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The Pope's words at the Regina Coeli prayer

Before the Regina Coeli

After the Regina Coeli

At midday today, Second Sunday of Easter or Divine Mercy Sunday, the Holy Father Francis appeared at the window of his study in the Vatican Apostolic Palace to pray the *Regina Coeli* with the faithful and pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square.

The following is the Pope's introduction to the Marian prayer, which substitutes the Angelus at Easter time:

Before the Regina Coeli

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

We know that every Sunday we recall the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, but in this period after Easter Sunday takes on an even more enlightening meaning. In the tradition of the Church, this Sunday, the first after Easter, was called "*in albis*". What does this mean? The expression is intended to recall the rite that was performed by those who had received baptism in the Easter Vigil. Each one of them was given a white robe – "*alba*", "*white*" – to indicate the new dignity of the children of God. Today we still do this: newborns are offered a little symbolic white robe, whereas adults wear a real one as we have seen in the Easter Vigil. And that white robe, in the past, was worn for a week, up to this Sunday, and from this there derives the name *in albis deponendis*, which means the Sunday in which we take off the white robe. And in this way, once the white robe is removed, the neophytes began their new life in Christ and in the Church.

There is another thing. In the Jubilee of the Year 2000, St. John Paul II established that this Sunday be dedicated to Divine Mercy. It is true, it was a beautiful intuition: it was the Holy Spirit Who inspired him in this. A

few months ago we concluded the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, and this Sunday invites us to take up again with renewed strength the grace that comes from God's mercy. Today's Gospel is the account of the apparition of the risen Christ before the disciples gathered in the Cenacle (cf. John 20:19-31). St. John writes that Jesus, after greeting His disciples, said to them: "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you". After saying this, He performs the gesture of breathing onto them and adds: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them" (vv. 21.23). Here is the meaning of mercy that is presented precisely on the day of Jesus' resurrection, as forgiveness of sins. The Risen Jesus transmitted to His Church, as her first task, the same mission of taking the concrete announcement of forgiveness. This is the first task, proclaiming forgiveness. This visible sign of His mercy carries within it the peace of the heart and the joy of the renewed encounter with the Lord.

Mercy in the light of Easter allows itself to be perceived as a *true form of knowledge*. And this is important: mercy is a true form of knowledge. We know that it is known in many forms. It is known through the senses, it is known through intuition, through reason and other forms. Well, it may also be known through the experience of mercy, because mercy opens the *door of the mind* to understand better the mystery of God and of our personal existence. Mercy helps us understand that violence, rancour and revenge do not have any meaning, and the first victim is he who lives this sentiments, because he is deprived of his own dignity. Mercy also opens the *door of the heart* and allows us to express closeness, especially with those who are alone or marginalized, because it makes them feel they are brothers and sons of one Father. It promotes the acknowledgment of those who are in need of consolation and helps us find the right words to give comfort.

Brothers and sisters, mercy warms the heart and makes us sensitive to the needs of our brothers with sharing and participation. Mercy, in short, commits us all to being instruments of justice, of reconciliation and peace. Let us never forget that mercy is the keystone in the life of faith, and the concrete form by which we give visibility to Jesus' resurrection.

Mary, Mother of Mercy, help us believe and live all this with joy.

After the Regina Coeli

Dear brothers and sisters,

Yesterday in Oviedo, Spain, the priest Luis Antonio Rosa Ormières was proclaimed Blessed. He lived in the nineteenth century, dedicated his many human and spiritual qualities to service in education, and for this purpose founded the Congregation of the Sisters of the Guardian Angel. May his example and his intercession help, in particular, those who work in schools and in the field of education.

I offer my heartfelt greeting to all of you, Roman faithful and pilgrims from Italy and many other countries, in particular the Confraternity of St. Sebastian from Kerkrade in the Netherlands, the Nigerian Catholic Secretariat and the *Liebfrauen* parish of Bocholt, Germany.

I greet Polish pilgrims, and express my lively appreciation of the initiative of Caritas Poland in support of many families in Syria. A special greeting goes to the devotees of Divine Mercy, gathered today in the church of Santo Spirito in Sassia, and to the participants in the "Race for Peace", a relay race that starts today from this Square, ending in Wittenberg in Germany.

I greet the many groups of young people, especially the confirmands or recently confirmed – there are many of you! – from the dioceses of Piacenza-Bobbio, Trento, Cuneo, Milano, Lodi, Cremona, Bergamo, Brescia and Vicenza, and also the "Masaccio" School of Treviso and the "San Carpofo" Institute of Como.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who in this period have sent me messages with Easter greetings. I

exchange them with all my heart, invoking for each one of you and for every family the grace of the Risen Lord. I wish you all a good Sunday, and please, do not forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch, and goodbye!
