



WHERE ARE OUR CHILDREN?

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In Argentina today, the 25th of May and three years after the military coup a reunion is anxiously awaited ... of parents with their sons and daughters, of wives with their husbands, of grandparents with their grandchildren ... a reunion of the Argentine family. But the reality is that the killings, the tortures, the disappearances and arbitrary detentions continue unabated in that country.

This very month a woman, Mrs. Thelma Jara de Cabezas who travelled to Mexico to present the case of her 'disappeared' son to the recent conference of Latin American bishops, was herself abducted as she left a Buenos Aires hospital where her husband lay gravely ill. She was a leading member of the mothers of 'disappeared' but now joins the growing list of victims herself (over 20,000 'disappeared' persons).

It is becoming a traditional part of the Argentine national holiday in Washington to celebrate a Mass in St. Matthew's Cathedral organised by the Embassy. This celebration ought to be a sign of real reconciliation and liberation for the Argentine people. Thus it is necessary and urgent that: -

- Thelma Jara de Cabezas and other Argentine women celebrate the next national holiday July 9th, reunited with their 'disappeared' loved ones.
- That each and every person detained be given due process of law.
- A complete list of 'disappeared' be published and every recourse used to find them.
- Concentration camps be suppressed and human dignity respected in all prisons by the suppression of torture and other abuses.
- All Argentine citizens held without due process be given the choice of exile if they desire it, as is their constitutional right.
- Political prisoners be given a trial.
- That lists of **people**, who have died be published, the bodies be given to the family or that the place where they are buried be revealed.

We do not wish to say that the Mass can only be celebrated when justice fully reigns. But we do expect that those gathering for Mass give signs of a sincere search for justice in truth. Without those signs, given the actual situation in Argentina it would be a sacrilege: to hide crimes behind religious rites, to propagate an image of a 'Christian Government' and thus make a mockery of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Cardinal Marty of Paris has given an example last year in similar circumstances; the Argentine martyr bishop Enrique Angelelli, with a courage that cost him his life, refused to celebrate Masses on military bases for these same reasons. Following their example we, a group of priests, religious and laity, members of different communities and Christian movements CALL ON ALL CHRISTIANS TO ABSTAIN FROM THIS MASS.

JESUS SAID: "When you go to present your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your offering before the altar and go first to be reconciled and then come and offer your gift" (Mt.5)

We know that the Argentine Church is gagged by threats of further official terror. This makes it more urgent that we be 'the voice of those who have no voice' (Pope John Paul II). This unhappy measure we take following more than three years of study and prayer over the suffering of the Argentine people. We hope it will save the life of Thelma Jara de Cabezas and thousands of other 'disappeared' in Argentina.

COALITION OF CHRISTIANS CONCERNED FOR JUSTICE IN ARGENTINA
(Washington DC)

WHERE ARE OUR MOTHERS?