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The Pope's words at the Regina Coeli prayer

Before the Regina Coeli

After the Regina Coeli

At midday today, Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord, World Day of Social Communications, the Holy Father Francis appeared at the window of his study in the Vatican Apostolic Palace to pray the *Regina Coeli* with the faithful and pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square.

The following is the Pope's introduction to the Marian prayer:

Before the Regina Coeli

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Today, in Italy and in many other countries, we celebrate the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord. This feast contains two elements. On the one hand, it guides our gaze to *heaven*, where Jesus, glorified, is seated at the right hand of God (cf. *Mk* 16: 19). On the other, it recalls the beginning of the *Church's mission: why?* Because Jesus, risen and ascended into Heaven, sends His disciples to spread the Gospel throughout the world; therefore, the Ascension exhorts us to raise our gaze to heaven, so as to then turn it straight back to earth, fulfilling the tasks the Risen Lord has entrusted to us.

It is what we are invited to do by today's Gospel passage, in which the event of the Ascension comes immediately after the mission that Jesus entrusts to the disciples. It is a boundless mission, that is, literally without boundaries, which surpasses human strength. Indeed, Jesus says: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (*Mk* 16:15). The task that Jesus entrusts, to a small group of simple men without great intellectual capacities, seems truly daring. Yet this meagre company, irrelevant in face of the world's great

powers, is sent to bring Jesus' message of love and mercy to all corners of the earth.

However, this plan of God can only be realized with the strength that God Himself grants to the Apostles. In this regard, Jesus assures them that their mission will be sustained by the Holy Spirit. He says thus: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (*Acts 1: 8*). So this mission was realized, and the Apostles began this work, which was then continued by their successors. The mission entrusted by Jesus to the Apostles has been carried out through the centuries, and it still continues today: it requires the collaboration of us all. Indeed, each one of us, by virtue of the Baptism he received, is qualified on his part to proclaim the Gospel. It is in fact Baptism that qualifies us and also drives us to be missionaries, to proclaim the Gospel.

While the Lord's Ascension into Heaven inaugurates a new form of Jesus' presence in our midst, it asks us to have eyes and a heart to encounter Him, to serve Him, and to bear witness to Him to others. It is about being men and women of the Ascension, namely, seekers of Christ along the roads of our time, bringing His word of salvation to the ends of the earth. In this itinerary, we encounter Christ Himself in our brothers, especially in the poorest, in those who suffer in their flesh the harsh and mortifying experience of old and new poverties. Just as at the beginning the Risen Christ sent His Apostles with the strength of the Holy Spirit, so today He sends all of us, with the same strength, to give concrete and visible signs of hope. Because Jesus gives us hope; He went to Heaven, and opened the doors of Heaven and the hope that we will arrive there.

May the Virgin Mary, as Mother of the dead and risen Lord, who inspired the faith of the first community of disciples, help us too to "lift up our hearts", as the liturgy exhorts us to do. And at the same time, may she help us have our "feet on the ground", and to sow with courage the Gospel in the concrete situations of life and history.

After the Regina Coeli

Dear brothers and sisters,

I am particularly close to the dear population of Indonesia, especially in the Christian communities of the city of Surabaya, stricken by the grave attack against places of worship. I raise my prayer for all the victims and their relatives. Together let us invoke the God of peace, so that He may bring an end to these violent actions, and that sentiments not of hatred and violence, but of reconciliation and fraternity may find space in the hearts of all. Let us pray in silence.

Today is World Social Communications Day, on the theme "Fake news and journalism of peace". I greet all media workers, especially journalists who are committed to searching for the truth in news, contributing to a just and peaceful society.

I greet you all, Romans and pilgrims, in particular the folk musicians and groups from Germany; the Paraguayan faithful resident in Rome in the "Virgen de Caacupé" community; participants in the UCIIM convention fifty years after the death of the founder Gesualdo Nosengo; and the "Dives in Misericordia" movement from Naples.

I greet the faithful of Catania, Scandicci, San Ferdinando di Puglia and San Marzano sul Sarno; young confirmands and newly-confirmed from Genoa; and those of Emmenbrücke, Switzerland, and Liscate; children from the *San Giustino* parish in Rome, and students from the "Tommaso Aversa" Institute of Mistretta.

I greet the employees of "Federal Express Europe", in the hope that a positive solution may be found to the current difficulties.

A special thought goes to the Alpine troops, gathered in Trento for the National Parade. I encourage them to be witnesses of charity and agents of peace, following the example of the *Alpino* Teresio Olivelli, defender of the weak and recently proclaimed Blessed. And today, the day dedicated to mothers in many countries, let us

applaud mothers! I would like to greet all mothers, thanking them for their care for the family. I remember also the mothers who look on us from Heaven and continue to protect us with prayer. Let us pray to our heavenly Mother that today, 13 May, in the name of Our Lady of Fatima, she may help us to continue on the way.

And I wish you all a good Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch, and goodbye!
