



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARGENTINA*

Monday, 7 April 2003

To H.E. Mr Eduardo Duhalde

*President of the Republic of Argentina*1. I am deeply grateful for the attentive text in which you express to me the recognition and affection of the beloved Argentine people. You have had the kindness to present it to me before reaching the end of your presidential mandate, on the occasion of your visit to the See of the Successor of the Apostle St Peter. In coming here today, you clearly desire to express the sincere gratitude of your compatriots for the Holy See's service to the progress, peace, justice and dignity of the human person.2. The Church has always accompanied the progress of the Argentinians with her presence and closeness. Especially through the generous apostolic work of the Pastors of this beloved land, and particularly with the proclamation of the Word of the Lord and the spread of the great Gospel values, she has helped them to face with courage and confidence the challenges of the present time. With concern for the whole Church and an awareness of the great difficulties that must be faced each day, I follow the ups and downs of the Argentine nation with interest at this critical time in history when the tragic events we are witnessing remind us all, and especially those with the arduous task of governing the peoples' future, of our responsibility, to God and to history, for building a world of peace and of spiritual and material well-being.3. As I look at Argentina, I express the wish that the heritage of the Church's social teaching may continue to be a precious guide in overcoming the problems that stand in the way of building an order that is more just, fraternal and supportive. The Church, a witness of hope, is always ready to serve as a means of reconciliation and understanding between the different sectors that make up the fabric of society, so that each one of them may cooperate effectively and actively in solving the problems. There should be a dialogue which, precluding every type of violence in all its forms, will help to alleviate the hardships that primarily affect the least privileged classes of society and thus contribute, with the collaboration of all, to building a more dignified and human future. Situations of injustice always conceal a serious moral disorder, which is not resolved merely by the application of more or less satisfactory technical measures, but by the determined promotion, above all, of a series of reforms that favour the rights and duties of the family as the natural and irreplaceable basis of society. An impetus must likewise be given to pro-life projects for the defence and development of life which take into account the ethical dimension of the person, from conception until natural death.4. The Catholic faith, whose presence in this land dates back to the early 16th century, is one of its treasures. Throughout this age-old history, the pilgrim Church among your people has produced abundant fruits of life through the efforts of men and women of acclaimed virtue, such as Bl. Mother Cabanillas, whom I had the honour of raising to the glory of the altars last year, and of so many Christians who worked tirelessly to proclaim

the Gospel as a service to the integral good of humanity. In effect, the deep Catholic roots that have formed the spiritual heritage of the Nation and are visible in its culture, history and certain legislative measures, have left a mark on the fundamental principles of the Constitution of your Country, at the same time guaranteeing legitimate respect for religious freedom. Argentina has always been able, and this deserves full recognition, to take in persons of every race and creed who have found, from La Quiaca to Tierra de Fuego and from the great cities and peoples of the Andes to those of the Atlantic coast, a place of peaceful and harmonious coexistence.⁵ I encourage all Argentinians without exception to persevere in their search for the way that leads to harmony, without forgetting that it cannot dispense with the respect for and protection of the fundamental rights of the human person. Likewise, I encourage everyone to continue to work tirelessly to build a society that offers equal opportunities and dispels every shadow of discrimination among its members, never succumbing to the materialistic principles that numb consciences and harden hearts. At this difficult moment in international relations, we must bear in mind that the Gospel alone can inspire authentic and enduring principles of peace. I pray to God that the Argentine nation, advancing on the paths of unity and effective solidarity, may achieve in the near future the prosperity which its children long for, after going through a major crisis. May the government leaders with political, administrative and legal responsibilities, as well as the experts in the various social sciences, discern and work hard to pass the necessary reforms, so that no one is deprived of what they need to develop as a person and a citizen. May they pay special attention to the most deprived social sectors, to the poor in general and to the unemployed, old-age pensioners and young people, without forgetting those who, for obvious reasons, are obliged to emigrate to other countries, crossing their own frontiers in search of a better future. The Argentinians, putting their trust in God and counting on the help of the international community, must be the principal protagonists and artisans of the history of a homeland that is serene and promising for all.⁶ Mr President, when you return to your Country, please convey the Pope's cordial greetings to your fellow citizens and assure them of his prayers. As I invoke the protection of the Mother of Argentinians, *Our Lady of Luján*, I bless you all with deep affection.

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