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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 pilgrims and 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, *buongiorno!*

Today in the Gospel (cf. *Mt* 16, 13-20), Jesus asks the disciples a good question: "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" (v.13).

It is a question we too can ask: what do the people say about Jesus? In general, good things: many see him as a great teacher, as a special person: good, righteous, consistent, courageous... But is this enough to understand who He is, and above all, is it enough for Jesus? It seems not. If He were simply a person from the past – just as the figures cited in the same Gospel, John the Baptist, Moses, Elijah and the great prophets were for the people – He would merely be a good memory of a bygone time. And for Jesus, this will not do. Therefore, immediately afterwards, the Lord asks the disciples the decisive question: "But who do you – you! – say that I am?" (v. 15). Who am I for you, now? Jesus does not want to be a key figure from past history; He wants to be an important person for you today, for me today; not a distant prophet: Jesus wants to be the God who is close to us!

Christ, brothers and sisters, is not a memory of the past, but the God of the present. If He were merely an historic figure, to imitate Him today would be impossible: we would find ourselves faced with the great chasm of time, and above all, faced with his model, which is like a very high, unscalable mountain; we would want to climb it, but lack the ability and the necessary means. Instead, Jesus is living: let us remember this, Jesus is living, Jesus lives in the Church, He lives in the world, Jesus accompanies us, Jesus is by our side, He offers us His Word, He offers us His grace, which enlighten and refresh us on the journey: He, an expert and wise guide, is

happy to accompany us on the most difficult paths and the steepest slopes.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are not alone on the path of life, because Christ is with us, Christ helps us to walk, as He did with Peter and the other disciples. It is precisely Peter, in today's Gospel, who understands this and by grace recognizes in Jesus "*the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (v. 16): "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God", says Peter; He is not a character from the past, but the Christ, that is, the Messiah, the awaited one; not a deceased hero, but the Son of the living God, made man and come to share the joys and the labours of our journey. Let us not be discouraged if at times the summit of the Christian life seems too high and the path too steep. Let us look to Jesus, always; let us look to Jesus who walks beside us, who accepts our frailties, shares our efforts and rests his firm and gentle arm on our weak shoulders. With Him close at hand, let us also reach out to one another and renew our trust: with Jesus, what seems impossible on our own is no longer so, with Jesus we can go forth!

Today it will be good for us to repeat the decisive question, that comes out of his mouth: "Who do you – Jesus says to you – who do you say that I am?". Let us hear the voice of Jesus, who asks us this. In other words: who is Jesus for me? An important figure, a point of reference, an unattainable model? Or is He God the Son, who walks by my side, who can lead me to the peak of holiness, that I cannot reach by myself? Is Jesus truly living in my life, does Jesus live with me? Is He my Lord? Do I entrust myself to Him in moments of difficulty? Do I cultivate his presence through the Word, through the Sacraments? Do I let myself be guided by Him, together with my brothers and sisters, in the community?

May Mary, Mother of the path, help us to feel that Son alive and present beside us.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters!

On Thursday, I will set out on a journey for a few days in the heart of Asia, in Mongolia. It is a much-desired visit, which will be an opportunity to embrace a Church that is small in number, but vibrant in faith and great in charity; and also to meet at close quarters a noble, wise people, with a strong religious tradition that I will have the honour of getting to know, especially in the context of an interreligious event. I would now like to address you, brothers and sisters of Mongolia, to tell you that I am happy to travel to be with you as a brother to all. I thank your authorities for their kind invitation, and those who, with great commitment, are preparing for my arrival. I ask all of you to accompany this visit with your prayers.

I assure my remembrance in prayer of the victims of the fires that have broken out in recent days in north-eastern Greece, and I express my solidarity with the Greek people. And let us stay close to the Ukrainian people, who are suffering due to the war, and are suffering a lot: let us not forget Ukraine!

I greet you all, Romans and pilgrims from Italy and many countries.

In particular, I greet the parish group from Madrid; the priests from the diocese of Molfetta-Ruvo-Giovanazzo-Terlizzi, with their bishop; the faithful of San Gaetano da Thiene in Melia; the families from the quarter of Pizzo Carano di San Cataldo and the cyclists from Ciociaria. I greet the altar servers of the pastoral unit of Codevigo, in the diocese of Padua, on a pilgrimage to Rome with their parish priest.

Today we remember Saint Monica, mother of Saint Augustine: with her prayers and her tears, she asked the Lord for the conversion of her son; a strong woman, a good woman! Let us pray for the many mothers who suffer when their children are a little lost or who find themselves on difficult paths in life.

And I wish you all a good Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch, and *arrivederci!*
