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The Pope's words at the Regina Caeli prayer

At midday today, Monday of the Angel, the Holy Father Francis led the recitation of the Regina Caeli in the Library of the Vatican Apostolic Palace.

The following are the Pope's words of introduction to the Marian prayer:

Before the Regina Caeli

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno*.

The Monday after Easter is also called the *Monday of the Angel* because we recall the meeting of the angel with the women who arrived at Jesus's tomb (cf. Mt 28:1-15). The angel said to them: "I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has risen (vv. 5-6). This expression "He has risen" goes beyond human capacity. Even the women who had gone to the tomb and had found it open and empty could not confirm "He has risen", but they could only say that the tomb was empty. "He has risen" is a message. Only an angel could say that Jesus had risen, only an angel with the authority to be the bearer of a heavenly message, with the power given by God to say it, just as an angel — only an angel — had been able to say to Mary: "you will conceive a son, [...] and he will be called the Son of the Most High" (cf. Lk 1:31-32). This is why we call it Monday of the Angel because only an angel with the power of God can say Jesus has risen.

Matthew the evangelist narrates that on the dawn of Easter "there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it" (cf. v. 2). That large stone, which was supposed to be the seal of the victory of evil and death, was put underfoot, it became the footstool of the angel of the Lord. All of the plans and defenses of Jesus' enemies and persecutors were in vain. All the seals had crumbled. The image of the angel sitting on the stone of the sepulchre is the concrete, visible, manifestation of God's victory over evil, the manifestation of Christ's victory over the prince of this world, the manifestation of the victory of light over darkness. Jesus' tomb was not opened by a physical phenomenon, but by the Lord's intervention. The angel's appearance, Matthew continues, "was like lightning, and his raiment white

as snow". (v. 3). These details are symbols that confirm the intervention of God himself, bearer of a new era, of the last times of history because with Jesus' resurrection, begins the last times of history which could last thousands of years, but they are the last times.

There is a twofold reaction to this intervention of God. That of the guards who cannot face the overwhelming power of God and are shaken by an interior earthquake: they became like dead men (cf. v. 4). The power of the Resurrection overthrows those who had been used to guarantee the apparent victory of death. And what did those guards have to do? Go to those who had given them orders to keep guard and tell the truth. They had a choice to make: either tell the truth or allow themselves to be convinced by those who had given them the order to keep guard. And the only way to convince them was money. And those poor people, poor people, sold the truth, and with the money in their pockets they went on to say: "No, the disciples came and robbed the body". The "lord" money, even here, in Christ's resurrection, is capable of having the power to deny it. The women's reaction is very different because they were expressly invited by the angel of the Lord not to be afraid: "Do not be afraid!" (v. 5) and not to seek Jesus in the tomb. In the end, they were not afraid.

We can reap a precious teaching from the angel's words: let us never tire of seeking the risen Christ who gives life in abundance to those who meet him. To find Christ means to discover peace in our hearts. The same women of the Gospel, after initially being shaken — that is understandable — experience great joy in finding the Master alive (cf. vv. 8-9). In this Easter Season, my wish is that everyone might have the same spiritual experience, welcoming the joyful proclamation of Easter in our hearts, in our homes and in our families: "Christ, having risen from the dead dies now no more; death will no longer have dominion over him" (Communion Antiphon). This is the Easter proclamation: "Christ is alive, Christ accompanies my life, Christ is beside me". Christ knocks at the door of my heart so I can let him in, Christ is alive. In these days of Easter, it would be good for us to repeat this: "the Lord is alive".

This certainty moves us to pray today and throughout the Easter Season: "*Regina Caeli, Laetare* — that is, Queen of Heaven, rejoice". The angel Gabriel had greeted her thus the first time: "Rejoice, full of grace!" (cf. Lk 1:28). Now Mary's joy is complete: Jesus lives, Love has conquered. May this be our joy as well!

After the Regina Caeli

Dear brothers and sisters, in the Easter atmosphere that characterizes this day, I affectionately greet all of you who are participating in this moment of prayer through the means of social communication. In particular my thoughts turn to the elderly, the sick, connected from their own homes or retirement and nursing homes. To them, I send a word of encouragement and gratitude for their witness: I am close to them. And to everyone, I hope you can live with faith these days of the Octave of Easter in which the memory of Christ's resurrection is prolonged. Seize every good opportunity to be witnesses of the joy and peace of the Risen Lord. Happy, serene and holy Easter to everyone! And please do not forget to pray for me.

Enjoy your lunch.

Arrivederci!
