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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, *buongiorno!*

Today, in Italy and many other countries, the Ascension of the Lord is celebrated. It is a feast we know well, but which can raise several questions – at least two. The first question: Why celebrate Jesus's departure from the earth? It would seem that his departure would be a sad moment, not exactly something to rejoice over! Why celebrate a departure? First question. Second question: What does Jesus do now in heaven? First question: Why celebrate? Second question: What does Jesus do in heaven?

Why we are celebrating. Because with the Ascension, something new and beautiful happened: Jesus brought our humanity, our flesh, into heaven – this is the first time – that is, he brought it in God. That humanity that he had assumed on earth did not remain here. The risen Jesus was not a spirit, no. He had his human body, flesh and bones, everything. He will be there in God. We could say that from the day of the Ascension on, God himself “changed” – from that point on, he is not only spirit, but such is his love for us that he bears our own flesh in himself, our humanity! The place awaiting us is thus indicated; that is our destiny. Thus wrote an ancient Father in the faith: “What splendid news! He who became man for us [...] to make us his brothers, presents himself as man before the Father to bear with himself all those who are joined with him” (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Discourse on the Resurrection of Christ*, 1). Today, we celebrate “heaven's conquest” – Jesus, who returns to the Father, but with our humanity. And so, heaven is already ours a little bit. Jesus has opened the door and his body is there.

The second question: So, *what does Jesus do in heaven?* He is there for us before the Father, continually showing our humanity to him – showing him his wounds. I like to think that Jesus, prays like this in front of the Father – making him see his wounds. “This is what I suffered for humanity: Do something!” He shows the Father the price of our redemption. The Father is moved. This is something I like to think about. But think about it yourselves. This is how Jesus prays. He did not leave us alone. In fact, before ascending, he told us, as the Gospel says today, “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (*Mt 28:20*). He is always with us, looking at us, and “he always lives to make intercession” (*Heb 7:25*) for us. To make the Father see his wounds, for us. In a word, Jesus *intercedes*. He is in a better “place”, before his Father and ours, to intercede on our behalf.

Intercession is fundamental. This faith helps us too – not to lose hope, not to get discouraged. Before the Father, there is someone who makes him see his wounds and intercedes. May the Queen of heaven help us to intercede with the power of prayer.

After the Regina Caeli

Dear brothers and sisters,

It is sad, but, a month after the outbreak of violence in Sudan, the situation continues to be serious. While encouraging the partial agreements reached so far, I renew my heartfelt appeal for the laying down of weapons, and I ask the international community to spare no effort to make dialogue prevail and to alleviate the suffering of the people. And let us continue to be near the beleaguered Ukrainian people.

Today, World Communications Day is celebrated with the theme *Speaking with the heart*. It is the heart that moves us toward open and receptive communication. I greet the journalists, communication professionals, thanking them for their work. And I hope that they might always work at the service of the truth and for the common good. A round of applause for all the journalists!

Today, *Laudato si'* Week begins. I thank the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and the many participating organizations. And I invite everything to collaborate in the care of our common home. There is such a need to put our capabilities and creativity together! Recent disasters remind us of this, such as the flooding that has hit the people of Emilia Romagna in these days, to whom, with all my heart, I renew my nearness. Today, booklets on *Laudato si'*, which the Dicastery has prepared in collaboration with the Stockholm Environment Institute, will be distributed in the Square.

I greet all of you, people from Rome and pilgrims from Italy and from many countries – I see many flags there, welcome! I especially greet the Franciscan Sisters of Saint Elizabeth from Indonesia – from far away; the faithful from Malta, from Mali, from Argentina, from the Caribbean Island Curaçao, and the musical band from Puerto Rico. We would like to hear you play after!

In addition, I greet the diocesan pilgrimage from Alessandria; the Confirmation candidates from the diocese of Genoa whom I met with yesterday. Yesterday, I met with them, with the red hats over there, in Santa Marta – they're wonderful!; the parish groups from Molise, Scandicci, Grotte and Grumo Nevano; the associations committed to protect human life; the “Emil Komel” young people's Choir from Gorizia; “Catherine of Saint Rose” and “Saint Ursula” schools from Rome; and the people with the Immacolata.

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