

2010

The Mission of Preaching



Five centuries since the foundation of the first Dominican community in "the Americas"!

IMPORTANT EVENTS: Please observe these dates with prayer, study and action...

1 January	World Day of Peace
17 January	World Day of Migrants and Refugees
27 January	Holocaust Remembrance Day and Day to Combat Leprosy
11 February	International Day for the Sick
20 February	World Day of Social Justice
8 March	International Women's Day
21 March	International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
22 March	World Water Day
22 April	International Earth Day
1 May	International Workers Day
3 May	World Press Freedom Day
5 June	World Environment Day
26 June	International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking
26 June	International Day in Support of Torture Victims
1st Sat. of July	International Day of Cooperatives
1 August	Death of Pierre Claverie, OP (Martyr of Algeria)
6 August	Hiroshima Day
9 August	Nagasaki Day
9 August	International Day of Indigenous People
16 September	International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer
21 September	International Day of Peace
1 October	International Day for Older Persons
2 October	International Day of Non Violence
10 October	World Day Against Death Penalty
15 October	International Day of Rural Women
16 October	World Food Day
17 October	International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
24 October	United Nations Day
24 - 30 October	Disarmament Week
3 November	Feast of St. Martin de Porres (Patron of Social Justice)
11 November	Bartolome de las Casas Day
25 November	International Day for Elimination of Violence against Women
1 December	World AIDS Day
2 December	International Day for the Abolition of Slavery
10 December	Human Rights Day
18 December	International Migrants Day

Produced by the General Promoters of Justice and Peace.

International Dominican Commission for Justice and Peace

Convento Santa Sabina – Aventino, Piazza Pietro d'Iliria, 1 - 00153 Rome - Italy

Tel. 39 6 57940656 - Fax 39 6 5750675 jp@curia.op.org - <http://jp.op.org>

THE SERMON OF MONTESINOS

“Are these not men? Have they not rational souls? Are you not bound to love them as you love yourselves? Don't you understand this? Don't you feel it?”

Sermon by Fr. Antonio de Montesinos

It was September, 1510, when the first Dominicans arrived at Hispaniola, the name given to the island of the Caribbean Sea, currently occupied by the Dominican Republic and Haiti. . . .Very soon the Dominicans became aware of the bad treatment received, and the abuse committed against, the inhabitants of that island. . . .They could not keep silent. “They felt they had an obligation to do so because of the profession they had made.”

They prepared the denouncement in the form of a sermon, to which they gave long and hard deliberation, with the participation of the whole Community. Once they decided on the text and wrote it down, it was signed by each one of the members of the community. Fr. Pedro de Cordoba, who was the vicar, commissioned Fr Antonio Montesinos to preach it at the High Mass on the Fourth Sunday of Advent which was December 21, 1511, just a little more than a year from the day of their arrival at the island.

In spite of the fact, as we have said, that it was a written sermon, the original text is not available, but only an extract which, later on, Fr. Bartolome de Las Casas would incorporate in his work on the History of the Indies (Book III, chapter 4), where one can read:

“I am the voice of Christ crying in the desert of this island, therefore, it is right that you listen attentively (...) All of you are in mortal sin and in it you live and will die for the cruelty with which you treat these innocent people. Tell me, by what right or justice do you keep these Indians in such cruel and horrible servitude...? By what authority have you declared such detestable wars on this people who were living, calmly and peacefully on their lands, where you have allowed an infinite number of them to be consumed in their sickness, resulting in death and destruction never heard of before? Through the excessive work you demand of them, they fall ill and die, or rather, you kill them with your desire to extract and acquire gold every day. And what do you care if someone instructs them in the Faith and that they know their God and Creator are baptized, attend Mass, keep holy days and Sundays? Are these not men? Have they not rational souls? Are you not bound to love them as you love yourselves? This, do you not understand? This, do you not feel? Are you in such a profound sleep that you are lethargic? Be certain that in such a state as you are, you can no more be saved than [those] who lack and do not want the Faith of Jesus Christ.”



FOR REFLECTION AND DIALOGUE

What persons around us suffer from the undervaluation of their human dignity and vulnerability in regard to their human rights? Which are the groups most affected? What false arguments are used to justify the unjustifiable? What attitude do we adopt as a group of Dominicans before such atrocities?

The first Dominicans who arrived at Hispaniola defended the truth that the Indians had “rational souls”, which in the language of the times, meant their human dignity. Most probably they had learned from St. Thomas that because, “to exist with a rational nature is of the greatest dignity, every rational being is called ‘person’”; therefore “in the very word ‘person’, proper dignity is expressed.” Do we know and cultivate dutifully this tradition of our Order?

(This excerpt is taken from, “In Evangelical Solidarity with the Oppressed: The Fifth Centenary Anniversary of the Arrival of the Order in America,” Juan Manuel Pérez García O.P., Francisco Javier Martínez Real O.P. Please see the “Jubilee” link at <http://curia.op.org>)

Produced by the General Promoters of Justice and Peace.

International Dominican Commission for Justice and Peace

Convento Santa Sabina – Aventino, Piazza Pietro d’Illiria, 1 - 00153 Rome - Italy

Tel. 39 6 57940656 - Fax 39 6 5750675 jp@curia.op.org - <http://jp.op.org>