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The Pope's words at the Regina Caeli prayer

At midday today, third Sunday of Easter, the Holy Father appeared at the window of his study in the Vatican Apostolic Palace to pray the Regina Caeli with approximately fifteen thousand faithful and pilgrims present 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*, happy Sunday!

Today the Gospel takes us back to the evening of Passover. The apostles are gathered in the Upper Room, when the two disciples return from Emmaus and tell of their encounter with Jesus. And as they are expressing the joy of their experience, the Risen One appears to all the community. Jesus arrives precisely *while they are sharing the story of the encounter with Him*. This makes me think that it is good to share, it is important to share faith. This account makes us reflect on the importance of sharing faith in the risen Jesus.

Every day we are bombarded with a thousand messages. Many of them are superficial and useless, others reveal an indiscreet curiosity or, worse still, arise from gossip and malice. They are news that have no purpose; on the contrary, they do harm. But there is also good news, positive and constructive, and we all know how good it is for us to hear good things, and how much better we are when this happens. And it is also good to share the realities that, for better or worse, have touched our lives, so as to help others.

And yet there is something we often struggle to talk about. What do we struggle to talk about? The most beautiful thing we have to tell: *our encounter with Jesus*. Every one of us has encountered the Lord and we struggle to speak about it. Each one of us could say so much about this: seeing how the Lord has touched us, and sharing this, not by being a lecturer to others, but by sharing the unique moments in which we perceived the Lord alive and close, who kindled joy in our hearts or dried our tears, who transmitted confidence and

consolation, strength and enthusiasm, or forgiveness, tenderness. These encounters, that every one of us has had with Jesus, share them and transmit them. It is important to do this in the family, in the community, with friends. Just as it does good to talk about the good inspirations that have guided us in life, the good thoughts and feelings that help us so much to go forward, and also about our efforts and labours to understand and to progress in the life of faith, perhaps even to repent and retrace our steps. If we do this, Jesus, just as He did with the disciples of Emmaus on the evening of Passover, will surprise us and make our encounters and our environments even more beautiful.

Let us try, then, to remember, now, a powerful moment of our life of faith, a decisive encounter with Jesus. Everyone has had it, each one of us has had an encounter with the Lord. Let us take a moment's silence and think: when did I find the Lord? When has the Lord been close to me? Let us think in silence. And this encounter with the Lord, did I share it to give glory to the Lord? And also, have I listened to others, when they have told me about this encounter with Jesus?

May Our Lady help us to share the faith to make our communities ever greater places of encounter with the Lord.

After the Regina Caeli

Dear brothers and sisters!

I am following in prayer and with concern, even pain, the news that has reached us in the last few hours regarding the worsening of the situation in Israel, due to the intervention by Iran. I make a heartfelt appeal to halt any action that might fuel a spiral of violence, with the risk of dragging the Middle East into an even greater military conflict.

No-one should threaten the existence of others. May all the nations instead take the side of peace, and help Israelis and Palestinians live in two States, side by side, in safety. It is their deep and legitimate desire, and it is their right! Two neighbouring States.

Let there be a ceasefire in Gaza soon, and let us pursue the paths of *negotiation*, with determination. Let us help that population, plunged into a humanitarian catastrophe; let the hostages kidnapped months ago be released! So much suffering! Let us pray for peace. No more war, no more attacks, no more violence! Yes to dialogue and yes to peace!

Today in Italy marks the one-hundredth National Day for the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, on the theme: "Demand for the future: young people between disenchantment and desire". I encourage this great University to continue its important formative service, faithful to its mission and attentive to the needs of the young and of society today.

I heartily welcome all of you, Romans and pilgrims from Italy and many countries. In particular, I greet the faithful of Los Angeles, Houston, Nutley and Riverside in the United States of America; as well as the Polish people, especially – how many Polish flags there are! – those of Bodzanów and the young volunteers of the Team for Aid to the Eastern Church. I welcome and encourage the leaders of the Sant'Egidio Community from various Latin American countries.

I greet the ACLI volunteers engaged in advocacy throughout Italy; the groups from Trani, Arzachena, Montelibretti; the young people of the profession of the faith from the parish of *Santi Silvestro e Martino* in Milan; the candidates for confirmation from Pannarano; and the "Art and Faith" groups of young people of the Sisters of

Saint Dorothy.

I affectionately greet the children from various parts of the world, who have come to remind us from 25 to 26 May the Church will hold its first World Children's Day. Thank you! I invite everyone to accompany the journey towards this event – the first Children's Day – with prayer, and I thank those who are working to prepare for it. And to you, boys and girls, I say: I am waiting for you! All of you! We need your joy and your wish for a better world, a world at peace. Let us pray, brothers and sisters, for the children who suffer because of the wars – there are many of them! – in Ukraine, Palestine, Israel, and in other parts of the world, in Myanmar. Let us pray for them, and for peace.

I wish you all a good Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. I greet the young people of the *Immacolata*. Enjoy your lunch, and *arrivederci!*
