

Litany of Remembrance and Hope:

For the people of Haiti and the Dominican Republic today who continue to suffer human-imposed slavery and injustice, we pray:

Response: Deliver them from darkness into your light of justice and peace.

For indigenous peoples everywhere whose humanity is questioned and whose culture is trampled, we pray, R.

For women and children who are victims of human trafficking to satisfy the greed and sexual appetites of others, we pray, R.

For victims of war whose lives are endangered daily by the arms race: the unrestrained production of “conventional” arms, nuclear warheads and other weapons of mass destruction, we pray, R.

For those impoverished by national policies and budgets that protect and increase the wealth of a few at the expense of the basic social needs of the majority, we pray, R.

For immigrants and other people on the move who are forced to leave their homelands and families because of the unequal distribution of the world’s goods, we pray, R.

For the earth, our home, whose very existence is threatened by the heavy footprint of human entitlement and disrespect, we pray, R.

(Other intentions....) R.

Closing Prayer:

Holy One: Open our eyes to see those made invisible in our world.

Source of Peace: Open our ears to hear the cries of our sisters and brothers who hunger and thirst for justice.

Font of all Knowing: Open our minds to understand the human dignity of all peoples, cultures, races, and religions.

Loving One: Open our hearts to feel the daily pain of those enslaved by human greed.

Divine Mystery: Open our hands to touch those in pain and in need.

Closing Song: “God Has Chosen Me” [verse 3] (Music by Bernadette Farrell)

Prayer by Lyn Kirkconnell,
Co-Promoter of Justice for
the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael



The Third Sunday of Advent

December 11, 2011

500th Anniversary Prayer for Advent

Opening Song: “God Has Chosen Me” [verses 1&2] (Music by Bernadette Farrell)

Welcome: We are celebrating the Third Week of Advent. All three readings for Sunday call us to the same mission embraced by Antonio de Montesinos and the other Dominican Friars with him. Five hundred years ago Montesinos gave the first sermon in the Americas that denounced the unjust and inhumane treatment of the indigenous peoples of this Hemisphere. His sermon was written by and with the community of Dominican Friars living on the island of Hispaniola, the present-day Dominican Republic and Haiti. His words, as spokesperson for his community, are echoes of Sunday’s readings from Isaiah, Paul and John.

As we listen to words from these readings, let us reflect on our own mission as preachers of the word today.

Reading #1: The prophet Isaiah said: “The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me... Yahweh sent me to bring good news to the poor, to bind up hearts that are broken; to proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to those in prison; to proclaim a year of favor from Yahweh.” In seeking to embody and proclaim this “year of favor from Yahweh,” Montesinos and his brothers recognized the need to challenge the atrocities they saw the Spanish conquerors inflicting on the indigenous peoples. Montesinos said: “... by what right ... do you hold these Indians in such cruel and horrible slavery? By what right do you wage such detestable wars on these people who lived mildly and peacefully in their own lands...?”

Both Isaiah and Montesinos knew what was needed to “bring good news,” to create a “year of favor from Yahweh.” The true meaning of evangelization is to meet and greet Christ in every person, every culture, every race, every religion and to denounce that which enslaves, impoverishes and dehumanizes.

The words of Isaiah and Montesinos. **All:** Thanks be to God.

Response, Psalm 34, sung or recited: “*The Lord hears the cry of the poor. Blessed be the Lord.*” (Music: John Foley, S.J.)

Reading #2: In Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians we hear: “Think what is best for each other and the community... Never try to suppress the Spirit.” Emboldened by the Spirit, this community of Friars could not remain silent in the face of injustices imposed on the indigenous peoples of the land. And so, Montesinos and his community became the voice of the voiceless as he denounced “... the cruelty and tyranny that (the Spanish colonizers) practiced on the innocent people ... of the island.” He challenged: “Why do you so greatly oppress and fatigue them, not giving them enough to eat or caring for them when they fall ill from excessive labors, so that they die or rather are slain by you, so that you may extract and acquire gold every day?”



Like the disciple Paul, Montesinos and the Friars embodied the words of Isaiah echoed in Sunday’s gospel of John. Montesinos became “the voice that cries in the wilderness: Make a straight way for the Lord.”

Later, Montesinos was sent back to Spain to take this same message to the King, to speak truth to power. Each of us is called to be that same “voice that cries in the wilderness,” to see and denounce injustice, to “think what is best for each other and the community” and to “never try to suppress the Spirit.”

The words of Paul, John and Montesinos!

All: Thanks be to God.

Response, Psalm 34, sung or recited: “*The Lord hears the cry of the poor. Blessed be the Lord.*” (Music: John Foley, S.J.)

Silent Reflection: Fr. Antonio de Montesinos was chosen by his Dominican Community to deliver a sermon to the conquerors, the exploiters, those in power. With the support and strength of his community he named the oppression and the oppressors, the unjust treatment of the indigenous people of the colonized island. He then addressed the root causes of the oppression: the greed for gold and personal wealth and, even more troubling, the lack of acknowledgement of the human dignity of the indigenous people. Montesinos and his Dominican Community went even further: they denounced these actions and attitudes as sinful and unjust and challenged the exploiters, the powerful, to repentance, to conversion and to restitution. (Read each question aloud with meditative intervals.)

1. If Montesinos and his Dominican Community were living today, where would they see assaults on human dignity? Where would they see injustices in our world?
2. Do I acknowledge the dignity of every human person?
3. Am I committed to defend the rights of others?
4. What are my Dominican Community and I doing to speak out against injustices?
5. Where might we put our efforts for a stronger commitment to justice?

Sharing/Dialog: Take a few minutes to share any insights from your personal reflections.

