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The Pope's words at the Regina Caeli

At midday today, Solemnity of Pentecost, 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 present in Saint Peter's Square.

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

Before the Regina Caeli

Dear brothers and sisters, good day!

Today that the square is open, we can return. It is a pleasure!

Today we celebrate the great Feast of Pentecost, in memory of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the first Christian community. Today's Gospel (see *Jn* 20: 19-23) takes us back to the evening of Easter and shows us the risen Jesus who appears in the Upper Room, where the disciples took refuge. They were afraid. "He stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'" (v. 19). These first words pronounced by the Risen One – "Peace be with you" – are to be considered more than a greeting: they express forgiveness, the forgiveness granted to the disciples who, to tell the truth, had abandoned Him. They are words of reconciliation and forgiveness. And we too, when we wish peace to others, are granting forgiveness, and asking for forgiveness as well. Jesus offers His peace precisely to these disciples who are afraid, who find it hard to believe what they have seen, that is, the empty tomb, and who underestimate the testimony of Mary of Magdalene and of the other women. Jesus forgives: He always forgives, and offers His peace to His friends. Do not forget: Jesus never tires of forgiving. We are the ones who tire of asking for forgiveness.

By forgiving and gathering His disciples around Him, Jesus makes them a Church, His Church, which is a community reconciled and ready for mission. Reconciled and ready for mission. When a community is not reconciled, it is not ready for the mission: it is ready for internal discussions and arguments. The encounter with the Risen Lord turns the lives of the Apostles upside down and transforms them into courageous witnesses.

Indeed, immediately afterwards He says, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (v. 21). These words make it clear that the Apostles are sent to prolong the same mission that the Father entrusted to Jesus. “I am sending you”: it is not time to stay locked up, nor to regret: to regret the “good times”, those times spent with the Master. The joy of the Resurrection is great, but it is an expansive joy, which should not keep to oneself: it is to be given. On the Sundays of the Easter Season we first heard this same episode, then the meeting with the disciples of Emmaus, then the Good Shepherd, the farewell discourses and the promise of the Holy Spirit: all this is guided towards strengthening the disciples’ faith - and ours as well - with a view to mission.

And precisely to inspire mission, Jesus gives the Apostles His Spirit. The Gospel says: “He breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” (v. 22). The Holy Spirit is fire that burns away sins and creates new men and women; He is the fire of love with which the disciples can “set the world on fire”, that tender love that favours the little ones, the poor, the excluded... In the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation we have received the Holy Spirit with His gifts: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, fear of the Lord. This last gift - the fear of the Lord - is precisely the opposite of the fear that previously paralysed the disciples: it is love for the Lord, it is the certainty of His mercy and goodness, it is the trust that of being able to move in the direction He indicates, without ever lacking His presence and support.

The Feast of Pentecost renews the awareness that within us dwells the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit. May He grant us, too, the courage to go outside the protective walls of our “Upper Rooms”, our little groups, without getting used to a quiet life or closing ourselves up in sterile habits. Let us now raise our thought to Mary: she was there, with the apostles, when the Holy Spirit came, protagonist of the first community who experienced the wonders of Pentecost, and let us pray that she obtain for the Church an ardent missionary spirit.

After the Regina Caeli

Dear brothers and sisters,

Seven months ago, the Amazon Synod came to an end. Today, the Feast of Pentecost, let us invoke the Holy Spirit so that He might give light and strength to the Church and to society in the Amazon region, sorely tried by the pandemic. Many have been infected and have died, including members of the indigenous peoples who are particularly vulnerable. Through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Amazon, I pray for the poorest and those who lack defences in that precious Region, but also for others throughout the world. And I plead that they may not lack health care.

Today is the National Day of Relief in Italy, to promote solidarity towards the sick. I renew my appreciation to those who, especially in this period, have offered and offer their witness of caring for others.

I wish all of you a Blessed Pentecost Sunday. We have such need of the light and strength of the Holy Spirit! The Church needs it to walk harmoniously and courageously in the witness of the Gospel. And the entire human family needs it so as to move out of this crisis more united and not more divided.

Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your meal and *arrivederci*.
