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Francis, the comic strip
People in St. Peter's Square attend the "Regina Coeli" prayer led by Pope Francis from the wi

People in St. Peter's Square attend the "Regina Coeli" prayer led by Pope Francis from the window of his studio overlooking the square at the Vatican May 8, 2022. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Carol Glatz

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May 9, 2022
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**VATICAN CITY —** Christians must listen to God's word, go where Christ goes, seek those who are lost and reach out to their neighbors, Pope Francis said.

"Do I let Jesus love me, and by allowing him to love me, do I pass from loving him to imitating him?" the pope asked May 8 before praying the "Regina Coeli" prayer with pilgrims in St. Peter's Square.

The pope also wished mothers a happy Mother's Day, which was being celebrated in many countries.

"Let us affectionately remember our mothers — a round of applause for our mothers — even those who are no longer with us down here, but who live in our hearts. Our prayer, our affection and our best wishes for all our mothers," he said.

In his main address, the pope reflected on the Sunday Gospel reading from St. John, which begins with Jesus saying, "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me."

Jesus offers "a beautiful image of the shepherd who stays with the sheep," and he explains it with three verbs: to hear, know and follow — actions each Christians are asked to imitate, the pope said.

People must be open to listening for the voice of the shepherd and others, he said.

"Today, we are inundated with words and by the urgency to always have something to say or do," he said.

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"We are afraid of silence. How hard it is to listen to each other! To listen till the end, to let the other express him or herself, to listen in our families, to listen at school, to listen at work, and even in the church!" he said.

Christians must be "listening children," he said, finding time for the Word of God and giving "space and attention to our brothers and sisters."

Jesus also knows and loves his sheep, "he does not condemn us," he said. "The way to discover the Lord's love is to listen to him."

"He wants to give us a new and marvelous awareness — that of knowing we are always loved by him and, therefore, that we are never left alone by ourselves" as "he sustains us above all in our sufferings, in our difficulties, in our crises."

People who listen to their shepherd, "experience they are known by the Lord and they follow the Lord who is their shepherd," the pope said.

"What do those who follow Christ do? They go where he goes, along the same path, in the same direction," he said.

"They go to seek those who are lost," feel compassion for those who suffer and reach out their hands to help their neighbors, he said. "May the Holy Virgin help us listen to Christ, know him always more and follow him on the way of service."