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The Pope's words at the Regina Coeli prayer

Before the Regina Coeli

After the Regina Coeli

At midday today, Fourth Sunday of Easter, 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:

Before the Regina Coeli

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

In the Gospel reading (cf. John 10:1-10) of this Sunday "of the Good Shepherd", Jesus presents Himself with two images that complement one another: the image of the shepherd and the image of the door of the sheepfold. The flock, of which we are all part, inhabits a sheepfold that serves as refuge, where the sheep dwell and rest after the exhaustion of their journey. And the sheepfold is an enclosure with a door, where there is a guardian. Different people approach the flock: one enters the enclosure passing through the door and one "climbs in by another way" (v. 1). The former is the shepherd; the latter is a stranger, who does not love the sheep and wants to enter for other reasons. Jesus identifies Himself with the former and manifests a relation of familiarity with the sheep, expressed through His voice, with which He calls them and which they recognize and follow (cf. v.3). He calls them to lead them out to grassy pastures, where they find good nourishment.

The second image with which Jesus presents Himself is that of the "door of the sheep" (v. 7). Indeed, He says: "I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved" (v. 9), that is, he will have life, and have it abundantly (cf. v. 10). Christ, the Good Shepherd, became the door of humanity's salvation because He offered His life for His

sheep.

Jesus, Good Shepherd and door of the sheep, is a leader Whose authority is expressed in service, a leader Who gives His life to command and does not ask others to sacrifice it. We can trust such a leader, like the sheep that hear the voice of their shepherd, because they know that with him they go to good and abundant pastures. A signal suffices, a call and they follow, obey, set out on the way guided by the voice of the one they sense as a friendly presence, strong and gentle at the same time, who directs, protects, consoles and medicates.

Christ is thus for us. There is a dimension of the Christian experience that, perhaps, we leave somewhat in the shade: the spiritual and affective dimension, our feeling of being connected by a special bond to the Lord as the sheep to their shepherd. Sometimes we rationalize faith too much and we risk losing our perception of the tone of that voice, of the voice of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, Who inspires and fascinates, as happened to the two disciples of Emmaus, whose heart burned while the Risen One was speaking along the way. It is the wonderful experience of feeling that you are loved by Jesus. Ask yourselves the question: "Do I feel loved by Jesus?" For Him, we are never strangers, but friends and brothers. Yet it is not always easy to distinguish the voice of the Good Shepherd. Be careful. There is always the risk of being distracted by the din of so many other voices. Today we are invited not to allow ourselves to be diverted by the false wisdom of this world, but to follow Jesus, the Risen One, as the only sure guide Who gives meaning to our life.

On this World Day of Prayer for Vocations – in particular for priestly vocations, so that the Lord will send us good Pastors — we invoke the Virgin Mary: may she accompany the ten new priests I ordained a short while ago. I have asked four of them from the diocese of Rome to come to give the blessing together with me. May Our Lady support with her help all those called by Him, so that they are prompt and generous in following His voice.

After the Regina Coeli

Dear brothers and sisters,

Yesterday, in Gerona, Spain, Antonio Arribas Hortigüela and six companions of the Religious of the Congregation of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart were proclaimed Blessed. These faithful and heroic disciples of Jesus were killed out of hatred for the faith at a time of religious persecution. May their martyrdom, accepted out of love for God and fidelity to their vocation, awaken in the Church the desire to witness with fortitude the Gospel of Charity.

I greet you all, Roman faithful and pilgrims, in particular those from Warsaw, Aalen (Germany), Liebenau (Austria), Chennai (India) and Texas (United States of America), as well as the teachers and students of the "Corderius College" of Amersfoort (Netherlands).

I greet the "Meter" Association, which for over twenty years has opposed every form of abuse of minors. Thank you. Thank you so much for your commitment in the Church and in society, and go ahead with courage!

I greet the participants in the national gathering of the Arm of Carabineers, the delegation from the Independent Police Union, the faithful of Pomezia and Palestrina, the Holy Sepulchre Association of Foligno, the Valsolda Philharmonic and young people from Modica. [The Valsolda Philharmonic Orchestra performed, and the Pope commented: "Good!"].

Tomorrow we will address our Supplication to Our Lady of the Rosary of Pompeii. In this month of May we pray the Rosary for peace, in particular. Remember: let us pray the Rosary for peace, as requested by the Virgin of Fátima, where I will go on a pilgrimage in a few days, on the occasion of the centenary of the first apparition.

I wish you all a good Sunday. And, please, do not forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch, and goodbye!
