Beat: Miscellaneous

TEXT -- Pope Francis delivers annual Christmas message

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USPA News - Pope Francis on Thursday delivered his Christmas message from the balcony of St. Peter`s Basilica in Vatican City, addressing tens of thousands of worshippers who gathered in St. Peter`s Square to see the Argentine pope deliver his second annual address. The text below has been translated from Italian to English by the Vatican. -- STARTS -- Dear Brothers and Sisters, Happy Christmas! Jesus, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, is born for us, born in Bethlehem of a Virgin, fulfilling the ancient prophecies.

The VirginÃ¢€™s name is Mary, the wife of Joseph. Humble people, full of hope in the goodness of God, are those who welcome Jesus and recognize him. And so the Holy Spirit enlightened the shepherds of Bethlehem, who hastened to the grotto and adored the Child. Then the Spirit led the elderly and humble couple Simeon and Anna into the temple of Jerusalem, and they recognized in Jesus the Messiah. "My eyes have seen your salvationÃ¢€, Simeon exclaimed, "the salvation prepared by God in the sight of all peoplesÃ¢€ (Lk 2:30). Yes, brothers and sisters, Jesus is the salvation for every person and for every people! Today I ask him, the Saviour of the world, to look upon our brothers and sisters in Iraq and Syria, who for too long now have suffered the effects of ongoing conflict, and who, together with those belonging to other ethnic and religious groups, are suffering a brutal persecution. May Christmas bring them hope, as indeed also to the many displaced persons, exiles and refugees, children, adults and elderly, from this region and from the whole world. May indifference be changed into closeness and rejection into hospitality, so that all who now are suffering may receive the necessary humanitarian help to overcome the rigours of winter, return to their countries and live with dignity. May the Lord open hearts to trust, and may he bestow his peace upon the whole Middle East, beginning with the land blessed by his birth, thereby sustaining the efforts of those committed effectively to dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. May Jesus, Saviour of the world, protect all who suffer in Ukraine, and grant that their beloved land may overcome tensions, conquer hatred and violence, and set out on a new journey of fraternity and reconciliation. May Christ the Saviour give peace to Nigeria, where [even in these hours] more blood is being shed and too many people are unjustly deprived of their possessions, held as hostages or killed. I invoke peace also on the other parts of the African continent, thinking especially of Libya, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, and various regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I beseech all who have political responsibility to commit themselves through dialogue to overcoming differences and to building a lasting, fraternal coexistence. May Jesus save the vast numbers of children who are victims of violence, made objects of trade and trafficking, or forced to become soldiers; children, so many abused children. May he give comfort to the families of the children killed in Pakistan last week. May he be close to all who suffer from illness, especially the victims of the Ebola epidemic, above all in Liberia, in Sierra Leone and in Guinea. As I thank all who are courageously dedicated to assisting the sick and their family members, I once more make an urgent appeal that the necessary assistance and treatment be provided. The Child Jesus. My thoughts turn to all those children today who are killed and ill-treated, be they infants killed in the womb, deprived of that generous love of their parents and then buried in the egoism of a culture that does not love life; be they children displaced due to war and persecution, abused and taken advantage of before our very eyes and our complicit silence. I think also of those infants massacred in bomb attacks, also those where the Son of God was born. Even today, their impotent silence cries out under the sword of so many Herods. On their blood stands the shadow of contemporary Herods. Truly there are so many tears this Christmas, together with the tears of the Infant Jesus. Dear brothers and sisters, may the Holy Spirit today enlighten our hearts, that we may recognize in the Infant Jesus, born in Bethlehem of the Virgin Mary, the salvation given by God to each one of us, to each man and woman and to all the peoples of the earth. May the power of Christ, which brings freedom and service, be felt in so many hearts afflicted by war, persecution and slavery. May this divine power, by its meekness, take away the hardness of heart of so many men and women immersed in worldliness and indifference, the globalization of indifference. May his redeeming strength transform arms into ploughshares, destruction into creativity, hatred into love and tenderness. Then we will be able to cry out with joy: "Our eyes have seen your salvationÃ¢€. With these thoughts I wish you all a Happy Christmas! -- ENDS --.

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