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Pope's Message to the Argentine people: perform works of mercy for the good of our country

Pope Francis has sent a video message to the Argentine people in which, after mentioning the Bicentenary celebration, the beatification of Mama Antula in August and the impending canonisation of Fr. Brochero, two figures that are very meaningful to the country, he then invites his compatriots to carry out concrete works of mercy. The following is an extensive summary of the message:

"In this year, in which we breathe in the atmosphere of the Bicentenary, two facts are taking place in our history, to things that are very important and powerful, and which are very valuable to me: one is the beatification of Mama Antula, a woman who helped consolidate Argentina in depth, and the other is the upcoming canonisation of Fr. Brochero, the 'gaucho priest' who had great compassion for his people in the mountains, and fought for their dignity.

It goes without saying that I would have liked to go to Argentina to beatify Mama Antula and canonise Fr. Brochero, but it is not possible. ... I cannot do so next year either because I already have fixed commitments in Asia and Africa, and the world is bigger than Argentina ... I leave it in the hands of the Lord and He will give me a date. But, in view of these developments and considering that next year I will not be able to come, I dedicated to communicate with you in this way.

For me, the Argentine people are my people, you are important, and I continue to be Argentine; I still travel with my Argentine passport. I am convinced that the people are the greatest treasure our homeland has. ... And that leads me to pray, and I pray for you at Mass, ... for every one of you. It is my love for my country that leads me to do this, and which leads me also to ask you, once more, to shoulder the weight of your homeland, this country that needs each one of us to give the best of ourselves, to improve, to grow and to mature. And this will help us achieve this culture of encounter that can overcome all these throwaway cultures that are offered everywhere in the world today. A culture of encounter where there is a place for everyone, where everyone can live with dignity and where one can express oneself peacefully without being insulted, attacked or rejected.

It strikes me that Argentina is praised for its geography, its wealth ... but the greatest wealth that our country has is the people, this population that knows how to be fraternal, how to respect itself. ... A people that reconnects and works together for the greatness of the country, this country that is ours; it does not belong to others, it belongs to us. Thank you for all the good you do every day.

We are in the Year of Mercy, and so to conclude this cat, I would like to propose, as teachers do, your 'house duties'. I propose that in this Year of Mercy we perform a work of mercy every day, or every other day if you cannot do so each day, and do not be angry if I read them out to remind you of them! ... They are concrete works of mercy and, if every one of us performs one every day or every other day, what good we will do for our people!

Visiting the sick is a work of mercy.

Feeding the hungry; there are people who are hungry.

Give the thirsty something to drink; we have both material and spiritual thirst at times.

Offer shelter to the pilgrim; that is, give shelter to those who have no home, to the homeless.

Clothe the naked; that is, people must be dressed so they are not cold in winter.

Visit prisoners. The Church insists on this very often.

Bury the dead.

These are the seven corporal works of mercy. The other seven are spiritual:

Teach the ignorant.

Give good counsel to those in need.

Correct those who err.

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

Console the sorrowful.

Suffer with patience the shortcomings of our neighbour. There are people that make us lose our patience at times, and suffering their shortcomings with patience is a work of mercy.

Pray to God for the living and for the dead.

Dear compatriots, I feel as if I am speaking to you at home. I am close to you on this occasion, in which we still feel the atmosphere of the Bicentenary celebrations and which is marked by the canonisation of Fr. Brochero and the beatification of Mama Antula, two people, a man and a woman, who laboured for their homeland and for evangelisation. ... I send you my love, and I tell you – it seems odd, but time stretches like elastic – I will see you soon, and do not forget to pray for me. Thank you".
