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The Pope's words at the Regina Caeli prayer

At midday today, Pentecost Sunday, 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 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!*

Today, the Solemnity of Pentecost, the Gospel takes us to the upper room, where the apostles had taken refuge after the death of Jesus (*Jn* 20: 19-23). The Risen One, on the evening of Passover, presents himself precisely in that situation of fear and anguish and, breathing on them, says: "Receive the Holy Spirit" (v. 22). In this way, with the gift of the Spirit, Jesus wishes to free the disciples from fear, from this fear that keeps them shut away at home, and he frees them so that they may be able to go out and become witnesses and proclaimers of the Gospel. Let us dwell a little on what the Spirit does: he *frees from fear*.

The disciples had closed the doors, the Gospel says, "for fear" (v. 19). The death of Jesus had shocked them, their dreams had been shattered, their hopes had vanished. And they closed themselves inside. Not only in that room, but within, in the heart. I would like to underline this: *closed inside*. How often do we too shut ourselves in? How often, because of some difficult situation, because of some personal or family problem, because of a suffering that marks us or the evil we breathe around us, do we risk slipping slowly into a loss of hope and lack the courage to go on? This happens many times. And then, like the apostles, we shut ourselves in, barricading ourselves in the labyrinth of worries.

Brothers and sisters, this "shutting ourselves in" happens when, in the most difficult situations, we allow fear to take the upper hand and let its loud voice dominate within us. The cause, therefore, is fear: fear of not being able to cope, of having to face everyday battles alone, of risking and then being disappointed, of making the wrong

decisions. Brothers, sisters, fear blocks, fear paralyses. And it also isolates: think of the fear of others, of those who are foreign, who are different, who think in another way. And there can even be the fear of God: that he will punish me, that he will be angry with me... If we give space to these false fears, the doors close: the doors of the heart, the doors of society, and even the doors of the Church! Where there is fear, there is closure. And this will not do.

However, the Gospel offers us the remedy of the Risen One: the Holy Spirit. He frees us from the prisons of fear. When they receive the Spirit, the apostles – we celebrate this today – come out of the upper room and go out into the world to forgive sins and to proclaim the good news. Thanks to him, fears are overcome and doors open. Because this is what the Spirit does: he makes us feel God's proximity, and so thus his love casts out fear, illuminates the way, consoles, sustains in adversity. Faced with fears and closure, then, let us invoke the Holy Spirit for us, for the Church and for the whole world: let a new Pentecost cast out the fears that assail us and revive the flame of God's love.

May Mary Most Holy, the first to be filled with the Holy Spirit, intercede for us.

After the *Regina Caeli*

Dear brothers and sisters!

Last 22 May the 150th anniversary of the death of one of the most eminent figures of literature, Alessandro Manzoni, was commemorated. Through his works, he spoke for victims and for the least: they were always under the protective hand of divine Providence, which "doth create and slay, Who doth chastise then heal in love"; and are sustained also by the proximity of the faithful pastors of the Church, present in the pages of Manzoni's masterpiece.

I invite you to pray for the populations who live on the border between Myanmar and Bangladesh, hard hit by a cyclone: more than eight-hundred thousand people, in addition to the many Rohingya already living in precarious conditions. As I reiterate my closeness to these populations, I address the leaders, so that they may facilitate access to humanitarian aid, and I appeal to the sense of human and ecclesial solidarity to come to the aid of these brothers and sisters of ours.

I warmly greet you all, Romans and pilgrims from Italy and many countries, especially the faithful from Panama and the pilgrimage of the archdiocese of Tulancingo, Mexico, celebrating *Nuestra Señora de los Angeles*; as well as a group from Novellana, Spain. I also greet the faithful of Celeseo, Padua, and of Bari, and I send my blessing to those who have gathered at the Gemelli Hospital to promote initiatives of fraternity with the sick.

Next Wednesday, at the end of the month of May, in Marian shrines throughout the world, moments of prayer are planned in Marian shrines around the world to support the preparations for the next Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. We ask the Virgin Mary to accompany this important stage of the Synod with her maternal protection. And to Her we also entrust the desire for peace of so many populations throughout the world, especially of beleaguered Ukraine.

I wish you all a good Sunday. And please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch and *arrivederci!*
