



The Holy See

LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE BICENTENNIAL OF INDEPENDENCE OF THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC

His Most Reverend Eminence

José María Arancedo

President of the Bishops' Conference of Argentina Buenos Aires

Dear Brother,

On the eve of the celebration of the bicentennial of Independence, I would like to offer a cordial greeting to you, to the Brother Bishops, to the National Authorities and to all the Argentine people. I would like that this celebration may render us stronger on the path undertaken by our forebears 200 years ago. With these words I express to all Argentines my closeness and the assurance of my prayers.

In a special way I am at the side of those who suffer: the sick, those who live in indigence, detainees, those who feel lonely, those who do not have work and who experience any type of need, those who are or who have been victims of human trafficking or trade, and of the exploitation of human beings, young victims of abuse and so many young people who are subjected to the scourge of drugs. They all often bear the harsh burden of extreme situations. They are the most wounded children of the Homeland.

Yes, sons and daughters of the Homeland. At school they taught us to speak of the Motherland, to love the Motherland. This is precisely where the patriotic sense of belonging is rooted: in love for the Motherland. We Argentines use a bold and likewise colourful expression when we refer to unscrupulous people: “this man would sell his own mother!”; but we know and we feel deeply in our heart that a Mother is not sold, she cannot be sold... and neither can the Motherland.

We are celebrating the 200-year journey of a Country that, in its desire and yearning for brotherhood, projects itself beyond the confines of the country: toward the Great Homeland, of

which St Martin and St Bolivar dreamt. This reality unites us in a family of broad horizons and loyalty of brothers. Today in our celebration let us also pray for the Great Homeland: that the Lord protect her, make her strong, more a sister, and defend her from every form of colonialization.

With the support of these 200 years, we are asked to continue to walk, to look ahead. To that end I think — in a special way — of the elderly and of the young, and I feel the need to ask their help in continuing to walk toward our goal. I ask the elderly, the “rememberers” of history, to have the courage to dream, to overcome the “throw-away culture” that is being imposed on us on a global level. We need their dreams, the fonts of inspiration. I ask the young people that they not be sent into retirement by the many proposals devoid of hope and of heroism which confine them to bureaucratic quietism. I am certain that our Homeland needs to bring Joel’s prophecy (cf. Jl 4:1) to life. Only if our grandparents have the courage to dream and our young people to prophesy great things, can the Homeland be free. We need grandparent dreamers who push the young people, who — inspired by those very dreams — run ahead with the creativity of prophesy.

Dear brother, I ask God, our Father and Lord, to bless our Homeland and bless us all; and to the Virgin of Luján, as mother, to look after us along our journey. And please, do not forget to pray for me.

Fraternally,

FRANCIS