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The Pope's words at the Regina Coeli prayer

Before the Regina Coeli

After the Regina Coeli

At midday today, Third Sunday of Easter, the Holy Father Francis appeared at the window of his study in the Vatican Apostolic Palace to pray the *Regina Coeli* with the faithful and pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square.

The following is the Pope's introduction to the Marian prayer:

Before the Regina Coeli

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

At the centre of this third Sunday of Easter there is the experience of the Risen Christ, made by His disciples, all together. This is highlighted especially by the Gospel, which introduces us once again to the Cenacle, where Jesus manifests Himself to His Apostles, addressing this greeting to them: "Peace be with you!" (*Lk* 24: 36). It is the greeting of the Risen Christ, Who gives us peace: "Peace be with you!" It refers both to inner peace, as well as that peace established in relations with people. The episode narrated by the evangelist Luke greatly emphasizes the realism of the Resurrection. Jesus is not a ghost. In fact, it is not about an apparition of Jesus' spirit, but of His real presence with a risen body.

Jesus realizes that the Apostles are disturbed to see Him, that they are disconcerted because the reality of the Resurrection is inconceivable to them. They think they see a ghost, but the Risen Jesus is not a ghost, He is a man with a body and a soul. Therefore, to convince them, He says to them: "See my hands and my feet – He shows them the wounds – that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have" (v. 39). And since this does not seem to be enough to conquer the incredulity of the disciples, the

Gospel also says something interesting: so great was the joy they had within that they could not believe in this joy. "No, it cannot be! It cannot be thus! So much joy is not possible!". And Jesus, to convince them, said to them: "Do you have anything here to eat?" (v. 41). They offer Him roasted fish, and Jesus takes it and eats it in front of them, to convince them.

Jesus' insistence on the reality of His Resurrection illumines the Christian perspective on the body: the body is not an obstacle or a prison of the soul. God has created the body, and man is not complete other than in the union of body and soul. Jesus, Who overcame death and rose in body and soul, makes us understand that we must have a positive idea of our body. It can become the occasion or instrument of sin; however, sin is not caused by the body, but rather by our moral weakness. The body is a stupendous gift of God, destined, in union with the soul, to express in fullness His image and likeness. Therefore, we are called to have great respect and care of our body and that of others.

Every offense or wound or violence to our neighbour's body, is an insult to God the Creator! My thought goes, in particular, to the children, the women, and the elderly mistreated in body. In these persons' flesh we find the body of Christ. Jesus, wounded, derided, slandered, humiliated, scourged and crucified ... Jesus taught us love. A love that, in His Resurrection, showed itself more powerful than sin and death, and He wants to rescue all those who experience in their own body the slaveries of our times.

In a world where too often arrogance prevails against the weakest and materialism suffocates the spirit, today's Gospel calls us to be able to look in depth, full of wonder and great joy, for having encountered the Risen Lord. It calls us to be people who know how to receive and value the novelty of life that He sows in history, to guide it towards new Heavens and a new earth. May the Virgin Mary, to whose maternal intercession we entrust ourselves with confidence, support us on this path.

After the Regina Coeli

Dear brothers and sisters,

Today, in Vohipeno, Madagascar, the martyr Luciano Botvasoa is proclaimed blessed. A family father, consistent witness of Christ unto the heroic giving of his life, he was arrested and killed for having demonstrated his will to remain faithful to the Lord and to the Church, representing for all of us an example of charity and strength in faith.

I am profoundly disturbed by the current world situation, in which, despite the tools available to the international community, it is difficult to agree on a common action in favour of peace in Syria and in other regions of the world. While I pray incessantly for peace, and I invite all people of good will to continue doing so, I appeal again to all the political leaders, so that justice and peace may prevail.

I have received with pain the news of the killing of the three men kidnapped at the end of March at the border between Ecuador and Colombia. I pray for them and for their families, and I am close to the dear Ecuadorian people, encouraging them to proceed, united and peaceful, with the help of the Lord and of His most holy Mother.

I entrust to your prayer the people who, like Vincent Lambert, in France, the little Alfie Evans, in England, and others in various countries, who live at times for a long time in a state of grave illness, receiving medical assistance for their basic needs. They are delicate situations, very painful and complex. Let us pray that all sick people always be respected in their dignity and cared for in a manner suited to their condition, with the concerted contribution of families, doctors and other health care workers, with great respect for life.

I greet you all with affection, pilgrims from Italy and from many parts of the world: families, parish groups,

schools, associations. I greet in particular the faithful of California, as well as those of Arluno, Pontelungo, Scandicci, Genoa-Pegli and Vibo Valentia; the children of the “Daughters of Jesus” schools of Modena and the “Friends of Paul VI” group from Pescara.

I wish you all a good Sunday. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch, and goodbye.
