



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

REGINA CAELI

Saint Peter's Square

Divine Mercy Sunday, 23 April 2017

[Multimedia]

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!*

We know that each Sunday we commemorate the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus, but in this period after Easter, Sunday takes on an even more illuminating significance. In the Tradition of the Church, this Sunday, the first after Easter, was called “[*Domenica*] *in albis*”. What does this mean? The expression is meant to recall the Rite performed by those who had received Baptism at the Easter Vigil. Each of them would receive a white garment — *alba, bianca* — to indicate their new dignity as children of God. This is still done today — infants are offered a small symbolic garment, while adults wear a proper one, as we saw at the Easter Vigil. In the past, that white garment was worn for a week, until this Sunday, from which the name in *albis deponendis* is derived, which means the Sunday on which the white garment is removed. In this way, when the white garment was removed, the neophytes would begin their new life in Christ and in the Church.

There is something else. In the Jubilee of the Year 2000, Saint John Paul ii established that this Sunday be dedicated to Divine Mercy. Truly, it was a beautiful insight: it was the Holy Spirit who inspired him in this way. Just a few months ago we concluded the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, and this Sunday we are invited to always hold firmly to the grace which comes from God’s mercy. Today’s Gospel is the account of the Apparition of the Risen Christ to the disciples gathered in the Upper Room (cf. Jn 20:19-31). Saint John writes that after greeting his disciples, Jesus says to them: “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you”. After saying this, he makes the gesture of breathing on them and adds: “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven” (vv. 21-23). This is the meaning of the mercy that is presented on the very day of Jesus’

Resurrection as the forgiveness of sins. The Risen Jesus passed on to his Church, as her first task, his own mission of bringing to all the concrete message of forgiveness. This is the first task: to announce forgiveness. This visible sign of his mercy brings with it peace of heart and joy of the renewed encounter with the Lord.

Mercy in the light of Easter enables us to perceive it as a *true form of awareness*. This is important: mercy is a true form of awareness. We know that it is experienced through many forms. It is experienced through the senses, it is experienced through intuition, through reason and even other forms. Well, it can also be experienced in mercy, because mercy opens the *door of the mind* in order to better understand the mystery of God and of our personal existence. Mercy enables us to understand that violence, rancour, vengefulness have no meaning, and the first victim is whoever feels these sentiments, because he deprives himself of his own dignity. Mercy also opens the *door of the heart* and allows one to express closeness especially to those who are lonely and marginalized, because it makes them feel as brothers and sisters, and as children of one Father. It favours recognition of those who need consolation and helps one find the appropriate words so as to give comfort.

Brothers and sisters, mercy warms the heart and makes it sensitive to the needs of brothers and sisters with sharing and participation. Thus, mercy requires everyone to be instruments of justice, reconciliation and peace. Let us never forget that mercy is the keystone in the life of faith, and the concrete form by which we make Jesus' Resurrection visible.

May Mary, Mother of Mercy, help us to believe and joyfully experience all this.

After the Regina Caeli:

Dear brothers and sisters, yesterday, in Oviedo, Spain, the priest Luis Antonio Rosa Ormières was declared Blessed. He lived in the 19th century, putting his many human and spiritual qualities at the service of education, and for this reason he founded the Congregation of the Sisters of the Guardian Angel. May his example and his intercession help in particular those who work in schools and in the educational field.

I wholeheartedly greet all of you, faithful from Rome and pilgrims from Italy and from so many countries, in particular the Confraternity of Saint Sebastian from Kerkrade, The Netherlands, the Nigerian Catholic Secretariat and the Liebfrauen parish of Bocholt, Germany.

I greet the Polish pilgrims and express heartfelt appreciation for the initiative of *Caritas* Poland in support of many families in Syria. A special greeting goes to the devotees of Divine Mercy who gathered today in the Church of *Santo Spirito in Sassia*; as well as to the "Race for Peace", a relay race that starts today from this Square and ends in Wittenberg, Germany.

I greet the many groups of young people, especially those who recently have been and those who are preparing to be confirmed — there are so many of you! — from the Dioceses of Piacenza-Bobbio, Trento, Cuneo, Milan, Lodi, Cremona, Bergamo, Brescia and Vicenza, Italy. And also the Masaccio School of Treviso and the San Carpofofo Institute of Como.

Lastly I thank all those who have sent me messages of Easter greetings in this period. I sincerely reciprocate them, invoking for each one and for each family the grace of the Risen Lord. Happy Sunday to everyone, and please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci!*