, to others, to the meaning of life. Let us open our eyes to others. Let us open our eyes, when we are little, to the true meaning of life. When we feel small in the face of a problem, small in front of a cross, an illness, when we experience fatigue and loneliness, let us not get discouraged. The mask of superficiality is falling and our radical weakness is re-emerging: it is our common ground, our treasure, because *with God weakness is not an obstacle but an opportunity*. A beautiful prayer would be this: "Lord, look at my frailties..." and to list them before Him. This is a good attitude before God.

Indeed, it is precisely in weakness that we discover how much God takes care of us. The Gospel today says that Jesus is very tender with the little ones: "He took them in His arms and blessed them, laying His hands upon them" (v. 16). The difficulties and situations that reveal our weakness are privileged opportunities to experience His love. Those who pray with perseverance know this well: in dark or lonely moments, God's tenderness towards us makes itself, so to speak, even more present. When we are little, we feel God's tenderness more. This tenderness gives us peace; this tenderness makes us grow, because God draws close to us in His way, which is nearness, compassion and tenderness. And, when we feel we are little, small, for whatever reason, the Lord comes closer, we feel he is closer. He gives us peace; he makes us grow. In prayer the Lord draws us close to him, like a father with his child. This is how we become great: not in the illusory pretence of our self-sufficiency – this makes no-one great - but in the strength of placing all our hope in the Father, just like the little ones do, they do this.

Today let us ask the Virgin Mary for a huge grace, that of littleness: to be children who trust the Father, certain that He will not fail to take care of us.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

I am very saddened by what has happened in recent days in the prison of Guayaquil, Ecuador. A terrible outbreak of violence between inmates belonging to rival gangs has left more than a hundred dead and many injured. I pray for them and for their families. May God help us heal the wounds of crime, that enslaves the poorest. And may he help those who work every day to make prison life more humane.

I wish once again to implore from God the gift of peace for the beloved land of Myanmar: may the hands of those who live there no longer wipe away tears of pain and death, but instead join together to overcome difficulties and work together to bring peace.

Today, in Catanzaro, Maria Antonio Samà and Gaetana Tolomeo, two women condemned to physical immobility throughout their lives, will be beatified. Sustained by divine grace, they embraced the cross of their infirmity, transforming their pain into praise for the Lord. Their bed became a spiritual reference point and a place of prayer and Christian growth for many people who found comfort and hope there. Let us applaud the new Blessed!

On this first Sunday of October, our thoughts turn to the faithful gathered at the Shrine of Pompeii for the recitation of the Supplication to the Virgin Mary. During this month, let us renew together our commitment to

praying the Holy Rosary.

I greet you, dear Romans and pilgrims! In particular, the faithful of Wépion, diocese of Namur, in Belgium; the young people of Uzzano, in the diocese of Pescia; and young people with disabilities who have come from Modena, accompanied by the Little Sisters of Jesus the Worker and by volunteers. In this regard, today in Italy is the Day for the removal of architectural barriers: everyone may lend a hand for a society where no-one feels excluded. Thank you for your work.

I wish you all a good Sunday. Also to the children of the Immacolata! And please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your meal, and *arrivederci!*
