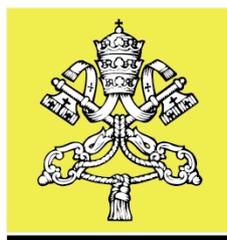


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Regina Coeli: the presence of the risen Jesus transforms everything

Vatican City, 10 April 2016 – "Jesus goes in search of His disciples when they begin to think that the past years with Him have been like a dream. When it seems that all had ended, He reappears and His presence transforms everything. The feeling of being abandoned gives way to the certainty that Christ is with us, now as then".

This was Pope Francis' comment on today's Gospel reading, which narrates the third appearance of Christ to His disciples, on the banks of the Sea of Galilee. Before praying the Regina Coeli with the faithful in St. Peter's Square, the Holy Father explained that the account describes the life of the disciples, who return to their routine after the distressing days of the passion, death and resurrection of Christ. "It was difficult for them to understand what had happened. But when it seems that all has come to an end, it is once again Jesus Who goes in search of them. ... This time He encounters them at the lake, where they have spent the night in the boats without catching anything. The nets appear to be empty, in a certain sense like the outcome of their experience with Jesus: they met Him, they left everything to follow Him, full of hope ... and now? Yes, they had seen Him risen again and they thought, 'He has gone and left us. It was like a dream'".

But when at dawn Jesus appears on the bank of the lake, the tired and discouraged fishermen do not recognise Him, so He tells them to "Cast the net on the right side of the boat". The disciples trust Him, so they obey and the result is an extraordinary catch. "It is then that John turns to Peter and says, 'It is the Lord!'. Peter immediately dives into the water and swims towards the bank, to Jesus. In that exclamation, 'It is the Lord!', there is all the enthusiasm of Paschal faith, full of joy and wonder, in stark contrast with the confusion, desperation and sense of powerlessness that had accumulated in the spirit of the disciples. Jesus' presence transforms everything: darkness is overcome by light, futile work again becomes fruitful and promising, and the feeling of weariness and abandonment gives way to new enthusiasm and the certainty that He is with us".

"From that moment onwards, these same sentiments have animated the Church, the Community of the Risen Christ", emphasised the Pope. "While at a first glance it may seem that the darkness of evil and the hardship of everyday life prevail, the Church is sure that upon those who follow the Lord Jesus, the light of Easter shines forever. The great proclamation of the Resurrection instils an intimate joy and invincible hope in the hearts of believers. Christ has truly risen! Today, too, the Church continues to make this joyous proclamation resound: joy and hope flow in hearts, in faces, in gestures and words. As Christians we are all called to communicate this message of resurrection to those we meet, especially those who suffer, those who are alone, those who find

themselves in precarious conditions, the sick, refugees, the marginalised. Let us bring to all a ray of the light of the risen Christ, a sign of His merciful power".

After praying the Regina Coeli, the Pope renewed, "in the hope that the risen Christ brings us", his appeal for the liberation of all those held hostage in zones of armed conflict. "In particular, I wish to recall the Salesian Father Tom Uzhunnalil, abducted in Aden, Yemen on 4 March".
