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The Pope's words at the Regina Caeli prayer

At midday today, Monday of the Angel, 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 Gospel lets us relive the women's encounter with the Risen Jesus on Easter morning. It thus reminds us that it was them, the women disciples, who were the first to see him and encounter him.

We might ask ourselves: why them? For a very simple reason: because they were the first to go to the tomb. Like all the disciples, they too were suffering because of the way the story of Jesus seemed to have ended; but, unlike the others, they do not stay at home paralyzed by sadness and fear: in the early morning, at sunrise, they go to honour the body of Jesus, bringing aromatic ointments. The tomb had been sealed and they wonder who could have removed that stone, so heavy (cf. *Mk* 16:1-3). But their wish to carry out this gesture of love prevails over all else. They are not discouraged, they overcome their fears and their anguish. This is the way to find the Risen One: to come out from our fears, to come out from our anguish.

Let us run through the scene described in the Gospel: the women arrive, they see the empty tomb and, "with fear and great joy", they run, the text says, "to tell his disciples" (*Mt* 28:8). Now, just as they are going to give this news, Jesus comes towards them. Let us take good note of this: Jesus meets them while they are going to announce him. This is beautiful: Jesus meets them while they are going to announce him. When we proclaim the Lord, the Lord comes to us. At times we think that the way to be close to God is that of keeping him close to us; because then, if we reveal ourselves and start to talk about it, then judgements, criticisms come, perhaps we do not know how to respond to certain questions or provocations, and so it is better not to talk about it, and to close

up: no Instead, the Lord comes while we proclaim him. You always find the Lord on the path of proclamation. Proclaim the Lord and you will encounter him. Seek the Lord and you will encounter him. Always on the path, this is what the women teach us: we encounter Jesus by witnessing him. We encounter Jesus by witnessing him.

Let us give an example. At times we will have received wonderful news, such as, for example, the birth of a child. So, one of the first things we do is to share this happy announcement with friends: "You know, I have had a baby... He is beautiful". And, by telling it, we also repeat it to ourselves and somehow make it come alive again for us. If this happens for good news, every day or on some important days, it happens infinitely more for Jesus, who is not only good news, nor even the best news of life, no, but he is life itself, he is "the resurrection and the life" (*Jn 11:25*). Every time we announce it, not by propaganda or proselytizing – that, no: proclaiming is one thing, propaganda and proselytism are another matter – every time we proclaim him, the Lord comes towards us. He comes with respect and love, as the most beautiful gift to share, Jesus dwells in us every time we proclaim him.

Let us think again of the women of the Gospel: there was the sealed stone and despite this, they go to the tomb; there was an entire city that had seen Jesus on the cross and nevertheless they go to the city to announce that he is alive. Dear brothers and sisters, when one encounters Jesus, no obstacle can prevent us from proclaiming him. If instead we keep his joy for ourselves, perhaps it is because we have not yet truly encountered him.

Brothers, sisters, before the women's experience we ask ourselves: tell me, when was the last time you bore witness to Jesus? When was the last time I bore witness to Jesus? Today, what shall I do so that the people I meet receive the joy of his proclamation? And again: can someone say: this person is serene, happy, good, because he has met Jesus? Can this be said of every one of us? Let us ask Our Lady to help us be joyful proclaimers of the Gospel.

After the Regina Caeli

Dear brothers and sisters!

Today is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the so-called Belfast or Good Friday Agreement, which put an end to the violence that had troubled Northern Ireland for decades. With a spirit of gratitude, I pray to the God of peace that what was accomplished in that historic step be consolidated for the benefit of all men and women of the Isle of Ireland.

I reiterate my wishes for a happy Easter to you all, Romans and pilgrims from various countries: "Christ is risen; he is risen indeed". I greet you warmly, especially the teenagers of the parishes of Vigevano, the young people of Pisa and those of Appiano Gentile.

I thank all of you who sent your good wishes to me in these days. I am especially grateful for your prayers: by the intercession of the Virgin Mary, may God may God reward each one with his gifts!

And I hope everyone will spend these days of the Octave of Easter, in which the celebration of Christ's Resurrection is extended, in the joy of faith. Let us persevere in invoking the gift of peace for the whole world, especially for dear and tormented Ukraine.

Happy Monday of the Angel! Please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch and *arrivederci*.
