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Francis on the bicentenary of the Independence of the Argentine Republic

Vatican City, 9 July 2016 – Pope Francis has written a letter to Archbishop José María Arancedo, president of the Episcopal Conference of Argentina, on the occasion of the bicentenary of the Independence of the Republic, to be held on 9 July, the day on which Argentina signed in 1816 its declaration of political independence from the Spanish monarchy, and also renounced all foreign domination.

After greeting the bishops, national authorities and Argentine people, he expresses his hope that this celebration "will make us stronger as we journey on the path taken by our ancestors two hundred years ago", and assures Argentines of his closeness in prayer. "I especially wish to be close to those who suffer the most: the sick, those living in poverty, prisoners, the lonely, the unemployed whose needs are not met; those who are victims of trafficking, of the trade in and exploitation of human beings; child victims of abuse, and the many young people who suffer as a result of the scourge of drugs. They bear the weight of difficult situations. ... They are the most afflicted children of the Motherland".

"Yes – children of the Motherland", he repeated. "At school we were taught to speak of the Motherland, to love the Motherland. It is right here that the patriotic sense of belonging is rooted: in love for the Motherland. The Argentines use an expression, bold and colourful, when we refer to unscrupulous people: 'he is capable of selling his own mother'. However we know and feel deeply in our heart that one cannot truly sell one's own mother, and the same is true of the Motherland".

The Pope noted that the Argentine people are celebrating two hundred years in the progress of a Motherland that, "in its desire and keenness for brotherhood, looks well beyond the limits of the country, to the Great Motherland that San Martín and Bolívar dreamed of. This reality unites us as a family with broad horizons and with the loyalty of brothers. We therefore also pray for this Great Motherland in our celebration today: may the Lord care for her, make her strong, and defend her from every type of colonisation".

"With these two hundred years behind us we are called to keep journeying and to keep on looking ahead. To achieve this, I think in a special way of the elderly and the young, and I feel the need to ask their help to continue in the pursuit of our destiny. I ask the elderly, who conserve the memory of history, to overcome this 'throwaway culture' that is imposed upon us globally, and to dare to dream. We need their dreams, which are a wellspring of inspiration. I ask the young not to settle for bureaucratic quietism, in which they are hemmed in by prospects

lacking in enthusiasm or heroism. I am convinced that our Motherland needs to bring alive the prophecy of Joel. Only if our grandparents dare to dream and our young people dare to prophesy great things, can the Motherland be free. We are in need of the dreaming elderly to drive the young who, inspired by those same dreams, run forward with the creativity of prophecy".

"Dear brother", Francis concludes, "I ask God to bless our Motherland, and to bless all of us; and I ask the Virgin of Luján, as a mother, to care for us on our journey. And please, do not forget to pray for me".
