



The Holy See

***VIDEO MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE CENTRE FOR STUDENT INMATES
AT THE PRISON COMPLEX OF EZEIZA (ARGENTINA)***

To my friends who attend the *Centro de estudiantes universitarios de Ezeiza*, a warm greeting, a greeting that evokes those Sunday telephone calls I make to the correctional facility. I am aware of all your activities and am filled with great joy by the existence of this space — a space for work, for culture, for progress; it is a sign of humanity. And it could not exist if there were not people of so much human sensitivity among the inmates, prison staff, directors, judges, members of the University of Buenos Aires and the students. Thank you.

Now a step forward. They have given impetus to the opening of the music programme. I wish to thank all those who have collaborated in this initiative: the chief Mr Claudio Segura, the director Mr Alejandro Gonzalez, the support and backing of the University of Buenos Aires and of the judiciary, especially the secretaries of the Appeals Court, Luis and Victor, and the inmates employed at the Centre for Students — Marcelino, Guille, and Edo — whom I know by telephone. Thank you for everything you have done.

It is a breath of life that is happening among you in the prison. And life — you know this — is a gift, but a gift that we must win every day. They give it to us, but we must earn it every day. We must earn it in every step of life. A gift that it is not easy to preserve. It takes courage every day. Many difficulties — we all have them — but let us take care of this gift and make it grow; let us care for it and make it flourish.

The inmates are serving a sentence, a sentence for a mistake they have made. But let us not forget that for punishment to be fruitful there must be a horizon of hope; otherwise it remains closed in on itself and is simply an instrument of torture; it is not fruitful. Punishment with hope, so it is fruitful. Hope for social reintegration, and for this, social formation, looking to the future, and this is what you are doing. With this new music programme you are looking towards social reintegration, and already you are reintegrating through studies, with the University of Buenos Aires; you are looking towards social reintegration. It is punishment with hope, a sentence with a

horizon. I would like to say again: there are and there will be problems, but the horizon is greater than the problems, and hope overcomes all problems.

Dear friends, I pray for you, I keep you close to my heart, and I ask you not to forget to do so for me. May God bless you. Keep going forward, always with a smile. Until the next call!