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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!*

The Gospel for today, the Sixth Sunday of Easter, speaks to us about the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus calls the *Paraclete* (cf. *Jn* 14:15-17). *Paraclete* is a word that comes from Greek, which means both *consoler* and *advocate* [editor's note: the word also means 'lawyer' in Italian] at the same time. This means that the Holy Spirit never leaves us alone, he is near to us, like an advocate who assists the accused person, standing by his or her side. And he suggests to us how to defend ourselves from those who accuses us. Let us recall that the great accuser is always the devil, who puts sin inside of you, the desire to sin, wickedness. Let us reflect on these two aspects: his closeness to us, and his assistance against those who accuse us.

His *closeness*: the Holy Spirit, Jesus says, "dwells with you and will be in you" (cf. v. 17). He never abandons us. The Holy Spirit wants to stay with us: he is not a passing guest who comes to pay us a courtesy visit. He is a companion for life, a stable presence. He is Spirit and desires to dwell in our spirits. He is patient and stays with us even when we fall. He remains because he truly loves us; he does not pretend to love us, and then leave us alone when things get difficult. No. He is faithful, he is transparent, he is authentic.

On the contrary! If we find ourselves in a moment of trial, the Holy Spirit consoles us, bringing us God's pardon and strength. And when he places our errors before us and corrects us, he does so gently – there is always the timbre of tenderness and the warmth of love in his voice that speaks to the heart. Certainly, the Spirit, the Paraclete, is demanding, because he is a true, faithful friend, who does not hide anything, who suggests what

needs to change and where growth needs to take place. But when he corrects us, he never humiliates us, and never instills distrust. Rather, he conveys the certainty that with God, we can always make it. This is his closeness. This is a beautiful certainty.

The Spirit as Paraclete is the second aspect. He is our *advocate* and he defends us. He defends us from those who accuse us: from ourselves when we do not appreciate and forgive ourselves, when we go so far as perhaps saying to ourselves that we have failed, that we are good for nothing; from the world who discards those who do not fit into its dictates and patterns; from the devil who is the “accuser” *par excellence* and the divider (cf. *Rev 12:10*), and does everything to make us feel incapable and unhappy.

In the face of all these accusing thoughts, the Holy Spirit suggests to us how to respond. How? The Paraclete, Jesus says, is the One who “reminds us of everything Jesus told us” (cf. *Jn 14:26*). He *reminds* us, therefore, of the words of the Gospel, and thus enables us to respond to the accusing devil, not with our own words, but with the Lord’s own words. He reminds us, above all, that Jesus always spoke of the Father who is in heaven, he made the Father known to us, and revealed the Father’s love for us, that we are his children. If we call on the Spirit, we will learn to embrace and recall the most important truth of life that protects us from the accusations of the evil one. And what is the most important truth in life? That we are beloved children of God. We are God’s beloved children: this is the most important truth, and the Spirit reminds us of this.

Brothers and sisters, let us ask ourselves today: Do we call on the Holy Spirit? Do we pray to him often? Let us not forget about the one who is close to us, or rather, is within us! Then: Do we listen to his voice, both when he encourages us and when he corrects us? Do we respond with Jesus’s words to the accusations from the evil one, to the “tribunals” of life? Do we remember that we are beloved children of God? May Mary make us docile to the voice of the Holy Spirit and sensitive to his presence.

After the Regina Caeli

Dear brothers and sisters,

In the past few days, we have once again witnessed armed conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians in which innocent people have lost their lives, including women and children. I hope that the cease fire that was recently reached will become stable, that the weapons be silenced, because security and stability are never obtained through the use of arms, but rather, every hope of peace will continue to be destroyed.

I heartfully greet all of you, people from Rome and pilgrims from Italy and many other countries, in particular, the faithful from Canada, Singapore, Malaysia and Spain.

I greet the leaders of the Saint Egidio Community from 25 African countries, as well as the Administration and Professors from the University of Radom in Poland. I greet Caritas Internationalis who is meeting and has elected a new president. Courageously move ahead on the way of reform!

I greet the faithful from Scandicci and from Torrita di Siena; the children from the Decanato of Appiano Gentile, the Agesci Scouts from Alghero, and the young people from Senigallia; the “John XXIII” Scholastic Institute from Cammarata; and the participants in the relay for life supporting the Foundation against Cancer.

Mother’s Day is celebrated in many countries today. Let us gratefully and affectionately remember all mothers – those who are still with us and those who have gone to heaven – let us entrust them to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Let’s give them a big round of applause!

Let us turn to her asking her to alleviate the suffering of battered Ukraine and of all the nations wounded by war and violence.

I hope you all enjoy your Sunday. And I greet the Immaculata group, who are wonderful! Please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch and *arrivederci!*
