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Holy Mass at the French Military Cemetery in Rome

At 11.00 this morning, on the *Commemoration of all the deceased faithful*, the Holy Father Francis presided at Holy Mass in the French Military Cemetery in Rome.

Upon arrival, the Pope placed some white flowers on some of the tombs, and paused in prayer at an anonymous tomb. Then, before arriving at the altar, he greeted a group of children with their relatives.

At the end of the Holy Mass, upon returning to the Vatican, Pope Francis went to the crypt of the Vatican Basilica to pray at the tombs of the Popes.

The following is the impromptu homily delivered by the Pope during the Mass, after the proclamation of the Gospel:

Homily of the Holy Father

A writing on the entrance door of a small cemetery which is up North comes to mind: "You who are walking, think about your steps, and of your steps, think about the final step".

You who are walking. Life is a journey, all of us are on a journey. All of us, if we wish to do something in life, are on a journey. It is not a stroll, nor is it a labyrinth, no, it is a journey. On the way, we pass in front of many historical events, in front of many difficult situations. And also in front of cemeteries. The advice of this cemetery is: "You who are passing by, halt your step and think, and of your steps, think about the final step". We will all have a final step. Some may say to me, "Father, don't be so mournful, don't be so tragic". But it is the truth. The important thing is that that final step finds us on a journey, not strolling around; in the journey of life and not in an endless labyrinth. To be on a journey so that the last step finds us walking. This is the first thought that I would like to say and that comes from my heart.

The second thought, is the graves. These people — good people — who died in the war, they died because they were called to defend their homeland, to defend values, to defend ideals and, many other times, to defend sad and lamentable political situations. And they are the victims, the victims of war, that eats the children of the homeland. And I think of Anzio, of Redipuglia; I think of the Piave River in 1914 — so many were left there —; I think of Normandy beach: forty thousand, in that landing! But it doesn't matter, they fell....

I stopped in front of a tomb: "Inconnu. Mort pour la France 1944" [Unknown. Died for France 1944]. Not even the name. In God's heart is the name of all of us, but this is the tragedy of war. I am sure that all these who went in good will, called by their homeland to defend it, are with the Lord. But do we, who are on the journey, fight sufficiently so that there will be no wars? So that the economies of countries are not fortified by the arms industry? Today the sermon should be to look at the tombs: "Died for France"; some have names, some others do not. But these graves are a message of peace: "Stop, brothers and sisters, stop! Stop, arms manufacturers, stop!".

I leave you with these two thoughts. "You who are walking, think about your steps, and of your steps, think about the final step": may they be in peace, in peace of the heart, all in peace. The second thought: these graves that speak, cry out, they cry out of themselves, they cry out, "Peace!".

May the Lord help us to sow and keep these two thoughts in our hearts.
