



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF THE HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE PEOPLE OF ARGENTINA

30 September 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This year, while we are still breathing the festive air of the Bicentennial, there are two events that will make history for us, two events that are very important and very intense, to which I attribute great value: one is the beatification of Mama Antula, a woman who helped strengthen the heart of Argentina, and the other is the upcoming canonization of Cura Brochero, that gaucho priest who felt compassion for his beloved people in Serrana and fought for their dignity.

It is unnecessary to say that I would have liked to come to Argentina to beatify Mama Antula and canonize Cura Brochero; but I wasn't able to come, it wasn't possible. You cannot imagine how much I would like to see you again. I won't be able to come next year either, because I already have fixed commitments in Asia and Africa. The world is larger than Argentina, and I cannot be in two places at once. I will leave it in the Lord's hands to show me the date. Taking these events into account and considering that next year I still won't be able to come, I have chosen to communicate with you this way.

For me the Argentinian people are my people. You are important, I continue to be Argentinian, I still travel with my Argentinian passport. I am convinced that as a people you are the greatest treasure our country has. When I receive your letters — so many that I can't answer them all, although I definitely answer some in order to be present — I take comfort, it gives me joy and leads me to pray for you during Mass, for your needs, for each of you. It is my love of country that makes me do this, and also makes me ask you, once again, to carry on your shoulders your homeland, this country that needs each one of us to give her our best, to improve, to grow and mature. This will allow us to achieve that culture of encounter which overcomes all of the throwaway cultures that are present everywhere in the world today. A culture of encounter where

everyone has a place, where everyone can live with dignity and where each person can express him- or herself peacefully without being insulted or condemned, or attacked, or rejected. The culture of encounter that we must all seek, with prayer and good will.

I am moved by the fact that Argentina is blessed with its geography, with its wealth. We have everything: mountains, woods, plains, coasts, all of the mineral riches. We have everything. What a rich country! But the greatest wealth our country has is its people, the people who are able to express solidarity, who know how to walk together, one alongside the other, who know how to help, to respect. The Argentinian people who do not fail, who are able to find wisdom, and if they do fail, others help them recover. I respect this Argentinian people, I love this people, I hold the people in my heart, it is the greatest wealth of our country. And even if we cannot shake hands, you can count on my memories and my prayers to the Lord to help you grow as a people. A people that comes together again, works together and seeks the greatness of the country, that country which belongs to us, not to others; it is ours. Thank you for all of the good you do every day. May God bless you.

We are in the Year of Mercy, and in closing this little talk, this monologue that is intended to be a little chat, I dare to give you some homework, like the teachers of the past. In this Year of Mercy I suggest that you perform a work of mercy each day, or every two days if you can't do it every day; and please don't get upset if I remind you what they are. There are corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Most of them are found in a list the Lord gave us in the Beatitudes, in Matthew 25, and throughout the Gospel. They are concrete works of mercy, and if each of you performs one each day or one every two days, how much good we will do for our people!

— Visit someone who is sick, visit the sick; this is a work of mercy.

— Feed the hungry. There are people who are hungry.

— Give drink to the thirsty, those who have material and sometimes spiritual thirst.

— Welcome the stranger, that is, give a place to those who don't have a home, who don't have shelter.

— Clothe the naked, that is, make sure that people have clothing, and don't suffer from the cold in winter.

— Visit the imprisoned. The Church insists greatly on this point.

— Bury the dead.

These are the seven corporal works of mercy.

And then there are seven spiritual works of mercy:

— Instruct the ignorant.

— Counsel those who need it.

— Correct those who do wrong.

— Forgive those who offend us. How difficult it is to forgive! All of us in today's world need to forgive much and to be forgiven.

— Console the sorrowful.

— Bear wrongs patiently. There are people who at times make us lose our patience, and we must bear their wrongs patiently, it is a work of mercy.

— Pray to God for the living and the dead.

I don't know how to explain it, dear brothers and sisters, dear fellow citizens, but it is as if I were speaking to you at home. I am close to you on this occasion when we still breathe the festive air of the Bicentennial and the two events of the canonization of Cura Brochero and the beatification of Mama Antula, two people, a man and a woman, who worked for the country and for evangelization. I send you my greetings right in the middle of all of this, I express my affection, and I say — it may seem strange, but I stretch time like a rubber band — that I will see you soon, and don't forget to pray for me. Thank you.