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The Pope's words at the Regina Coeli prayer

Before the Regina Coeli

After the Regina Coeli

At midday today, 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, which substitutes the Angelus at Easter time:

Before the Regina Coeli

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Today, in Italy and in other countries, we celebrate the Ascension of Jesus into heaven, forty days after Easter. Today's Gospel passage (cf. Mt 28: 16-20), which concludes the Gospel of Matthew, presents to us the moment of the definitive departure of the Risen Lord from His disciples. The scene is set in Galilee, the place where Jesus had called them to follow Him and form the first core of His new community. Now those disciples have gone through the "fire" of the Passion and the Resurrection; at the sight of the Risen Lord, they bow before Him, some however still doubtful. To this frightened community, Jesus leaves the immense task of evangelizing the world; and He embodies this task in the order to teach and baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (cf. v. 19).

The Ascension of Jesus into heaven thus constitutes the end of the mission the Son received from the Father and the beginning of the continuation of this mission by the Church. Indeed, from this moment the presence of Christ in the world is mediated by His disciples, by those who believe in Him and proclaim Him. This mission will last until the end of history and will enjoy every day the assistance of the Risen Lord, Who assures: "I am with

you every day, until the end of the world” (v. 20).

And His presence brings strength in persecutions, comfort in tribulations, support in the difficult situations that the mission and proclamation of the Gospel encounter. The Ascension reminds us of this assistance from Jesus and from His Spirit, that gives confidence and security to our Christian witness in the world. He reveals to us why the Church exists: she exists to proclaim the Gospel, and only for that! And also, the joy of the Church is to announce the Gospel. We, all the baptized, are the Church. Today, we are invited to understand better that God has given us the great dignity and responsibility of announcing it to the world, of making it accessible to humanity. This is our dignity, this is the greatest honour for each of us, for all the baptized!

On this Day of the Ascension, as we turn our gaze to heaven, where Christ ascended and sits at the right hand of the Father, let us strengthen our footsteps on earth to continue with enthusiasm and courage on our journey, our mission of witnessing and living the Gospel in every environment. However, let us be well aware that this does not depend primarily on our strengths, organizational abilities and human resources. Only with the light and strength of the Holy Spirit can we effectively fulfil our mission of making Jesus’ love and tenderness increasingly known and experienced by others.

Let us ask the Virgin Mary to help us contemplate the heavenly goods the Lord promises us, and to become ever more credible witnesses of His Resurrection, of the True Life.

After the Regina Coeli

Dear brothers and sisters,

I wish to express my closeness to my dear brother Pope Tawadros II and to all the Egyptian nation, which two days ago suffered another act of atrocious violence. The victims, which included children, were faithful on their way to a shrine to pray, and they were killed when they refused to deny their Christian faith. May the Lord welcome these brave witnesses, these martyrs, in His peace, and convert the hearts of the violent.

We also pray for the victims of the terrible attack in Manchester last Monday, where so many young lives were cruelly taken. I am close to the families and those who mourn the departed.

Today World Social Communications Day is celebrated, on the theme “*Do not be afraid because I am with you*” (Is 43.5). Social media offer the opportunity to share and disseminate news widely; such news can be good or bad, true or false; let us pray that communication, in all its forms, may be truly constructive, in the service of truth, rejecting prejudices and spreading hope and trust in our time.

I greet you all, dear Romans and pilgrims: families, parish groups, associations, schools.

In particular, I greet the faithful from Colorado; the Bavarian folk groups who are here for the great parade in the centenary of the feast of the *Patrona Bavariae*; and I greet Polish faithful, with a blessing also for those attending the pilgrimage to the Piekary Shrine.

I greet the Comboni Missionaries, who celebrate the 150th anniversary of their founding; the pilgrimage of the Hospitaller Sisters of Ascoli Piceno; groups from Naples, Scandicci, Thiesi, Nonantola, and the pupils of the “Sacred Heart of the Incarnate Word” School in Palermo.

A special thought and encouragement goes to the representatives of voluntary associations promoting organ donation, a “noble and meritorious act” (Catechism, No. 2296). I would also like to welcome the employees of Mediaset Roma, in the hope that their work situation may be resolved, with the aim of the true good of the

company, not merely its profits, but respecting the rights of all people involved: and the first is the right to work.

I would like to conclude with a great greeting to all the people of Genoa and a great thank you for the warm welcome they gave me yesterday. May the Lord bless them abundantly, and may Our Lady of the Guard keep them.

I wish everyone a good Sunday. Please do not forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch, and goodbye!
