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A white man in a suit reads from a paper with his other palm face down while standing next t

Argentina's President Javier Milei is sworn in as Argentina's president next to Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner at the National Congress in Buenos Aires Dec. 10, 2023. (OSV News photo/Matias Baglietto, Reuters)

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Vatican City — January 12, 2024
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Argentine President Javier Milei has invited Pope Francis to visit their "beloved homeland" and he will also come to the Vatican in February.

"I believe that your trip will bring fruits of pacification and the fraternity of all Argentines, eager to overcome our divisions and conflicts," he said in a letter sent to the pope.

"Your presence and your message will contribute to the long-desired unity of all our compatriots and will provide us with the collective strength necessary to preserve our peace and work for the prosperity and enhancement of our beloved Argentine Republic," he wrote.

The letter, addressed to "Holy Father," was dated Jan. 8, and was released Jan. 11 by the president's office on X, formerly known as Twitter, using the official account @OPRArgentina.

"You well know that you do not need an invitation to come to Argentina," the tweet said, quoting from the letter.

Meanwhile, the Argentine daily newspaper La Nación reported Jan. 12 that Milei would be coming to the Vatican to attend the canonization ceremony of Blessed María Antonia de San José Feb. 11. She will be the first female of Argentina to be canonized.

In his letter to the pope, Milei wrote, "At the risk of saying the unnecessary, I invite you to visit our beloved homeland, according to the dates and places indicated to us, keeping in mind the general desire of our cities, provinces and towns counting on your presence and sending you their filial affection."

"I know time is short. Even so, I hope that you can travel for the widespread joy of all the Argentine people. I reiterate to your holiness the assurances of my highest consideration and respect for your work and person," the president wrote.

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Milei, who won the presidency in November and assumed office Dec. 10, had publicly called Francis an imbecile, a "filthy leftist" and "a malignant presence on earth" during his campaign.

Francis still called Milei to congratulate him after his runoff election and dismissed the leader's offensive comments toward him.

"In an election campaign, things are said 'in jest' " and to create attention, Francis said in an interview with Mexico's N+ newscast. During that interview, aired Dec. 13, the pope said a trip to Argentina was "pending," but not confirmed, having received an invite from Milei.

In his two-page letter to the pope Jan. 8, Milei said he appreciated the pope's "very significant telephone call Nov. 22, after my election as president."

"I value your wise advice and you wishing me courage and wisdom, so necessary for facing the challenge of guiding the destinies of our homeland and fellow citizens," he wrote.

The president noted the country was "going through times of affliction and hope" and that the economy was in "a critical state and urgent measures must be adopted to avoid a social catastrophe with painful consequences."

"We are aware that these decisions can deepen inequalities, therefore, our top priority is to protect our most vulnerable compatriots, thanking the collaboration of the Catholic Church, whose efforts in the social sphere are invaluable," he wrote.