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Commemorative Act of the 40th Anniversary of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Argentina and Chile

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Commemorative Act of the 40th Anniversary of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Argentina and Chile took place.

The following is the address delivered by the Holy Father Francis to those present at the ceremony:

Address of the Holy Father

*Honourable Ministers,
Your Eminences, Your Excellencies,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am pleased to offer you a cordial welcome on this, the fortieth anniversary of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Argentina and Chile, which ended the lengthy territorial dispute between the two countries. We do well to commemorate those intense negotiations that, with papal mediation, avoided the armed conflict about to set two brother peoples against each other and concluded with a dignified, reasonable and equitable solution.

I thank the Embassies of Chile and Argentina for this commemoration, and I greet the respective Delegations and Authorities present, as well as the representatives of the mediators who took part in that event.

I wanted to highlight this anniversary also by inviting the Cardinals and the members of the Diplomatic Corps, whom I thank for their presence. Moreover, I would like to take this occasion in order to launch a renewed appeal to the world, at this particular moment, on behalf of peace and dialogue. The steadfast commitment shown by the two countries during the long and difficult negotiations, and the fruits of peace and friendship that

were borne, can serve as a model worthy of imitation.

In 2009, in the Preface to the late Archbishop Carmelo Juan Giaquinta's book on the Treaty of Peace and Friendship, [1] I wrote: "The Treaty was made possible thanks to the mediation of Pope John Paul II and the confidence placed in him by our peoples and leaders. Yet how did we arrive at the Pope's mediation? ... It was above all due to the prayers of our people – our peoples –, who detest war... After Pope John Paul II intervened, at Christmas in 1978, the efforts made by the two Episcopates were unceasing. Without involvement in the mediation itself, which was exclusively the domain of the Pope and the Governments of Argentina and Chile, there was a need to encourage, support and defend the papal mediation from more than a few outside threats, so that it could reach its satisfactory conclusion in November 1984, practically six years after it began". [2]

From the very first days of his pontificate, Saint John Paul II was concerned not only to prevent the dispute between Argentina and Chile "from degenerating into a disgraceful armed conflict, but also to find a way to definitively resolve this dispute". [3] At the request of the two governments, accompanied by concrete and stringent commitments, the Pope agreed to mediate with the aim of proposing "a just and equitable, and therefore honourable solution". [4] During the mediation process, the Pope expressed his intent in these terms: "so that a satisfactory solution may be found, through the goodwill of both parties, based on justice and international law, which excludes the use of force". [5] These days we are experiencing the unhappy outcome of the use of force.

The title of the Treaty between Argentina and Chile defines this in two words: peace and friendship. Let us reflect on them for a moment.

The first is *peace*. Upon the Ratification of the Treaty, on 2 May 1985, John Paul II expressed his joy, because – in his words – agreement "consolidates peace in such a way as to justifiably give the well-founded confidence of its stability". [6] This gift of peace, the Pope insisted, would nonetheless require a daily effort to preserve it from the obstacles that might oppose it and to encourage everything that might serve to enrich it. Indeed, the Treaty offers suitable means for achieving two ends, namely the resolution of eventual differences and the promotion of "a harmonious friendship through cooperation in all fields, aimed at a closer integration of the two nations". [7] This model for the complete, definitive and peaceful settlement of a dispute deserves – as I recently stated – to be re-proposed in the current world situation, in which so many conflicts persist and degenerate without an effective will to resolve them through the absolute exclusion of recourse to force or the threat of its use. This is the tragic situation that we are presently experiencing.

The second word is *friendship*. "As the icy winds of war blow, joining with recurrent phenomena of injustice, violence and inequality, as well as the grave climate crisis and unprecedented anthropological change, it is imperative to stop and ask ourselves: is there something worth living for and hoping for?" [8] In effect, these setbacks, difficulties and failures can be seen as a summons to reflection; they invite us to open our hearts to an encounter with God and to grow more conscious of ourselves, our neighbours and the realities all around us. Let us not forget that we are "beggars", sovereign beggars. We are called to become "beggars of the essential", of what gives authentic meaning to our lives. "By doing so, we discover that the value of human existence does not consist in things, in successes achieved, in the race of competition, but first and foremost in that relationship of love which sustains us, rooting our journey in trust and hope. Sisters and brothers, it is friendship with God, which is then reflected in all other human relationships, that is the foundation of the joy which will never fail". [9]

A few weeks ago, on the occasion of this fortieth anniversary, the Bishops of Argentina and Chile signed a new declaration recalling how the Treaty "prevented war between brother peoples". [10] The Bishops of both countries thanked God because that agreement enabled dialogue and peace to prevail. At the same time, they expressed their gratitude to Saint John Paul II for his offer to mediate between the two countries, a mediation that was carried out by Cardinals Antonio Samorè and Agostino Casaroli, two great men.

I concur with the sentiments of the Bishops of Chile and Argentina in giving thanks to God for protecting us and saving us from war! Along with the Cardinals and Bishops of those two countries, we are grateful for the peace and cooperation existing between the two nations, and confident that this path can be further deepened for the

good of the two peoples. It is my hope that the spirit of encounter and concord between nations seeking peace, in Latin America and throughout the world, may favour the multiplication of coordinated initiatives and policies aimed at resolving the numerous social and environmental crises that affect populations in all continents and certainly prove detrimental to the poor.

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Treaty, a commemorative ceremony was held here in the Vatican on 28 November 2009, honoured by the visit of the Presidents of Argentina, Mrs Cristina Fernández Kirchner, and of Chile, Mrs Michelle Bachelet. On that occasion, Pope Benedict XVI pointed out that Chile and Argentina are not just two neighbouring nations, but much more. “They are”, he said, “two brother peoples with a common vocation to fraternity, respect and friendship, which are largely a result of the Catholic tradition at the root of their history and their rich cultural and spiritual patrimony”. [11]

Now, forty years later, we renew our gratitude for the efforts of all who, in the governments and diplomatic delegations of both countries, contributed to pursuing that path of peaceful resolution in response to the yearnings for peace of the Argentinean and Chilean people. The Treaty of Peace and Friendship, as Pope Benedict said, “is a shining example of the power of the human spirit and the desire for peace in the face of the barbarity and senselessness of violence and war as a means of resolving differences”. [12] It is a most timely example of the need to “persevere at every moment with firm determination to the final consequences in an endeavor to resolve disputes with a real desire for dialogue and agreement, through patient negotiation and with the necessary compromises, always taking into account the just requirements and legitimate interests of all”. [13]

In this regard, how can I not refer to the many ongoing armed conflicts that remain still unresolved, despite the fact that they cause immense sufferings for the countries at war and the entire human family. Here I would point to the hypocrisy of speaking of peace and dabbling in war. In some countries where there is much talk of peace, the highest yielding investments are in the production of arms. This hypocrisy always leads to failure. The failure of fraternity, the failure of peace. May the international community make the force of law prevail through dialogue, for dialogue “must be the soul of the international community”. [14] I simply mention two failures of humanity today: Ukraine and Palestine, where people are suffering, where the arrogance of the invader prevails over dialogue. Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you most heartily for taking part in this commemorative ceremony. Through the intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace, our Mother, I invoke God’s blessing upon the beloved nations of Chile and Argentina, which I likewise invoke upon all peoples who long for peace and concord, and to every man and woman committed to the cause of fraternity and social friendship. Thank you.

May the Lord bless our peoples.

[1] CARMELO JUAN GIAQUINTA, *El tratado de paz y amistad entre Argentina y Chile. Cómo se gestó y preservó la mediación de Juan Pablo II*, Buenos Aires, 2009.

[2] *Ibid.*, 9-11.

[3] *Papal Mediation between Argentina and Chile in the Dispute over the Southern Zone*, 23 April 1982.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Ratification of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Argentina and Chile. Mediation in the Dispute over the Southern Zone*, 2 May 1985.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] Message for the XLV Meeting for Friendship Among Peoples (Rimini, 20-25 August 2024), 19 July 2024.

[9] Ibid.

[10] En el 40 aniversario del Tratado de Paz y Amistad entre Argentina y Chile, Statement of the Bishops' Conferences of the two countries, Buenos Aires, 6 November 2024.

[11] Address to the Delegations of Argentina and Chile on the occasion of the XXV anniversary of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Cf. Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See for the Presentation of Greetings for the New Year, 8 January 2024.
