



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS *REGINA CÆLI* Saint Peter's Square

Sunday, 28 May

2017 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today, in Italy and in other countries, we celebrate Jesus' Ascension into heaven, which took place 40 days after Easter. The Gospel passage (cf. Mt 28:16-20), which concludes the Gospel of Matthew, presents the moment of the Risen One's final farewell to his disciples. The scene is set in Galilee, the place where Jesus had called them to follow him and to form the first nucleus of his new community. Now those disciples have traversed the "fire" of the Passion and of the Resurrection; at the visit of the Risen Lord they prostrate themselves before him, although some remain doubtful. Jesus gives this frightened community the immense task of evangelizing the world; and he reinforces this responsibility with the command to teach and baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (v. 19).

Jesus' Ascension into heaven thus constitutes the end of the mission that the Son received from the Father and the beginning of the continuation of this mission on the part of the Church. From this moment, from the moment of the Ascension, in fact, Christ's presence in the world is mediated by his disciples, by those who believe in him and proclaim him. This mission will last until the end of history and every day will have the assistance of the Risen Lord, who assures: "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (v. 20).

His presence brings strength during persecution, comfort in tribulations, support in the difficult situations that the mission and the proclamation of the Gospel will encounter. The Ascension reminds us of Jesus' assistance and of his Spirit that gives confidence, gives certainty to our Christian witness in the world. He reveals to us the reason for the Church's existence: the Church exists to proclaim the Gospel, for this alone! So too, the joy of the Church is proclaiming the Gospel. The Church is all of us baptized people. Today we are called to better understand that God has given us the great dignity and responsibility of proclaiming him to the world, of making him accessible to all mankind. This is our dignity; this is the greatest honour of each one of us, of all the baptized!

On this Feast of the Ascension, as we turn our gaze toward heaven, where Christ has ascended and sits at the right hand of the Father, we strengthen our steps on earth so as to continue our journey — our mission of witnessing to and living the Gospel in every environment — with enthusiasm and courage. However, we are well aware that this does not depend first and foremost on our strengths, on our organizational abilities or human resources. Only with the light and strength of the Holy Spirit can we effectively fulfil our mission of leading others to know and increasingly experience Jesus' tenderness.

Let us ask the Virgin Mary to help us contemplate the heavenly benefits that the Lord promises us, and to become ever more credible witnesses to his Resurrection, to the true Life.

After the Regina Caeli:

Dear brothers and sisters, I again wish to express my closeness to my dear brother, Pope Tawadros ii, and to the entire nation of Egypt which, two days ago, was struck by another act of savage violence. The victims, including children, were faithful who were on their way to a shrine to pray, and were killed after they refused to deny their Christian faith. May the Lord welcome these courageous witnesses, these martyrs, into his peace; and may he convert the hearts of terrorists.

Let us also pray for the victims of last Monday's dreadful attack in Manchester, where so many young lives were cruelly shattered. I am close to the families and to those who are mourning.

Today we celebrate World Communications Day, on the theme: "*Fear not, for I am with you*" (Is 43:5). The means of social communications offer the opportunity to instantaneously share and spread news on a large scale; this news can be good or bad, true or false. Let us pray that communication, in all its forms, may be actually constructive, at the service of truth, rejecting prejudice, and may it spread hope and trust in our time.

I greet you all, dear people of Rome and pilgrims: families, parish groups, associations, schools.

In particular I greet the faithful from Colorado; the Bavarian folk groups who have come for the great parade on the centenary of the Feast of the Patroness of Bavaria; I greet the Polish faithful, with a blessing also for those taking part in the pilgrimage to the Shrine of Piekarz.

I greet the Comboni Missionaries who are celebrating 150 years since their foundation; the pilgrimage of the Hospitaler Sisters of Ascoli Piceno; the groups from Naples, Scandicci, Thiesi, Nonantola, and the students from Palermo's *Sacro Cuore del Verbo Incarnato* school.

A special thought and encouragement go to the representatives of the volunteer associations that promote organ donation, "a noble and meritorious act" (*Catechism*, n. 2296). I also greet the

workers from *Mediaset Roma*, with the hope that their work situation may be resolved, with its aim of being the true good of the company, not limited to mere profit but respecting the rights of all the people involved: the first of which is the right to work.

I would like to conclude with a heartfelt greeting to the people of Genoa and with a big thank-you for the warm welcome they gave me yesterday. May the Lord bless them abundantly and may Our Lady of the Guard watch over them.

I wish everyone a happy Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch!

Arrivederci!