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The Pope's words at the Regina Caeli prayer

At midday today, the Holy Father Francis appeared at the window of his study in the Vatican Apostolic Palace to pray the Regina Caeli with the 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, happy Sunday!

In the Gospel of today's Liturgy, bidding his disciples goodbye during the Last Supper, Jesus says almost as a sort of testament: "Peace I leave with you". And he adds immediately, "My peace I give to you" (*Jn 14:27*). Let us reflect on these short phrases.

First of all, *peace I leave with you*. Jesus bids farewell with words expressing affection and serenity. But he does so in a moment that is anything but serene. Judas has left to betray him, Peter is about to deny him, and almost everyone else to abandon him. The Lord knows this, and yet, he does not rebuke, he does not use severe words, he does not give harsh speeches. Rather than demonstrate agitation, he remains kind till the end. There is a proverb that says you die the way you have lived. In effect, the last hours of Jesus' life are like the essence of his entire life. He feels fear and pain, but does not give way to resentment or protesting. He does not allow himself to become bitter, he does not vent, he is not impatient. He is at peace, a peace that comes from his meek heart accustomed to trust. This is the source of the peace Jesus gives us. For no one can leave others peace if they do not have it within themselves. No one can *give* peace unless that person *is* at peace.

Peace I leave with you: Jesus demonstrates that meekness is possible. He incarnated it specifically in the most difficult moment, and he wants us to behave that way too, since we too are heirs of his peace. He wants us to be meek, open, available to listen, capable of defusing tensions and weaving harmony. This is witnessing to Jesus and is worth more than a thousand words and many sermons. The witness of peace. As disciples of Jesus, let

us ask ourselves if we behave like this where we live – do we ease tensions, and defuse conflicts? Are we too at odds with someone, always ready to react, explode, or do we know how to respond nonviolently, do we know how to respond with peaceful actions? How do I react? Everyone can ask themselves this.

Certainly, this meekness is not easy. How difficult it is, at every level, to defuse conflicts! Jesus' second phrase comes to our aid here: *my peace I give you*. Jesus knows that on our own we are not able to cultivate peace, that we need help, that we need a gift. Peace, which is our obligation, is first of all a gift of God. In fact, Jesus says: "My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you" (v. 27). What is this peace that the world does not know and the Lord gives us? This peace is the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit of Jesus. It is the presence of God in us, it is God's "power of peace". It is He, the Holy Spirit, who disarms the heart and fills it with serenity. It is He, the Holy Spirit, who loosens rigidity and extinguishes the temptations to attack others. It is He, the Holy Spirit, who reminds us that there are brothers and sisters beside us, not obstacles or adversaries. It is He, the Holy Spirit, who gives us the strength to forgive, to begin again, to set out anew because we cannot do this with our own strength. And it is with Him, with the Holy Spirit, that we become men and women of peace.

Dear brothers and sisters, no sin, no failure, no grudge should discourage us from insistently asking for this gift from the Holy Spirit who gives us peace. The more we feel our hearts are agitated, the more we sense we are nervous, impatient, angry inside, the more we need to ask the Lord for the Spirit of peace. Let us learn to say every day: "Lord, give me your peace, give me your Holy Spirit". This is a beautiful prayer. Shall we say it together? "Lord, give me your peace, give me your Holy Spirit". I didn't hear it well. One more time: "Lord, give me your peace, give me your Holy Spirit". And let us also ask this for those who live next to us, for those we meet each day, and for the leaders of nations.

May Our Lady help us welcome the Holy Spirit so we can be peacemakers.

After the Regina Caeli

Dear brothers and sisters,

This afternoon in Lyon, Pauline Marie Jaricot, Foundress of the Society of the Propagation of the Faith for the support of the missions, will be beatified. This faithful lay woman lived during the first half of the 1800s. She was a courageous woman, attentive to the changes taking place at the time, and had a universal vision regarding the Church's mission. May her example enkindle in everyone the desire to participate through prayer and charity in the spread of the Gospel throughout the world. A round of applause for the new Blessed!

Today, *Laudato Si' Week* begins, to listen ever more attentively to the cry of the Earth which urges us to act together in taking care of our common home. I thank the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, and the numerous organizations taking part in it, and I invite everyone to participate.

This coming Tuesday is the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin, Mary Help of Christians, particularly dear to Catholics in China who venerate Mary, Help of Christians as their Patroness in the Shrine of Sheshan in Shanghai, in many churches throughout the country, and in their homes. This happy occasion offers me the opportunity to assure them once again of my spiritual closeness. I am attentively and actively following the often complex life and situations of the faithful and pastors, and I pray every day for them. I invite all of you to unite yourselves in this prayer so that the Church in China, in freedom and tranquility, might live in effective communion with the universal Church, and might exercise its mission of proclaiming the Gospel to everyone, and thus offer a positive contribution to the spiritual and material progress of society as well.

And I greet all of you, pilgrims from Rome, and Italy, and many other countries. In particular, I greet the faithful from Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium, Poland and Puerto Rico; the priests from Ecuador; the Emmaus community from Foggia; the volunteers of the *Soccorso di Saint-Pierre* (Aosta); the students from Verona and

the boys and girls from Sombreno, Diocese of Bergamo.

I greet all of you, they are here, who participated in the national *Scegliamo la vita* [Let's Choose Life] event. I thank you for your dedication in promoting life and defending conscientious objection, which there are often attempts to limit. Sadly, in these last years, there has been a change in the common mentality, and today we are more and more led to think that life is a good at our complete disposal, that we can choose to manipulate, to give birth or take life as we please, as if it were the exclusive consequence of individual choice. Let us remember that life is a gift from God! It is always sacred and inviolable, and we cannot silence the voice of conscience.

Have a good Sunday everyone! Please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch and *arrivederci*.
