



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

REGINA CAELI

*Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 15 April 2018*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

At the centre of this Third Sunday of Easter there is the encounter with the Risen One experienced by his disciples, all together. This is evidenced especially by the Gospel which introduces us once again to the Upper Room, where Jesus manifests himself to the Apostles, addressing this greeting to them: “Peace to you” (Lk 24:36). It is the greeting of the Risen Christ, who gives us peace: “Peace to you!”. It is a matter of both inner peace and the peace that is established in interpersonal relationships. The episode recounted by Luke the Evangelist rests heavily on the realism of the Resurrection. Jesus is not a spirit. Indeed, it is not about an apparition of Jesus’ spirit, but of his real presence with his risen body.

Jesus realizes that the Apostles are unsettled in seeing him, that they are bewildered because the reality of the Resurrection is inconceivable to them. They believe they are seeing a spirit; but the Risen Jesus is not a spirit; he is a man with body and soul. This is why, in order to convince them, he says to them: “See my hands and my feet” — he shows them his wounds — “that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have” (v. 39). And since this did not seem enough to overcome the disciples’ disbelief — the Gospel says something interesting: there was so much joy they had within that this joy prevented them from believing it: ‘No, it cannot be! It cannot be so! So much joy is not possible!’. And Jesus, in order to convince them, asks them: “Have you anything here to eat?” (v. 41). They offer him some broiled fish; Jesus takes and eats it in front of them, in order to convince them.

Jesus' insistence on the reality of his Resurrection illuminates the Christian perspective of the body: the body is not an obstacle nor a prison of the soul. The body is created by God, and mankind is not complete if there is no union of body and soul. Jesus, who has triumphed over death and risen in body and soul, helps us to understand that we must have a positive idea of our body. It can become an occasion or instrument of sin, but sin is not provoked by the body, but rather by our moral weakness. The body is a wondrous gift from God, intended, in union with the soul, to express in fullness the image and likeness of Him. Therefore, we are called to have great respect and care for our body and that of others.

Any offense or wound or violence to the body of our neighbour is an affront to God the Creator! My thoughts go, in particular, to the children, the women, the elderly who are physically abused. In the flesh of these people we find the Body of Christ. Christ wounded, mocked, slandered, humiliated, scourged, crucified.... Jesus taught us love. A love that, in his Resurrection, is demonstrated to be more powerful than sin and death, and seeks to redeem all those who experience in their own body the slavery of our time.

In a world where too often self-importance prevails over the weakest and materialism stifles the spirit, today's Gospel passage calls us to be people capable of looking deeply, full of wonder and great joy at having encountered the Risen Lord. It calls us to be people who know how to welcome and appreciate the novelty of life that He sows in history, in order to direct it toward new heavens and the new land. May we be sustained in this journey by the Virgin Mary, to whose maternal intercession we entrust ourselves with faith.

After reciting the Regina Caeli, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, today in Vohipeno, Madagascar, the martyr Lucien Botovasoa was proclaimed Blessed. He was the father of a family and a coherent witness to Christ up to the heroic offering of his life. Arrested and put to death for manifesting his will to remain faithful to the Lord and the Church, he represents for all of us an example of charity and of strength in the faith.

I am deeply disturbed by the current world situation, in which, despite the instruments available to the international community, it is difficult to agree upon a common action in favour of peace in Syria and in other regions of the world. While I pray unceasingly for peace, and I invite all people of good will to continue to do likewise, I once again appeal to all accountable politicians that justice and peace may prevail.

I sadly received news of the killing of three men abducted at the end of March on the Ecuador-Colombia border. I pray for them and for their families, and I am close to the dear people of Ecuador, encouraging them to go forward united and in peace, with the help of the Lord and of his Most Holy Mother.

I entrust to your prayers the people, such as Vincent Lambert in France, little Alfie Evans in England, and others in various countries, who live, at times for long periods, in a state of severe infirmity, medically assisted in their basic needs. These are delicate, very painful and complex situations. Let us pray that every sick person may always be respected in his/her dignity, and cared for in a way suited to his/her condition, with the unanimous support of family members, physicians and other healthcare professionals, with great respect for life.

I warmly greet all of you, pilgrims from Italy and from many parts of the world: families, parish groups, schools, associations. In particular I greet the faithful from La California, as well as those from Arluno, Pontelongo, Scandicci, Genoa-Pegli and Vibo Valentia; the children from the “Daughters of Jesus” school in Modena and the “Friends of Paul vi” group of Pescara.

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