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The Pope's words at the Regina Caeli

At midday today, the Holy Father Francis led the recitation of the Regina Caeli 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 day!

In today's Gospel passage (see *Jn* 14: 1-12), we hear the beginning of Jesus' so-called "Farewell discourse". They are the words He addresses to the disciples at the end of the Last Supper, just before facing the Passion. In this dramatic moment Jesus began by saying, "Do not let your hearts be troubled" (see v. 1). He says it to us too, in the troubles of life. But how can we make sure that our hearts are not troubled? Because the heart is troubled.

The Lord indicates two remedies for being troubled. The first is: "Believe in me" (v. 1). It would seem to be rather theoretical, abstract advice. Instead, Jesus wants to tell us something precise. He knows that, in life, the worst anxiety, anguish, is born of the sensation of not being able to cope, of feeling alone and without points of reference when faced with events. We cannot overcome this anguish alone, when one difficulty is added to another. We need Jesus' help, and therefore Jesus asks us to have faith in Him, that is, to lean not on ourselves but on Him. Because liberation from being troubled depends upon trust. Entrusting oneself to Jesus, to take the "leap". And this is liberation from being troubled. And Jesus rose and lives precisely to be always by our side. So we can say to Him, "Jesus, I believe that You rose again and are next to me. I believe that You listen to me. I will bring you what upsets me, my troubles; I have faith in You and I entrust myself to You".

There is then a second remedy for being troubled, which Jesus expresses with these words: "My Father's house

has many rooms... I am going there to prepare a place for you" (v. 2).

This is what Jesus did for us: He reserved a place in Heaven for us. He took our humanity upon Himself to take it beyond death, to a new place, to Heaven, so that where He is, we might also be there. It is the certainty that consoles us: there is a place reserved for everyone. There is a place for me too. Every one of us can say: there is a place for me. We do not live aimlessly and without a destination. We are awaited, we are precious. God is in love with us, we are His children. And for us He has prepared the most worthy and beautiful place: Paradise. Let us not forget: the dwelling place that awaits us is Paradise. Here we are passing through. We are made for Heaven, for eternal life, to live forever. Forever: it is something we cannot even imagine now. But it is even more beautiful to think that this *forever* will be entirely in joy, in full communion with God and with others, without any more tears, without resentment, without divisions and troubles.

But how can we reach heaven? What is the way? Here is Jesus' decisive phrase. Today He says to us: "I am the Way" (v. 6). The way to go up to Heaven the way is Jesus: to have a living relationship with Him, to imitate Him in love, to follow in His footsteps. And I, a Christian, you, a Christian, every one of us Christians, can ask ourselves: "Which way do I follow?". There are ways that do not lead to Heaven: the ways of worldliness, the ways of self-affirmation, the ways of selfish power. And there is Jesus' way, the way of humble love, of prayer, of meekness, of trust, of service to others. It is not the way of *my self-centredness*, it is the way of Jesus, Who is the *centre of my life*. It is to go on every day, asking Him: "Jesus, what do You think of the choice I made? What would You do in this situation, with these people?". It is good for us to ask Jesus, who is the Way, for the directions to get to Heaven. May Our Lady, Queen of Heaven, help us to follow Jesus, Who opened Heaven for us.

After the Regina Caeli

My thoughts today turn to Europe and Africa. To Europe, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950. It inspired the process of European integration, enabling the reconciliation of the peoples of the continent, after the Second World War, and the long period of stability and peace from which we benefit today. May the spirit of the Schuman Declaration never fail to inspire those who hold responsibility in the European Union, called to face the social and economic consequences of the pandemic in a spirit of harmony and collaboration.

And our gaze also turns to Africa, because on 10 May 1980, forty years ago, Saint John Paul II, during his first pastoral visit to the continent, gave voice to the cry of the populations of the Sahel, sorely tried by drought. Today I congratulate the group of young people from the countries of the Sahel and of the United States of America for the launch of the initiative "*Laudato si' Alberi*" (Laudato si' Trees). The aim is to plant at least one million trees throughout the region of the Sahel, which will become part of the "Great Green Wall of Africa". I hope that many will follow the example of solidarity given by these young people.

And today, in many countries, Mother's Day is celebrated. I wish to remember all mothers with gratitude and affection, entrusting them to the protection of Mary, our heavenly Mother. My thought also turns to the mothers who have passed on to the other life, and who accompany us from Heaven. Let us be silent a moment so each one of us can remember our mother. [Silent pause]

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