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## The Pope's words at the Regina Caeli

At midday today, the Holy Father Francis led the recitation of the Regina Caeli prayer from the library of the Vatican Apostolic Palace. At the end of the Regina Caeli the Pope appeared at the window of his study and imparted his blessing.

The following are the Pope's words of introduction to the Marian prayer:

### Before the Regina Caeli

Dear brothers and sisters, good day!

This Sunday's Gospel passage (see *Jn* 14:15-21) presents two messages: the observance of the commandments and the promise of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus links love for Him to the *observance of the commandments*, and He insists on this in His farewell discourse: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (v. 15); "Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me" (v. 21). Jesus asks us to love Him, but explains: this love does not end in a desire for Him, or in a feeling, no; it demands the willingness to follow His way, that is, the will of the Father. And this is summarised in the commandment of reciprocal love - the first love - given by Jesus Himself: "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another" (*Jn* 13:34). He did not say, "Love me as I have loved you", but "love one another as I have loved you". He loves us without asking us to do the same in return. It is a gratuitous love, that of Jesus: He never asks us to do the same in return. And He wants this gratuitous love of His to become the concrete form of life among us: this is His will.

To help the disciples walk this path, Jesus promises that He will pray to the Father to send "another Paraclete" (v. 16), that is, a consoler, a defender, who will take His place and give them the intelligence to listen and the courage to observe His words. This is the Holy Spirit, who is the Gift of God's love that descends into the heart of the Christian. After Jesus died and rose again, His love is given to those who believe in Him and are baptised

in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Spirit Himself guides them, enlightens them, strengthens them, so that everyone may walk in life, even through adversity and difficulty, in joys and sorrows, remaining on the path of Jesus. This is possible precisely by remaining docile to the Holy Spirit, so that, through His presence at work in us, He may not only console but transform hearts, opening them to truth and love.

Faced with the experience of error and sin - which we all commit - the Holy Spirit helps us not to succumb, and enables us to grasp and live fully the meaning of Jesus's words: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (v. 15). The commandments are not given to us as a kind of mirror in which to see the reflection of our miseries, our inconsistencies. No, they are not like that. The Word of God is given to us as the Word of life, which transforms the heart, life, which renews, which does not judge to condemn, but heals and has forgiveness as its end. God's mercy is thus. A Word that is light for our steps. All this is the work of the Holy Spirit! He is the Gift of God, He is God himself, who helps us to be free people, people who want and know how to love, people who have understood that life is a mission to proclaim the wonders that the Lord accomplishes in those who trust Him.

May the Virgin Mary, model of the Church, who knows how to listen to the Word of God and to welcome the gift of the Holy Spirit, help us to live the Gospel with joy, knowing that we are sustained by the Spirit, the divine fire that warms our hearts and illuminates our steps.

### After the Regina Caeli

Dear brothers and sisters!

Tomorrow will be the centenary of the birth of Saint John Paul II, in Wadowice, Poland. Let us remember him with great affection and gratitude. Tomorrow morning, at 7 o'clock, I will celebrate Holy Mass, which will be broadcast via satellite, at the altar where his mortal remains rest. From Heaven may he continue to intercede for the People of God and for peace in the world.

In some countries liturgical celebrations with the faithful have resumed; in others the possibility is being considered. In Italy, from tomorrow it will be possible to celebrate Holy Mass with the people; but please, let us go ahead with the rules, the prescriptions they give us, so as to protect the health of each person and of the people.

In the month of May, in many parishes it is traditional to celebrate the Masses for First Communion. Clearly, due to the pandemic, this beautiful moment of faith has had to be postponed. Therefore I wish to send an affectionate thought to the boys and girls who should have received the Eucharist for the first time. Dear boys and girls, I invite you to live this time of waiting as an opportunity to prepare yourselves better: praying, reading your catechism to deepen your knowledge of Jesus, and growing in goodness, and in service to others. I wish you a good time of preparation.

Today is the beginning of *Laudato si'* Week, which will end next Sunday, in which we remember the fifth anniversary of the publication of the Encyclical. In these times of the pandemic, in which are more aware of the importance of care for our common home, I hope that all the common reflection and commitment may help to create and strengthen constructive attitudes for the care of creation.

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

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