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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At midday today, Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 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!* Happy Feast Day!

Today, Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Gospel offers us the dialogue between her and her cousin Elizabeth. When Mary enters the house and greets Elizabeth, the latter says: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb" (*Lk* 1:42). These words, full of faith and joy and wonder, have become part of the "Hail Mary". Every time we recite this prayer, so beautiful and familiar, we do as Elizabeth did: we greet Mary and we bless her, because she brings Jesus to us.

Mary accepts Elizabeth's blessing and replies with the canticle, a gift for us, for all history: the *Magnificat*. It is a song of praise. We can define it as the "canticle of hope". It is a hymn of praise and exultation for the great things that the Lord has accomplished in her, but Mary goes further: she contemplates the work of God in the entire history of her people. She says, for example, that the Lord "has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty" (vv. 52-53). As we listen to these words, we might ask ourselves: is the Virgin not exaggerating a little, perhaps, describing a world that does not exist? Indeed, what she says does not seem to correspond to reality; while she speaks, the powerful of the time have not been brought down: the fearsome Herod, for example, is still firmly on his throne. And the poor and hungry remain so, while the rich continue to prosper.

What does that canticle of Mary mean? What is the meaning? She does not intend to chronicle the time – she is

not a journalist – but to tell us something much more important: that God, through her, has inaugurated a historical turning point, he has definitively established a new order of things. She, small and humble, has been raised up and – we celebrate this today – brought to the glory of Heaven, while the powerful of the world are destined to remain empty-handed. Think of the parable of that rich man who had a beggar, Lazarus, in front of his door. How did he end up? Empty-handed. Our Lady, in other words, announces a radical change, an overturning of values. While she speaks with Elizabeth, carrying Jesus in her womb, she anticipates what her Son will say, when he will proclaim blessed the poor and humble, and warn the rich and those who base themselves on their own self-sufficiency. The Virgin, then, *prophesies* with this canticle, with this prayer: she prophesies that it will not be power, success and money that will prevail, but rather service, humility and love will prevail. And as we look at her, in glory, we understand that the true power is service – let us not forget this: the true power is service – and to reign means to love. And that this is the road to Heaven. It is this.

So, let us look at ourselves, and let us ask ourselves: will this prophetic reversal announced by Mary affect my life? Do I believe that to love is to reign, and to serve is power? Do I believe that the purpose of my life is Heaven, it is paradise? To spend it well here. Or am I concerned only with worldly, material things? Again, as I observe world events, do I let myself be entrapped by pessimism or, like the Virgin, am I able to discern the work of God who, through gentleness and smallness, achieves great things? Brothers and sisters, Mary today sings of hope and rekindles hope in us. Mary today sings of hope and rekindles hope in us: in her, we see the destination of our journey. She is the first creature who, with her whole self, body and soul, victoriously crosses the finish line of Heaven. She shows us that Heaven is within reach. How come? Yes, Heaven is within reach, if we too do not give in to sin, if we praise God in humility and serve others generously. Do not give in to sin. But some might say, “But, Father, I am weak” – “But the Lord is always near you, because he is merciful”. Do not forget God’s style: proximity, compassion and tenderness. Always close to us, with his style. Our Mother takes us by the hand, she accompanies us to glory, she invites us to rejoice as we think of heaven. Let us bless Mary with our prayer, and let us ask her to be capable of glimpsing Heaven on earth.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

I greet you all, Romans and pilgrims from various countries: families, parish groups, associations. In particular, I greet the young people of the diocese of Verona busy in a school camp. And the young people of the *Immacolata*.

I wish a blessed Feast of the Assumption to those of you present here, to those who are on vacation, and also the many who cannot afford a period of relaxation, to the lonely and the sick. Let us not forget them! And I think with gratitude in these days of those who ensure indispensable services to the community. Thank you for your work for us.

And on this day dedicated to Our Lady, I urge those who have the opportunity to visit a Marian shrine to venerate our heavenly Mother. Many Romans and pilgrims go to Saint Mary Major to pray before the *Salus Populi Romani*. There is also the statue of the Virgin Queen of Peace, placed there by Pope Benedict XV. Let us continue to invoke the intercession of Our Lady, so that God might give the world peace, and let us pray in particular for the Ukrainian people.

A blessed Feast Day to you all! Do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your meal, and *arrivederci!*
