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BOLLETTINO

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 230507a

Sunday 07.05.2023

The Pope's words at the Regina Caeli prayer

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At midday today, the Holy Father appeared at the window of his study in the Vatican Apostolic Palace to pray the *Regina Caeli* with the faithful and pilgrims gathered 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 Gospel of today's Liturgy (*Jn* 14:1-12) is taken from Jesus' last discourse before his death. The disciples' hearts are troubled, but the Lord speaks reassuring words to them, inviting them *not to be afraid*, do not be afraid. He is not abandoning them, but is going to prepare a place for them and to guide them towards that destination. The Lord today thus shows us all the wonderful place *to go*, and, at the same time, tells us *how to get there*, shows us the way. He tells us *where to go and how to get there*.

First of all, *where to go*. Jesus sees the disciples' distress, he sees their fear of being abandoned, just as it happens to us when we are forced to be separated from someone we care for. And so, he says: "I go to prepare a place for you … that where I am you may be also" (vv. 2-3). Jesus uses the familiar image of home, the place of relationships and intimacy. In the Fathers' house – he says to his friends, and to each one of us – there is space for you, you are welcome, you will always be received with the warmth of an embrace, and I am in Heaven to prepare a place for you! He prepares for us that embrace with the Father, the place for all eternity.

Brothers and sisters, this Word is a source of consolation, and it is a source of hope for us. Jesus does not separate from us, but has opened the way for us, anticipating our final destination: the encounter with God the

Father, in whose heart there is a place for each one of us. So, when we experience fatigue, bewilderment and even failure, let us remember where our life is headed. We must not lose sight of the destination, even if we run the risk of of overlooking it, of forgetting the final questions, the important ones: where I am going? Where I am I walking towards? What is it worth living for? Without these questions, we compress our life into the present, we think we must enjoy it as much as possible and end up living day by day, without purpose, without a goal. Our homeland, instead, is in heaven (cf. *Phil* 3:20); let us not forget the greatness and the beauty of our destination!

Once we have discovered the target, we too, like the apostle Thomas in today's Gospel, wonder: *how can we get there*, what is the way? At times, especially when there are major problems to face and there is the sensation that evil is stronger, we ask ourselves: what should I do, what path should I follow? Let us listen to Jesus' answer: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (*Jn* 14:6). "I am the way". Jesus himself is *the way* to follow to live in *truth* and to have *life* in abundance. He is the way and therefore faith in him is not a "package of ideas" in which to believe, but rather a road to be travelled, a journey to undertake, a path with him. It is following Jesus, because he is the way that leads to unfailing happiness. Following Jesus and imitating him, especially with deeds of closeness and mercy towards others. This is the compass for reaching Heaven: loving Jesus, the way, becoming signs of his love on earth.

Brothers and sisters, let us live the present, let us take the present in hand, but let us not be overwhelmed; let us look up, let us look to Heaven, let us remember the goal, let us think that we are called to eternity, to the encounter with God. And, from Heaven to the heart, let us renew today the choice of Jesus, the choice to love him and to walk behind him. May the Virgin Mary, who following Jesus has already arrived at the goal, sustain our hope.

After the *Regina Caeli*

Dear brothers and sisters!

Yesterday two Beatifications were celebrated. In Montevideo, in Uruguay, Bishop Jacinto Vera, who lived in the nineteenth century, was beatified. A pastor who took care of his people, he bore witness to the Gospel with generous missionary zeal, promoting social reconciliation in the tense atmosphere of the civil war. In Granada, in Spain, the young Maria de la Concepción Barrechegurn y García was beatified. Confined to bed by a serious illness, she bore her sufferings with great spiritual fortitude, inspiring admiration and consolation in all. She died in 1927 at the age of 22. A round of applause to the two Blesseds!

I heartily greet you all, Romans and pilgrims from Italy and many countries, in particular the faithful from Australia, Spain, England and students from Saint Thomas College in Lisbon.

I greet the *Meter* Association and its founder Don Fortunato Di Noto, who continue their commitment to preventing and combating violence against minors; today they celebrate the 27th Day of Child Victims; for 30 years they have been defending childhood from abuse and violence. I am close to you, brothers and sisters, and I accompany you with my prayers and affection. Never tire of being on the side of the victim, there is the Christ Child waiting for you, thank you!

I greet the group of fibromyalgia patients of the Medical Area of the Vicariate of Rome; the Sisters of Saint Joseph Benedict Cottolengo; the Lay Association of Mercy; the Lay Camillian Family; the faithful of Pozzuoli, Caraglio and Valle Grana; and the choirs of Empoli and Ponte Buggianese.

A special greeting goes to the new Swiss Guards, their families and friends, and the Swiss authorities who took part in celebrating this distinguished Corps. A round of applause for the Guards, everyone!

Tomorrow in Pompeii the traditional Supplication to Our Lady of the Rosary will be raised, in the Shrine which

Blessed Bartolo Longo wished to dedicate to peace. In this month of May let us pray the Rosary, asking the Blessed Virgin for the gift of peace, especially for beleaguered Ukraine. May the leaders of nations listen to the desire of the people who suffer and who want peace!

I wish everyone a good Sunday. Please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your meal, and *arrivederci*!