



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
ON THE OCCASION OF THE SOLEMN COMMEMORATION
OF THE CENTENARY OF THE INAUGURATION
OF THE MONUMENT "CHRIST OF THE ANDES"**

*To Cardinal Francisco Javier Errázuriz Ossa,
Archbishop of Santiago and President of the Chilean Bishops' Conference,
and to Archbishop Eduardo Vicente Mirás of Rosario,
President of the Argentine Bishops' Conference*

1. On the occasion of the solemn commemoration of the centenary of the inauguration of the monument to Christ of the Andes, I am pleased to send an affectionate greeting to the Cardinals and Prelates of Argentina and Chile, as well as to the High Authorities and the other participants in this important celebration. It calls to mind crucial events in the history of both Countries and expresses the fundamental, deeply-rooted Christian values on which the identity and coexistence of their Peoples are based, while at the same time expressing their firm determination to increasingly strengthen every day the commitment to continue together on the path to peace.

2. Indeed, if setting up the majestic monument at the time entailed the deployment of considerable means and the close collaboration of many people and institutions, this was equalled by the earlier efforts to give the gesture meaning. In the previous years, various agreements had been made to solve the different disputes between the two Peoples by peaceful means, which led to the four definitive peace treaties signed in 1902.

The best of victories was won and the true strength of the human being was demonstrated, as well as the genuine greatness of the Nations. The threat of war gave way to friendly coexistence between two neighbouring sister Countries. Their joy and satisfaction at having achieved the inestimable triumph of peace were well justified.

3. The deep spirit of faith of both Argentines and Chileans recognized in those events a priceless

gift of God who "bless[ed] his people with peace!" (Ps 29[28]: 11) and wanted to shape their gratitude in the Andean peaks, so that the divine blessing might extend from on high to all the brother and sister lands and make the boundary a place of encounter rather than antagonism.

From that time, the figure of Christ the Redeemer has been an invitation to repeat with the Psalmist the ceaseless prayer of those who place full trust in him: "Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people" (Ps 72: [71]: 3). In fact, peace on earth, "which all men of every era have most eagerly yearned for", is an ongoing task that can never be considered completed and always requires divine help, as well as common sense and experience (cf. *Message for World Day of Peace 2003*, n. 1; 9).

4. At the inauguration, solemn words were spoken that were later carved on a tablet at the foot of the monument as an eternal reminder for posterity of an unbreakable covenant: "Sooner shall these mountains crumble into dust than Argentines and Chileans break the peace". What is the point of the beauty of the majestic peaks and the richness of the fertile valleys if ties of friendly coexistence and peace are not encouraged on the earth where the Creator set man and woman?

Those words remind the citizens and Authorities of today of the need to continue their efforts, through the constant promotion of a culture of peace and significant gestures that make it prevail over any other alternative, to reinforce the bonds of agreement and friendship, the path of loyal dialogue and respect for the law.

At the beginning of the third millennium, in which there was no lack of new threats to peace, I would like to ask the beloved sons and daughters of Argentina and Chile to turn their gaze in the commemoration of this centenary to the Redeemer, and to implore him for light and for the necessary strength to face today's challenges with hope and determination. I join in spirit the joy of the celebration, and especially in your prayers for the development of fraternal coexistence, areas of mutual collaboration and the vital commitment to build a society founded above all on the recognition of the inalienable dignity of the human person. Thus, peace will be guaranteed and a legacy bequeathed to the new generations that will enable them to build a better future on solid and lasting foundations.

I implore Christ the Redeemer to continue to accompany the noble Nations of Argentina and Chile with his protection, guiding them on the path of peace and encouraging their efforts to reach ever high goals of prosperity, living the spiritual values. With these sentiments I send you my Blessing.

From the Vatican, 11 February 2004

JOHN PAUL II
