



Dominican Month for Peace

Rome, 25 June 2019

To all the members of the Dominican Family

Dominican Month for Peace 2019 And Update from 2017 and 2018

Prot. 50/19/117 Promoter of J&P

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Warm greetings again from Rome!

As I prepare to finish my 9-year mandate and to hand over to my successor, it gives me pleasure to announce to you that the focus of our annual Dominican Month for Peace for 2019 will be on **India**. As in 2017 and 2018, the period of this focus will be Advent, when we are all waiting for the celebration of the mystery of the incarnation of the Prince of Peace. Our focus on peace in India will therefore start on the First Sunday of Advent (1 December), run for the whole of December, and culminate on the Church's World Day of Peace on 1 January.

We remind you that the idea of this Dominican Month for Peace was conceived in order to promote a global Dominican solidarity with our brothers and sisters who are trying to bring hope in situations of violence and war. In 2017, we focused on Colombia, where, after a 50-year civil war, a Peace Accord offered new hope. In the Month for Peace, Dominican communities in all parts of the world demonstrated solidarity with the suffering of the Colombian people and with the efforts of Dominicans there to be advocates of peace. Masses were celebrated, prayers were offered, awareness of Colombia was raised, and Colombian embassies were contacted. About 28,500 US Dollars (\$20,800 from inside Colombia and \$7,700 from outside) was donated for the training of peacemakers in the Diocese of Tibú, Catatumbo, and this is being used to build an auditorium where dialogue and peace talks will be hosted.

Unfortunately the situation in Colombia remains very fragile. Many community leaders, indigenous people, journalists and human rights defenders continue to be threatened and assassinated, peace agreements made are often dishonoured and huge economic and gender inequalities persist. Nevertheless, in the face of this, Dominicans, among many different actions, are still playing a key role in strengthening the Peace Accord, in mediating peace between government and guerrilla forces, in supporting families of victims of massacres, in a campaign against anti-personnel landmines, and in training armed forces to develop a culture of respect for human rights. Let us continue to pray for them!

In 2018, we focused on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a country that has been living through decades of devastating wars with ongoing massacres and human rights violations perpetrated by government forces and scores of opposing armed groups. Along with many foreign powers and companies, these armed groups are scrambling to extract the rich natural resources of the country. Building on the experience of 2017 and with excellent communication and participation in every region, many Dominican communities worldwide organised Masses, prayers and awareness-raising activities in solidarity with the Congolese people and the Congolese Dominicans during the Month for Peace. More than 40 reports of Dominican Family activities in all continents were received, but it is known that many other activities were unreported globally. \$22,300 was donated for PEDUC (Program for Civic Education) at the University of Uélé in Isiro, in the north-east of DRC. This will be used to set up a Peace Education Centre by renovating a building, acquiring furniture and equipment and setting up a peace library.

The Month for Peace coincided with the holding of the long-awaited general elections in the country on 30 December. Despite many weaknesses and irregularities, these elections were conducted in a relatively peaceful manner and, although the results were disputed, the people largely have accepted that the unexpected and peaceful handover of power to an Opposition candidate was the best they could hope to achieve. President Tshisekedi has therefore received national and

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international recognition. Many Dominicans (and PEDUC in particular in the Isiro region) played an important role in preparing the people and in monitoring the election. Throughout this process, the Dominican Family in the DRC deeply appreciated the prayers for peace and gestures of solidarity expressed by Dominicans worldwide.

While the challenges in the DRC remain enormous and the road to real peace will be a long one, our Dominican brothers and sisters there, with the support of our delegation to the UN, are growing in strength in their efforts to empower the people to become agents of sustainable development and peace. Let us continue to pray for them!

Having focused on Latin America in 2017 and on Africa in 2018, this year we will now focus on Asia, and in particular on **India**. In the wake of the Synod on Youth that took place in October, 2018, we have decided to reinforce this priority of the Church by including a particular focus on peace as it applies to youth, with whom many of our Dominican brothers and sisters in India are working. With this priority in mind, and while forms of violence are prevalent at so many levels of the huge and complex Indian society, our focus in the 2019 Dominican Month for Peace will be on countering violence, in the form of deprivation and abuse, against children, women and "tribals" (indigenous people), struggles in which many Dominicans are present.

The focus of our attention, for information and to provide spiritual and financial support, will be two Dominican projects:

1. The Dominican Project Bloom for street children in Nagpur; and
2. The Dominican Family Safe Childhood Project to train trainers to address child sexual abuse.

Closer to the Month for Peace, in September or October, you will be sent more information and materials on India and on the Dominicans there to assist you with content for the prayers, preaching, awareness-raising and other activities that you will organise. Meanwhile, as a next step, we urge you:

1. to appoint a coordinator for the Month for Peace for your entity,
2. to inform our promoters of Justice and Peace, fr Mike Deeb un@curia.op.org and Sr Cecilia Espenilla jp.dsi@curia.op.org of the name of the coordinator appointed for your entity, and
3. to allocate time for possible events in your regular programme for that month.
4. If you or anyone else in your community has ideas on useful and creative ways to highlight this focus, if you have discovered useful materials, videos, etc about India, or if you, yourself, have been able to produce materials, songs or works of art, please feel free to share them with us as soon as possible by sending them to both fr Mike and Sr Cecilia. We will then do our best to incorporate your suggestions and diffuse them widely. If we can all collaborate more in the preparation of this event, it is certainly likely to have a much greater impact.

Thank you very much for your cooperation! We pray that, through this small action, solidarity amongst us all can continue to grow and, in turn, enable our preaching mission to have a greater impact in bringing Good News to our world.

In St Dominic,

br Bruno Cadore
Master of the Order

sr Cecilia Espenilla
DSI International Promoter for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

br Mike Deeb
General Promoter for Justice and Peace