

Buenos Aires,  
October 2, 1978.

Cardinal Juan Carlos Aramburu,  
Archbishop of Buenos Aires,  
Metropolitan Curia,  
1034 Suipacha,  
Buenos Aires.

Your Eminence:-

Yesterday, Sunday, many mothers of disappeared persons were in Lujan as part of the annual youth pilgrimage, having gone there of course on foot. As you well know, we are mothers of young people who have been arrested by the armed forces or the security forces who, however, always refuse to give us any information about their fate. In fact, they deny that they ever took them away. Those who are missing, the *desaparecidos*, total - and you know this - about 30,000. The number increases day by day. This has been going on since three years without these illegal actions ever ceasing.

You saw us in Lujan, close to the altar during the Mass. No doubt you would have also heard our distressing request for you to publicly pray for our children, many of whom took part in this same pilgrimage in past years. The young people gathered there must certainly have prayed for this in the silence of their hearts. But you refused to say a single word nor ask for prayers; there was not one reference in your long homily to this terrible problem, the most deplorable one that affects our country.

As Christians, as Argentinians, as mothers, we cannot understand this refusal of the ecclesiastical authority, this insensitivity to our sorrow; this silence in the face of the suffering consciously caused by those who hold political power. If the ministers of the Lord keep silent because of lack of understanding, because of fear, because of unfaithfulness to their evangelical mission, who will speak? Who will be the voice of those who do not have a voice? If the elements you warn us about fill the vacuum created by our silence, you will be responsible before God.

You, Senor Cardinal, refuse to see us and to listen to us. When you do speak about the subject, you do it to surreptitiously suggest that we should keep silent, we should forget our children, we should bring our demands to a stop. Faced with such an attitude, ought we not to arrive at the sad conclusion that Christ's representatives in the Argentinian Church would rather join hands with the secular power and what it has to offer, instead of testifying to the truth and rendering the service they owe to the persecuted, to the poor, to those who suffer, (according to God's repeated command?) Do you believe, Senor Cardinal, that the evangelization of our people as Vatican II and Pope Paul VI have taught us, will occur in these circumstances, without the affirmation of truth, of love, of life, which is the only thing that stirs souls?

We are convinced that the new Supreme Shepherd, as well as the Latin American bishops who will gather in Puebla - who will be sent a copy of this letter - will acknowledge our painful cry.

Looking forward to your answer, we ask you once again to give us an opportunity to meet you.

With our sincere greetings, we remain .....

*Los familiares de los desaparecidos.*

*Explanatory note:*

This letter refers to the pilgrimage on foot to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Lujan which the young people of Buenos Aires carry out each year. This year, 1978, it took place on September 30th and Sunday, October first. According to the press, about 600,000 young people left the barrio of Lujan on the outskirts of Buenos Aires and walked 65 kilometers during the afternoon and night of Saturday, arriving in Lujan on Sunday morning. Most of the people, gathered in Belgrano Square, in front of Lujan Cathedral, took part in the Mass presided over by Cardinal Aramburu, during which he gave his homily. A large number of mothers of missing persons, wearing white kerchiefs on their heads in order to be identified, were part of the pilgrimage and were present at the religious service. This annual pilgrimage, an extraordinary affirmation of faith and love, which each year increases in number, is no doubt a response to the problems and anxieties the country is suffering, especially that of the so-called *desaparecidos*, most of whom are young people.