



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE  
**BOLLETTINO**

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS  
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ  
دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسى الرسولي BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIE

N. 160509b

Monday 09.05.2016

### **Regina Coeli: the Ascension, promise of our participation in the fullness of life before God**

Vatican City, 8 May 2016 – "In the Ascension of Jesus, crucified and resurrected, there is the promise of our participation in the fullness of life before God", assured Pope Francis this morning before praying the Regina Coeli with thousands of faithful gathered in St. Peter's Square. The Holy Father recalled that today many countries observe the feast of Jesus' Ascension to heaven forty days after Easter.

"We contemplate the mystery of Jesus Who rises from our earthly space to enter into the fullness and glory of God, taking our humanity with Him. That is, our humanity enters for the first time in heaven", he explained, who went on to cite the Gospel of St. Luke, which also narrates the reaction of the disciples who do not feel pain or loss, but instead return to Jerusalem with great joy, as they no longer fear the city that rejected their teacher and had witnessed Judas' betrayal, Peter's denial, the scattering of the disciples and the violence of a power that felt itself to be under threat.

"From that day, for the Apostles and for every one of Christ's disciples, it was possible to live in Jerusalem and in all cities throughout the world, even those most afflicted by injustice and violence, because above every city there is the same heaven, and every inhabitant may gaze upwards with hope. Jesus, God is true man, with His human body in heaven. And this is our hope, our anchor, and we are steadfast in this hope if we look to heaven. In this heaven dwells the God Who revealed Himself so close to us that He took a human face, that of Jesus of Nazareth. He remains forever ... Emmanuel, God with us, and never abandons us".

After seeing the Lord rise to heaven, the disciples returned to the city as witnesses who with joy announce to all the new life that comes from the Crucified and Risen One, in whose name repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed to all nations. "This is the witness – given not only with words but also through daily life – the witness that every Sunday should come out of our churches to enter during the week into houses, offices, school, places for meeting and for leisure, hospitals, prisons, homes for the elderly, places crowded with immigrants, the outskirts of cities", said Francis.

In this proclamation and in this witness we are, as Jesus announces, vested in power from on high, the power of the Holy Spirit Who opens minds and hearts to announce love and mercy even in the most hostile environments of our cities. The Holy Spirit is "the true artifice of the multiform witness that the Church and every baptised

person give to the world", the Holy Father concluded, inviting all to prepare for the feast of Pentecost, to be celebrated next Sunday.

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