



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE PILGRIMS FROM ARGENTINA FOR THE CANONIZATION OF
BLESSED MARIA ANTONIA OF SAINT JOSEPH DE PAZ Y FIGUEROA**

*Clementine Hall
Friday, 9 February 2024*

[[Multimedia](#)]

Dear brothers and sisters,

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

I greet my brother Bishops from Argentina — from the primate diocese, which was left empty-handed [joking] — and all the priests, men and women religious, and faithful who accompany them. *Mama Antula*’s charity, 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, for it 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 grant us the grace to follow her example, and may this example help you to be that sign of love and tenderness amid our brothers and sisters.

Let us also remember that the path of holiness entails trust, surrender, as when Blessed María Antonia arrived in Buenos Aires, barefoot and with only a crucifix, because she had placed her trust 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 Blessed *Mama Antula* was nourished, always moved her in all her work. 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 for her, 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” (*ibid.*, 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 our life, and from which the strength to realize our apostolate emanates (cf. Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10). I invite you to seriously participate on Sunday in the celebration of Christ, who died and rose again, in which we will proclaim *Mama Antula* a saint. I invite you to be witnesses of 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 Father’s house.

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

L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly Edition in English, Fifty-seventh year, number 7, Friday 16 February 2024, p. 8.