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## The Pope's words at the Regina Caeli prayer

At midday today, second Sunday of Easter or Divine Mercy Sunday, 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, *buongiorno!*

Today, Divine Mercy Sunday, the Gospel recounts two apparitions of the Risen Jesus to his disciples, and in particular, to Thomas, the "doubting Apostle" (cf. *Jn* 20:24-29).

In reality, Thomas is not the only one who struggled to believe. In fact, he represents all of us a little bit. Indeed, it is not always easy to believe, especially when, as in his case, he had suffered a tremendous disappointment. And after such a huge disappointment, it was difficult to believe. He had followed Jesus for years, running risks, and enduring discomforts. But the Teacher had been put on a cross like a criminal, and no one had freed him. No one had done anything! He was dead and everyone was afraid. How could he trust again? How he could trust such news that said he was alive? There was a doubt inside him.

Thomas, however, shows that he was courageous. While the others had closed themselves inside the Upper Room out of fear, he went out, running the risk that someone might recognize, report and arrest him. We could even think that, with his courage, he would have deserved more than the others to meet the Risen Lord. Instead, precisely because he had been away, Thomas was not there when Jesus had appeared the first time to the disciples on Easter evening, thus losing that opportunity. He had gone away from the community. How could he retrieve the opportunity? Only by going back with the others, returning to that family he had left behind, scared and sad. When he does so, when he returns, they tell him that Jesus had come, but he struggles to believe – he

wants to see his wounds. And Jesus satisfies him: eight days later, he appears again in the midst of his disciples and shows them his wounds, his hands, his feet, these wounds that are the proof of his love, that are the ever-open channels of his mercy.

Let us reflect on these facts. In order to believe, Thomas wants an extraordinary sign – to touch the wounds. Jesus shows them to him, but *in an ordinary way*, coming in front of everyone, in the community, not outside. It's as if he said to him: if you want to meet me, do not look far away, remain in the community, with the others. Don't go away...pray with them...break bread with them. And he says this to us as well. That is where you will find me; that is where I will show you the signs of the wounds impressed on my body: the signs of the Love that overcomes hatred, of the Pardon that disarms revenge, the signs of the Life that conquers death. It is there, in the community, that you will discover my face, as you share moments of doubt and fear with your brothers and sisters, clinging even more strongly to them. Without the community, it is difficult to find Jesus.

Dear brothers and sisters, the invitation given to Thomas is valid for us as well. We, where do we seek the Risen One? In some special event, in some spectacular or amazing religious manifestation, solely at the emotional or sensational level? Or rather in the community, in the Church, accepting the challenge of staying there, even though it is not perfect? Despite all of its limitations and failures, which are our limitations and failings, our Mother Church is the Body of Christ. And it is there, in the Body of Christ, that, now and forever, the greatest signs of his love can be found impressed. Let us ask ourselves, however, if in the name of this love, in the name of Jesus's wounds, whether we are willing to open our arms to those who are wounded by life, excluding no one from God's mercy, but welcoming everyone – each person like a brother, like a sister, like God welcomes everyone. God welcomes everyone.

May Mary, *the Mother of Mercy*, help us to love the Church and to make her a welcoming home for everyone.

### **After the *Regina Caeli***

Dear brothers and sisters,

I want to express my closeness to all our brothers and sisters who, especially in the East, are celebrating Easter today: Dear brothers and sisters, may Risen Lord be with you and fill all of you with his Holy Spirit! Happy Easter to all of you!

And unfortunately, in strike contrast to the Easter message, wars are continuing, and they continue to sow death in horrific ways. Let us grieve over these atrocities and let us pray for the victims, asking God that the world might never more have to experience the shock of violent death by the human hand, but the awe of the life that He gives and renews with his grace!

I am following with concern the events unfolding in Sudan. I am close to the Sudanese people, already so tried, and I invite you to pray so that they might lay down their arms, and pick up the path of peace and harmony.

And I am thinking of our brothers and sisters both in Russia and in Ukraine who are celebrating Easter. May the Lord be near to them and help them to make peace!

I greet all of you, people from Rome and pilgrims, especially the prayer groups who cultivate the spirituality of the Divine Mercy, gathered today in the Shrine of the Holy Spirit in Sassia. And, certain of interpreting the feelings of the faithful throughout the world, I direct a grateful thought to the memory of Saint John Paul II, the object of offensive and unfounded inferences these past few days.

I greet the groups who have come from France, from Brazil, from Spain, from Poland, from Lithuania; the children from Saint-Jean de Passy College from Paris, with their teachers and their families. I greet the faithful

from Pescara, the students from the Scuola Santa Maria ad Nives from Genoa, and the children from Marcheno, Brescia.

I greet the Firefighters from various European countries, gathered in Rome for a large demonstration open to the public. Thank you for your service! And I want to tell you something: when I pray for you, I ask for a grace: that you don't have work!

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

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