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The Pope's words at the Regina Caeli prayer

At midday today, Monday of the Angel, the Holy Father Francis appeared at the window of his study in the Vatican Apostolic Palace to recite the *Regina Caeli* with faithful and pilgrims gathered in Saint Peter's Square.

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

Before the *Regina Caeli*

Dear brothers and sisters, buongiorno!

The days of the Easter Octave are like a single day in which the joy of the Resurrection is prolonged. Thus, the Gospel of today's liturgy continues to tell us about the Risen One, his appearance to the women who went to the tomb (cf. Mt 28:8-15). Jesus goes to meet them and greets them. Then the Lord says two things, two pieces of advice that would be good also for us to welcome as an Easter gift.

The first is he reassures them with simple words: "Do not be afraid" (v. 10). The Lord knows that our fears are our daily enemies. He also knows that our fears hide from the great fear, that of death: fear of fading away, of losing loved ones, of being sick, of not being able to cope further... But at Easter Jesus conquered death. So, no one else can tell us in a more convincing way: "Do not be afraid." The Lord says this right there next to the tomb from which he came out victorious. He invites us to come out of the tomb of our fears. Listen closely: come out of the tombs of our fears, since our fears are like tombs, they bury us. He knows that fear is always lurking at the door of our heart, and we need to hear ourselves say *do not be afraid, fear not* on Easter morning as on the morning of every day, "*do not be afraid.*" Take courage. Brother, sister, who believe in Christ, do not be afraid! Jesus says: "I tasted death for you, I took your pain upon myself. Now I have risen to tell you: I am here with you forever. Do not be afraid!" Fear not.

But how can we combat fear? The second thing Jesus tells the women can help us: "Go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see me." (v. 10) *Go and tell.* Fear always closes us in on ourselves, while Jesus

instead makes us go forth and sends us to others. This is the solution. We might say to ourselves, but I am not capable of doing this! But just think, the women were not perhaps the most suitable and prepared to proclaim the resurrection, but that did not matter to the Lord. He cares that we go forth and proclaim. Go and tell. Because the Easter joy is not to be kept to oneself. The joy of Christ is strengthened by giving it, it multiplies sharing it. If we open ourselves and bear the Gospel, our hearts will open and overcome fear. This is the secret: we proclaim and overcome fear.

Today's text recounts that proclamation can encounter an obstacle: *falsehood*. The Gospel narrates a "counter-proclamation," that of the soldiers who guarded the tomb of Jesus. The Gospel says they were paid "a sum of money" (v. 12), a good sum, and received these instructions: "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.'" (v. 13) 'You were sleeping? Did you see during your sleep how they stole the body?' There is a contradiction there, but a contradiction that everyone believes because money was involved. It is the power of money, the other lord that Jesus says we must never serve. Here is the falsehood, the logic of concealment that opposes the proclamation of truth. It is a reminder for us also: falsehoods – in words and in life – they taint the announcement, they corrupt within, leading back to the tomb. Falsehoods take us backwards, they lead right to death, to the tomb. The Risen One instead wants us to come out of the tombs of falsehood and dependency. Before the Risen Lord, there is another "god" – the god of money that dirties and ruins everything, that closes the door to salvation. This is present everywhere in daily life with the temptation to adore the god of money.

Dear brothers and sisters, rightfully we are scandalized when in the news we discover deceit and lies in the lives of persons and society. But let us give a name also to the obscurity and falsehoods we have in ourselves! And let us place our own darkness and falsehoods before the light of the Risen Jesus. He wants to bring hidden things to light to make us transparent and luminous witnesses to the joy of the Gospel, of the truth that will make you free (cf Jn 8:32).

May Mary, Mother of the Risen One, help us overcome our fears and give us passion for the truth.

After the *Regina Caeli*

Dear brothers and sisters!

Happy Easter once again to all of you, Romans and pilgrims from various countries!

May the grace of the Risen Lord give comfort and hope to all those who are suffering: may no one be abandoned! May quarrels, wars and disputes give way to understanding and reconciliation. Underscore this word always: reconciliation, because what Jesus did on Calvary and with His resurrection is to reconcile us all with the Father, with God and with each other. Reconciliation.

God has won the decisive battle against the spirit of evil: let Him win! Let us renounce our human plans, let us be converted to his plans for peace and justice.

I thank all those who have sent me their good wishes in recent days. I am especially grateful for your prayers! I ask God, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, to reward each one with His gifts.

This afternoon, here in the square, I will meet more than fifty thousand teenagers from all over Italy. A beautiful sign of hope! And there are some already! That is why the Square is prepared in this way.

I wish everyone to live these Easter days in the peace and joy that come from the Risen Christ. Please continue to pray for me. Enjoy your meal and arrivederci!

[In the Square: Long live the Pope!]

The Pope replies: Bravo to the young people of the *Immacolata*!
