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The Pope's words at the Regina Caeli prayer

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 Pope's words of introduction to the Marian prayer:

Before the Regina Caeli

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Buongiorno!

The book of the *Acts of the Apostles* (cf. 2:1-11) recounts what happens in Jerusalem 50 days after the Pasch of Jesus. The disciples were gathered in the Upper Room, and the Virgin Mary was with them. The Risen Lord had told them to remain in the city until they received the gift of the Spirit from on High. And this was revealed with a "sound" they suddenly heard come from heaven, like the "rush of a mighty wind" that filled the house they were in (cf. v. 2). Thus, it concerns a real but also symbolic experience. Something that happened but also gives us a symbolic message for our whole life.

This experience reveals that the Holy Spirit is like a strong and freely flowing wind; that is, he brings us strength and brings us freedom: a strong and freely flowing wind. He cannot be controlled, stopped, nor measured; nor can his direction be foreseen. He cannot be understood within our human exigencies – we always try to frame things – he does not let himself be framed in our methods and our preconceptions. The Spirit proceeds from God the Father and from his Son Jesus Christ and bursts upon the Church; he bursts upon each one of us, giving life to our minds and our hearts. As the Creed states: he is "the Lord, the giver of life". He has power because he is God, and he gives life.

On the day of Pentecost, Jesus' disciples were still disoriented and fearful. They did not yet have the courage to go out in the open. We too, at times, prefer to remain within the protective walls of our surroundings. But the Lord knows how to reach us and open the doors to our hearts. He sends upon us the Holy Spirit who envelops

us and overpowers all our hesitations, tears down our defenses, dismantles our false certainties. The Spirit makes us new beings, just as he did that day with the Apostles: he renews us, new beings.

After having received the Holy Spirit they were no longer as they were before – he changed them, but they went out and began to preach Jesus, to preach that Jesus is risen, that the Lord is with us, in such a way that each one understood them in his or her own language. Because the Spirit is universal; he does not remove cultural differences, differences of thought, no. He is for everyone, but each one understands him in his or her own culture, in his or her own language. The Spirit changes the heart, broadens the view of the disciples. He enables them to communicate to everyone the great, limitless works of God, surpassing the cultural confines and religious confines within which they were accustomed to thinking and living. The Apostles, he enables them to reach others, respecting their possibilities of listening and understanding, in the culture and language of each one (vv. 5-11). In other words, the Holy Spirit puts different people in communication, achieving the unity and universality of the Church.

And today this truth tells us so much, this reality of the Holy Spirit, where in the Church there are small groups who always seek division, to separate themselves from others. This is not the Spirit of God. The spirit of God is harmony, is unity, unites differences. A good Cardinal, who was the Archbishop of Genoa, said that the Church is like a river: the important thing is to be inside; if you are a little on that side and a little on the other side is not important; the Holy Spirit creates unity. He used the figure of a river. The important thing is to be inside, in the unity of the Spirit, and not look at the pettiness that you are a little on this side and a little on that side, that you pray in this way or the other.... This is not of god. The Church is for everyone, for everyone, as the Holy Spirit showed on the day of Pentecost.

Today let us ask the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, to intercede so that the Holy Spirit descends in abundance, fills the hearts of the faithful and kindles the fire of his love in everyone.

After the Regina Caeli

Dear brothers and sisters! I entrust to all of your prayers the situation in Colombia, which continues to be worrying. On this solemnity of Pentecost, I pray that the beloved Colombian people may be able to welcome the gifts of the Holy Spirit so that, through serious dialogue, they can find just solutions to the many problems that especially the poorest suffer, due to the pandemic. I exhort everyone to avoid, for humanitarian reasons, behaviours that are damaging for the population in exercising the right to peaceful protest.

Let us also pray for the populations of the city of Goma, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, forced to flee due to the eruption of the great volcano, Mount Nyiragongo.

Tomorrow the Catholic faithful in China celebrate the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Help of Christians and heavenly Patron of their great country. The Mother of the Lord and of the Church is venerated with particular devotion in the Sheshan Shrine in Shanghai, and is invoked assiduously by Christian families, in the trials and hopes of daily life. How good and how necessary it is that the members of a family and of a Christian community are ever more united in love and in faith! In this way, parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren, pastors and faithful can follow the example of the first disciples who, on the solemnity of Pentecost, were united in prayer with Mary as they awaited the Holy Spirit. Therefore, I invite you to accompany with fervid prayer the Christian faithful in China, our dearest brothers and sisters, whom I hold in the depth of my heart. May the Holy Spirit, protagonist of the Church's mission in the world, guide them and help them to be bearers of the happy message, witnesses of goodness and charity, and builders of justice and peace in their country.

And speaking of tomorrow's celebration, Mary Help of Christians, a thought to the Salesian men and women, who work so very much in the Church for those who are furthest away, for the most marginalized, for young people. May the Lord bless you and lead you forward with many holy vocations!

Tomorrow the “*Laudato Si’* Year” concludes. I thank those who participated with many initiatives throughout the world. It is a journey that we must continue together, listening to the cry of the Earth and of the poor. For this reason the “*Laudato Si’* Platform”, a seven-year operative course, will begin immediately to guide families, parish and diocesan communities, schools and universities, hospitals, businesses, groups, movements, organizations, religious institutes to adopt a *sustainable* lifestyle. And best wishes to all those animators who today receive the mandate to spread the Gospel of Creation and to take care of our common home.

I cordially greet all of you, those from Rome, from Italy and other countries. I see here Poland, Mexico, Chile, Panama and so many others.... I see flags there: Colombia. Thank you for being here! In particular I greet the youth of the Focolare Movement.... They are boisterous, these Focolari! And the participants in the “Walk of friendship with the powers of the Order”.

I wish everyone a happy Sunday. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch! *Arrivederci!* Many greetings to you!
