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The Pope's words at the Regina Caeli

At midday today, the Holy Father Francis recited the Regina Caeli prayer from the Library of the Vatican Apostolic Palace. At the end of the Regina Caeli the Pope appeared at the window of his study and imparted his blessing.

The following are the Pope's words of introduction to the Marian prayer:

Before the Regina Caeli

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Today's Gospel, which is set on the day of the Passover, describes the episode of the two disciples of Emmaus (*Lk 24, 13-35*). It is a story which begins and ends *on the move*. Indeed, there is the outbound journey of the disciples who, sad about the epilogue of Jesus' story, leave Jerusalem and return home to Emmaus, walking about eleven kilometres. It is a journey that takes place during the day, much of it downhill. And there is the return journey: another eleven kilometres, but at nightfall, with part of the journey uphill after the fatigue of the outward journey and the entire day. Two trips: one easy during the day, and the other tiring at night. Yet the first takes place in sadness, the second in joy. In the first there is the Lord walking beside them, but they don't recognise Him; in the second they do not see Him anymore, but they feel Him near them. In the first they are discouraged and hopeless; in the second they run to bring the good news of the encounter with the Risen Jesus to the others.

The two different paths of those first disciples tell us, Jesus' disciples today, that in life we have two opposite directions in front of us: there is the path of those who, like those two at the beginning, let themselves be paralysed by life's disappointments and go ahead sadly; and there is the path of those who do not put themselves and their problems first, but Jesus who visits us, and the brothers who await His visit, that is, the brothers who are waiting for us to take care of them. Here is the turning point: to stop circling around oneself, the disappointments of the past, the unrealised ideals, the many bad things that have happened in our life. Very

often we tend to keep going around and around... Set that aside and look at the greatest and truest reality of life: *Jesus lives, Jesus loves me*. This is the greatest reality. And I can do something for others. It is a beautiful reality: positive, bright, beautiful! The turning point is this: passing from *thoughts about myself* to the *reality of my God*; passing - with another play on words - from "if", "se", to "yes", "sì". From "if" to "yes". What does it mean? "If He had freed us, if God had listened to me, if life had gone as I wanted, if I had this and that...", in a complaining tone. This "if" does not help us, it is not fruitful, it helps neither us nor others. Here are our "ifs", similar to those of the two disciples. But they pass to the yes: "Yes, the Lord is alive, He walks with us. Yes, now, not tomorrow, we are on our way to announce it". "Yes, I can do this for the people to be happier, to improve the people, to help many people. Yes, yes, I can". From "if" to "yes", from laments to joy and peace, because when we complain, we are not joyful; we are in greyness, greyness, that grey air of sadness. And this does not help, nor does it enable growth. From "if" to "yes", from the lament to the joy of service.

This change of pace, from "I" to "God", from "if" to "yes", how did it happen in the disciples? By *meeting* Jesus: the two disciples of Emmaus first open their hearts to Him; then they listen to Him explain the Scriptures; then they invite him home. These are three steps that we too can take in our homes: *first*, opening our hearts to Jesus, entrusting Him with the burdens, the hardships, the disappointments of life, entrusting the "ifs" to him, and then, the second step, *listening* to Jesus, taking the Gospel in hand, reading this passage today, in chapter twenty-four of Luke's Gospel; *third*, praying to Jesus, in the same words as those disciples: "Lord, 'stay with us' (v. 29). Lord, stay with me. Lord, stay with all of us, because we need You to find the way". And without You there is night.

Dear brothers and sisters in life we are always journeying. And we become what we go towards. Let us choose the way of God, not of the self; the way of "yes", not the way of "if". We will discover that there are no unexpected events, no uphill path, no night that cannot be faced with Jesus. May Our Lady, Mother of the journey, who by receiving the Word made her entire life a "yes" to God, show us the way.

After the Regina Caeli

Dear brothers and sisters,

Yesterday was the United Nations World Malaria Day. While we are combatting the coronavirus pandemic, we must also continue our efforts to prevent and cure malaria, which threatens billions of people in many countries. I am close to all the sick, to those who care for them, and to those who work to ensure that every person has access to good basic healthcare services.

I also address a greeting to all those who today, in Poland, participate in the "National Reading of the Sacred Scripture". I have told you many times, and I would like to say it once again, how important it is to get into the habit of reading the Gospel, a few minutes, every day. Let us carry it in our pockets, in our bags. May it always be close to us, also physically, so that we read a little every day.

In a few days' time the month of May will begin, dedicated in a special way to the Virgin Mary. With a short Letter, published yesterday - I invited all the faithful to pray the Holy Rosary this month, with your families or alone, and to pray one of the two prayers that I have made available to everyone. May our Mother help us to face with greater faith and hope the time of difficulty we are going through.

I wish you all a good month of May, and a good Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch, and *arrivederci*.

