SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 240209a

Friday 09.02.2024

Audience of the Holy Father with pilgrims from Argentina for the canonization of Blessed María Antonia de San José de Paz y Figueroa

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the pilgrims from Argentina for the canonization of Blessed María Antonia de San José de Paz y Figueroa, to take place on Sunday 11 February 2024, in Saint Peter's Basilica.

The following is the Pope's address to those present at the audience:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

Good morning, and thank you for being here today. I am very pleased to have this meeting with you all on the occasion of the canonization of María Antonia de San José, our *Mama Antula*, to which you have come to manifest your devotion.

I greet my brother bishops from Argentina - from the primatial diocese, which they then left with nothing - and all the priests, men and women religious, and faithful who accompany them. The charity of Mama Antula, especially in the service of those most in need, imposes itself with great strength today, in the midst of this society that runs the risk of forgetting that "radical individualism is a virus that is extremely difficult to eliminate, a virus that is clever. It makes us believe that everything consists in giving free rein to our own ambitions" (Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti*, 105). In this Blessed, we find an example and an inspiration that revives "the option for those who are least, those whom society discards" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 195). May the Lord give us the grace of following her example, and may this example help us to be this sign of love and tenderness amid our brethren.

Let us also remember that the path of holiness implies trust, renunciation, as when Blessed María Antonia

arrived in Buenos Aires, barefoot and with only a crucifix, because she had placed her security not in herself, but in God; she trusted that her arduous apostolate was His work. She experienced what God wants of every one of us, that we may discover His call, each in our own state of life; for whatever it may be, it will always be synthesized in achieving “everything for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls”. This premise, which is at the basis of Ignatian spirituality, on which Mama Antula was nourished, always moved her in every one of her works. Indeed, it is true that one of her main concerns when the Society of Jesus was suppressed was to impart the spiritual exercises herself, thus seeking to help everyone discover the beauty of following Christ. But this was not easy, since, due to the aversion that had been created against the Jesuits, she was prohibited from giving the exercises, so that she decided to impart them clandestinely. We must not forget this clandestine dimension: it is very important. In this regard, another message the Blessed gives for today’s world is not to give up in the face of adversity, not to desist from our good intentions of bringing the Gospel to everyone, despite the challenges this may represent. Often the “family and the workplace can also be a parched place where faith nonetheless has to be preserved and communicated” (*ibidem*, 86). Firmly rooted in the Lord, we must see in this an opportunity in which we can challenge our environment in order to bring the joy of the Gospel.

Besides the Blessed’s devotion for Saint Joseph, from whom she took her name, I would like to highlight her great fervour for the Eucharist, which must be at the centre of all our Christian life, and from which the strength to realize our apostolate emanates (cf. Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10). I therefore invite you to participate seriously on Sunday in the celebration of Christ, who died and rose again, in which we proclaim *Mama Antula* a saint. I invite you to be witnesses to this gift for the Argentine people, but also for the entire Church. Let us ask her, who promoted pilgrimages so much, to help us in our pilgrimage together towards the house of the Father.

May the Virgin of Luján intercede for all the pilgrim faithful of Argentina, and for the universal Church. And do not to forget to pray for me. God bless you. Thank you.