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## The Pope's words at the Regina Caeli prayer

At midday today, 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!*

In this Sunday's Gospel passage (*Jn 15:9-17*) after having compared Himself to the vine and us to the branches, Jesus, explains what *fruit* is borne by those who remain united to Him: this fruit is *love*. He again repeats the key-verb: *abide*. He invites us to abide in his love so that his joy may be in us and our joy may be full (vv. 9-11). To abide in Jesus' love.

Let us ask ourselves: what this love is in which Jesus tells us to abide to have his joy? What is this love? It is the love that originates *in the Father*, because "God is love" (1 *Jn 4:8*). This love of God, of the Father, flows like a river in his Son Jesus and through Him comes to us, his creatures. Indeed, he says: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you" (*Jn 15:9*). The love Jesus gives us is the same with which the Father loves Him: pure love, unconditional, freely given love. It cannot be bought, it is free. By giving it to us, Jesus treats us like friends – with this love –, making us know the Father, and he involves us in his same mission for the life of the world.

And then, we can ask ourselves the question, how do we abide in this love? Jesus says: "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love" (v. 10). Jesus summarized his commandments in a single one, this: "that you love one another as I have loved you" (v. 12). To love *as* Jesus means to offer yourself in service, at the service of your brothers and sisters, as he did in washing the feet of the disciples. It also means going outside of ourselves, detaching ourselves from our own human certainties, from earthly comforts, in order to open ourselves up to others, especially those in greater need. It means making ourselves available, as we are

and with what we have. This means to love not in word but in deeds.

To love like Christ means saying 'no' to other 'loves' that the world offers us: love of money – those who love money do not love as Jesus loves –, love of success, vanity, [love] of power.... These deceptive paths of "love" distance us from the Lord's love and lead us to become more and more selfish, narcissistic, overbearing. And being overbearing leads to a degeneration of love, to the abuse others, to making our loved ones suffer. I am thinking of the unhealthy love that turns into violence – and how many women are victims of violence these days. This is not love. To love as the Lord loves us means to appreciate the people beside us, to respect their freedom, to love them as they are, not as we want them to be, gratuitously. Ultimately, Jesus asks us to abide in his love, to dwell in his love, not in our ideas, not in our own self-worship. Those who dwell in self-worship live in the mirror: always looking at themselves. Those who overcome the ambition to control and manage others. Not controlling, serving them. Opening our heart to others, this is love, giving ourselves to others.

Dear brothers and sisters, where does this abiding in the Lord's love lead? Where does it lead us? Jesus told us: "That my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (v. 11). And the Lord wants the joy he possesses, because he is in complete communion with the Father, to be in us insofar as we are united to Him. The joy of knowing we are loved by God despite our infidelities enables us to face the trials of life confidently, makes us live through crises so as to emerge from them better. Our being true witnesses consists in living this joy, because joy is the distinctive sign of a true Christian. True Christians are not sad; they always have that joy inside, even in difficult moments.

May the Virgin Mary help us to *abide in Jesus' love* and to grow in love for everyone, witnessing to the joy of the Risen Lord.

### After the Regina Caeli

Dear brothers and sisters!

With particular concern I am following the events that are happening in Jerusalem. I pray that it may be a place of encounter and not of violent clashes, a place of prayer and peace. I invite everyone to seek shared solutions so that the multireligious and multicultural identity of the Holy City is respected and brotherhood prevails. Violence begets violence. Enough with the clashes.

And let us also pray for the victims of the terrorist attack that took place yesterday in Kabul: an inhumane action that struck so many girls as they were leaving school. Let us pray for each one of them and for their families. And may God give peace to Afghanistan.

In addition, I would like to express my concern for the tensions and violent clashes in Colombia, which have caused deaths and injuries. There are many Colombians here; let us pray for your homeland.

Today, in Agrigento, Rosario Angelo Livatino, a martyr of justice and faith, was beatified. In his service to the community as an upstanding judge, who never allowed himself to become corrupt, he strived to judge not to condemn but to rehabilitate. He always places his work "under the protection of God"; for this reason he became a witness to the Gospel up to his heroic death. May his example be for everyone, especially for judges, an incentive to be loyal defenders of lawfulness and freedom. A round of applause for the new Blessed!

I offer a heartfelt greeting to all of you, people of Rome and pilgrims. Thank you for being here! In particular, I greet the people suffering from fibromyalgia: I express my closeness to them and I hope that attention to this sometimes overlooked disease may grow.

And we cannot forget mothers! This Sunday, in many countries Mother's Day is celebrated. Let us greet all the

mothers in the world, even those who are no longer with us. A round of applause for mothers!

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

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