**IV Sunday of Advent**

The cry that Fray Antonio de Montesinos launched 500 years ago, on the IV Sunday of Advent in 1511 to the colonizers in "La Española", when contemplating the treatment inflicted on the natives, still resonates in our days: "You are all in mortal sin and you live and die in it, because of the cruelty and tyranny that you use with these innocent people. Tell me, with what right and with what justice do you have these Indians in such cruel and horrible servitude? With what authority have you made such detestable wars against these people who were in their peaceful and peaceful lands, where so many of them, with death and ravages never heard of, have you consumed? Are these not men? Do they not have rational souls? Are you not obliged to love them as yourselves? Do you not understand this? Do you not feel this? How are you in such depth of sin? "I dream so lethargically asleep?"[[1]](#footnote-1) .

So many years later, these words that inspire the Dominican Family to denounce the violations of dignity continue to resonate in the ocean. The most bleeding reality that has caused me the most pain, rage and helplessness in these last months is that of a tremendous injustice and barbarity that has never been seen before. I am referring to "the truck" or the truck of the General Directorate of Migration that stops in the middle of a street and forcibly takes on the darkest colored people it finds, whether or not they have identity documents in their hand, children and the elderly, to take them to Haiti, a country whose language they do not even know because here they are ashamed to learn it. Normally they are field and construction workers who do not carry a document with them for fear of losing it or having it damaged by humidity, dust and sweat. Well, this prison-cage truck, uninhabitable and inhospitable inside, is filled to the limit with people who have been working for years, have formed a family and only know the Dominican land because they have never set foot on the land of their ancestors on the other side of the border.

These people who are arrested have lived in fear that one day this situation will happen to them and what hurts them most is seeing their families suffer the loss of a loved one who gives them love, gives them food and medicine every day and supports the work of agriculture, construction, etc. Some tell how along the way they are told that this can be “managed” and they look for money where they don’t have it, on credit at high interest rates, to be able to leave the inhumane prisons of the Immigration in the capital before leaving them to their fate beyond the border.

There is no turning back, nor half-hearted treatment that leaves us indifferent to these injustices that are becoming more common every day in every corner of the country. Ah! The truck doesn't go everywhere! In the bateys where the Central Romana or Grupo Vicini workers live, they have express orders not to enter. Otherwise, what slaves would pick sugar cane from sunrise to sunset in the most inhumane conditions? The batey is the only place where they feel safe and, sometimes, very grateful to the aforementioned companies and landowners who protect them. But when they can no longer continue picking because their calloused and deformed hands no longer have the strength they squandered in the cane fields since they were children, they are forced to abandon the ravines where they spent most of their lives.

Praying the biblical quote “remember that you were slaves in Egypt” (Dt 5, 15) it is unacceptable that in the 21st century these discriminatory and violent practices against groups of migrants or of foreign descent continue. The lack of a prior administrative process to individually evaluate each case and guarantee respect for the human rights of these people is a flagrant violation of the basic principles of justice and equity. I lived with Fr. Juan Manuel Febles the early morning of March 15 of this year when we freed two children, two pregnant women and an elderly woman after following the truck to Higüey. One child could not be unloaded and was taken to the capital and released the next day by UNHCR. It is worth noting that this child, orphaned by his mother, left his paternal home for fear of experiencing this terrible violation of his dignity again and cannot sleep at night. We share the images and testimonies that show inhuman and degrading treatment towards these people, who, regardless of their origin or immigration status, as people, have the right to humane and dignified treatment. You can view the testimonies recorded by the Radio Seybo team at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtAMewKbzLs

In Sacred Scripture, hospitality is considered sacred and in the parable of the Last Judgement, Christ himself identifies with the migrant: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Mt 25:35). Both the teachings of St. John Paul II and that of Pope Francis have established the issue of migration as an unavoidable concern of the mission of the Church. In his case, not only his words, but also his gestures have caused Christians to become aware of the seriousness of the issue. In these turbulent and difficult times, we cannot allow our Dominican institutions to be used to commit abuses; This is exactly what we want to avoid: violence, pillage and disorder affecting our families.

In several statements, the Dominican Family has demanded that the Dominican authorities put an end to these practices that violate human rights by guaranteeing transparent and fair administrative processes for all people. The cessation of these practices, which are often aimed at extortion and theft, has been requested, and the international community has been urged to take concrete measures to protect the rights of these people, the weakest in Dominican society. It should be noted that, for some time now, the residency of Dominicans of Haitian descent has not been renewed, and they remain in a legal limbo after having been beneficiaries of Law 169-14 enacted with the purpose of solving the effects of Sentence 168-13, which retroactively stripped more than four generations of Dominicans of Haitian descent of the right to nationality based on the origin of their parents.

Migration is a right that must be respected; it is genuine when it is exercised in an orderly and dignified manner and not when the person is forced to migrate, in an unplanned, unsafe manner that violates their human rights, before, during and after the migratory transit. For many people, the dream of having a better life for themselves and their families turns out to be a nightmare in which they suffer violations of their rights, face hunger, illness, violence, and even lose their lives. For this reason, it is important to have an evangelical view with a Human Rights perspective towards migration because, although with differences, it is already a growing phenomenon throughout our region.

Added to all this is the construction of a wall on the border by the Dominican Government for 3 years. It really does not make sense, in addition to promoting the separation between very close human groups, it is a step backwards in history that has taken so many steps towards rapprochement and strengthening brotherhood. Both countries need each other because they are part of the same history of struggle for dignity in which many rights have been won, being a model for other latitudes of the world. The construction of this wall is one more way of reinforcing the Sentence n° 168/13 of the Constitutional Court of the Dominican Republic which decides that the sons and daughters of foreigners who are not legal residents in the country are not entitled to Dominican nationality. Given this sentence, how can they be deprived of a fundamental right, that of their nationality?… The Constitution states that “everyone born in Dominican territory is Dominican.” On the other hand, this sentence contradicts international agreements and conventions on Human Rights, ratified by the Dominican Congress. Why not invest those millions in projects that benefit relations between both countries so that both Haitians and Dominicans do not have to emigrate from their country to another in search of a better future or simply to avoid dying of hunger in their own country?

The readings offered by the liturgy help us to meditate on this painful mystery that our brothers are going through. The prophet Micah (5:1-4a) encourages us to trust in the One who heals our brokenness in brotherhood: “The Lord will be great to the ends of the earth. He himself will be peace.” In Psalm 79, man gives thanks for God’s protective tenderness, asks for his light to emerge from the darkness and commits to announcing his grace. The Letter to the Hebrews (10:5-10) is a confession of faith: “Behold, I have come to do your will, O God.” The Gospel of Luke (1:39-45) tells of the meeting between Mary and Elizabeth who “was filled with the Holy Spirit” and proclaimed: “Blessed is she who believed, for what was spoken to her by the Lord will be fulfilled.”

In the Dominican Family we feel urged to make a call to conscience as citizens of the same Humanity and as Christians who believe in the same God. Let us pray to God the Father-Mother for Haiti and the Dominican Republic, so that as a people we can move forward, strengthen our institutions, join forces in the search for solutions, and that He gives us the wisdom to make the best decisions and a generous heart to support each other as sister peoples. May Our Father Saint Dominic and the Virgin of Altagracia intercede for these families and for a society where we achieve peace and harmony by discovering ourselves as brothers and children of the same God.

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1. CASAS, Bartolomé de las, History of the Indies, book III, chap. 4 (Selected Works of Friar Bartolomé de las Casas), vol. 2, (Madrid 1961) 176. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)