REPORT OF JUSTICE AND PEACE O.P. VENEZUELA

Given the serious situation that Venezuela is going through, Justice & Peace O.P. Venezuela wants to send these words to the whole Order of Preachers, especially to the promoters of Justice & Peace, to let you know our point of view on the political, economic and social crisis that takes place in our country as well as the actions we have carried on to face the situation.

You might have seen in the news or even have received reports from specialists, political scientists and economists that provide trustful information from scientific data that can depict the current situation of Venezuela. Given the situation that this country lives, you might wander about our living conditions, the actions we might have taken, as well as the ways you can help.

For us, it is important to be heard by brothers with whom, even in the distance, we share a common life, united by the ministry of the preaching of the Gospel to the human kind. Many have expressed their solidarity through brotherhood, giving medicines... but also through open communications such as the Dominican Family of Bolivia, the Interprovincial Conference of Dominicans of Latin America and the Caribbean (CIDALC, in Spanish), the Confederation of Dominican Sisters of Latin America and the Caribbean (CODALC, in Spanish), and the Dominican Sisters International (DSI). Thank you all for the demonstrations of brotherhood and solidarity, thanks for including us in your prayers.

CONTEXTUALIZATION

Venezuela suffers a deep political, economic and social crisis that translates into a humanitarian emergency, due to the lack and high prices of food, health care and medicines. There is also a high rate of mortality of neonates in some of the hospitals because of infections they have gotten there; hospitals do not have the minimum resources to keep sanitary conditions, among other causes.

The Government has implemented a plan called People’s Liberation Operation (OLP) in order to face crime. Their operations have led to executions. Consider that Venezuela does not have death penalty. Additionally to this, there is an increase of kills by street criminals.

Freedom and human rights are more evidently limited and violated by the Government, as it is shown by arbitrary detentions, civil being condemned by military courts, prohibition and criminalization of non violent protests, the monopoly of mass media, persecution and denial of resources to the independent media that are critical toward the Government, the creation of paramilitary groups, known as ‘colectivos’; many of them formed by criminals from the most dangerous neighbourhoods, they are given arms by the Government and stay at its orders to intimidate, destroying homes, neighbourhoods, vehicles, chasing, torturing and killing people in the communities that have raised their voice of disagreement and protest.
The Venezuelan Government violates the institutions, the Law, the due process to carry legal actions that is fundamental in the rule of law for the legal and judiciary guarantee. The arbitrariness is such that it evidently brakes with the National Constitution. In a democratic State, this deepens the crisis that the Government denies, because they caused it.

This whole situation is serious and has an influence in the national big scale affecting the daily life of citizens in a significant manner; unfortunately, in detriment of their life quality, which lowers down within the economic crisis into an inhumane environment. All of it is the result of the economic policies boosted by the Government that have caused the highest inflation rate in the world, which expected to reach 1,500% this year. On the other hand, the fall of the GDP is astonishingly negative.

The foreign exchange policies, the interfering measures in the whole economic activities and the uncertainty of rules translate into legal insecurity of the economic activity. The public expenses and corruption, undoubtedly, deepen the national crisis and make the short and medium term future appear hard. All this represents an increase in the weight on the shoulders of the Venezuelan population that will continue crushing the poorest and worsening the numbers on malnourishment and deaths for not having access to the health system and medicines. There will be an increase in school dropout and in the number of Venezuelans migrating to other countries in precarious conditions, in risk of labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, drug smuggling. The fierce face of poverty will be more noticeable.

The exploitation of row material as the only support of our economy has to be examined carefully with the participation of specialists. Venezuela depends on oil revenues and the administration of the oil company is carried by the Government under a model that has made it decay. The Government has abandoned the maintenance and the investment for a sustainable development of the industry and has separated from the international standards that kept the oil company among the first of the world. It is proven by the fact of a lower production every year.

Likewise, the Orinoco mining belt, as a source of income through the exploitation of natural resources, is likely not only to follow the fate of the oil company (PDVSA), as for irregular administration and the corruption network, but it also will affect negatively and irretrievably the environment, with consequences all over the region.

“The Venezuelan land that last February 24, 2016 became part of the Orinoco Mining Belt is wider than the territory of countries like Bulgaria, Cuba, Iceland, Portugal and Panama. The land affected by the Mining Belt Project by decree 2.248, published in the Official Journal # 40.855, is of 111,843.70 sq kilometres. This vast territory was divided into 4 pieces and equals the 12% of the national territory. The decree was signed by President Nicolás Maduro as though it was a new myth of El Dorado, where there is not only the promise for gold but also
diamond, bauxite, coltan, iron, cooper, kaolin, dolomite and rare-earth metals.”
(Núñez, EL Nacional, 2016)

After this brief summary of the general crisis of the Country, we would like to underline two aspect of urgency: the food crisis and the health crisis.

HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY

The balance of food and nutrition 2016-2017 presented by Susana Raffalli Arismendi, collaborator of Caritas Venezuela and specialist in the food in Venezuela, exposes the food and health situation as in “state of emergency”. Raffalli says: “It is sad that we went from calling the attention on possible outputs to call for international help for funerary expenses. We are having from 4 to 6 children dead a week because of malnourishment.” Further, she points out that “the food crisis is too serious, it has turned into an humanitarian emergency; the national food system was disabled to satisfy the added nutrition needs of the population and the basic nutrition needs of the poorest, who are showing severe malnutrition, as extreme privation to the extreme of famine edema, pellagra and kwashiorkor…” Finally, among her conclusions, she says: “With no further resources this humanitarian emergency cannot be solved; the life of many Venezuelans depends on the international help.”

This is the image of a two-year-old child who died after 5 days of agony at the El Llanito Hospital in Caracas. He weighed only 4.5 Kg. (Hurtado, 2017)

Venezuelans searching for food in the garbage (clic)

As for health, we quote JoD’Elias, who amply knows the satiation of the Venezuelan health system. When speaking about it, he pointed out that “we
have gone from a deep crisis to a very complex humanitarian emergency… The prolonged shortage, the disarticulation of the health system and the severe and arbitrary rationing, with limited access and blockage to mechanisms of humanitarian help because of lack of cooperation of the Government, are causing an exponential increase of deaths that are sanitarily avoidable; there are health conditions that are not being treated, epidemics that are continuously propagating and irreparable damages to the mental and physical conditions of the patients.

Eight-year-old boy protesting against the lack of medicines in Venezuela (rumrum.es, 2016)

Doctors pose with patients to denounce the lack of medicines (información.com, 2016)

THE CORE PROBLEM: THE DESTRUCTION OF DEMOCRACY

The current state of these two factors – food and health – leads us to talk about the humanitarian emergency. All the aspects of the social life in Venezuela show that the national crisis is caused by the central problem of destruction of democracy as a form of government, life and social organization and by the installation of a dictatorship. This destruction of democracy, to the best Castro-communist style, is carried on under the advice of the Cuban dictators. They are actively and massively present in different areas of the national life, including the security class, the National Armed Forces.

Evidence of the braking with democracy and of violation to the constitution is the actions of the Government after the Parliamentary elections in 2015. We shall say that before those elections there were as well actions that violated the Constitution, legal procedures and regulations, created by the Government after
their interests and to their convenience. But the violation of the Constitution has worsened since the parliamentary elections in 2015, resulting in serious transgressions to the constituted powers of the State.

At the elections for the legislative power on December 6, 2015, the opposition parties won the supermajority for the National Assembly with 112 seats, whereas the Government’s party only got 55 seats. 4 candidates from the indigenous factions were not recognized out of which 3 were supporting the opposition. The Supreme Court suspended their investiture because the Government’s party alleged they won by electoral fraud. With that political movement, the opposition lost their second supermajority, which consists of two thirds of the seats (112 seats) and they only had the first supermajority that requires three fifths of the seats (101 seats).

The taking of oath of the three opposition candidates before the National Assembly resulted in the sentence by the Supreme Court (which was illegally appointed) declaring the National Assembly in disobedience; the sentence would not be removed until the National Assembly relieve those three congress persons from their seats. They dismissed afterwards to facilitate a negotiation that the Government has used to manipulate and make time because they do not show actual intentions to dialogue.

Right after the elections, before the inauguration of the new congress, the pro-government outgoing assembly appointed a new Supreme Court (judges and substitutes) without abiding by the procedures, regarding terms, candidatures, requirements, etc. Lots of irregularities, took place; among which, the appointing of judges that were candidates to the National Assembly, and that are now enabled to make decision on legislative issues from the Supreme Court, as the elected congress people are disabled.

The appointing of those judges and substitutes did not count on the support of the Attorney General, who did not sign the appointing because of the irregularities. From then, every action of the Government is evidence of the totalitarianism practised by the Government party to oppress the opposition and obstruct all the democratic and constitutional solutions to the political and social crisis of the Nation.

Let us point out some of the facts that violate the state of right and the National Constitution, causing a long period of civil protests:

- Sentences that have limited the parliamentary immunity of the Assembly.
- Unjustified delays in the regional elections, which should have been done in 2016, and municipal elections should have been in 2017.
- The suppression of the Recall Elections, through pettifoggery carried on by the National Electoral Council itself, which is openly partial and dependent to the Government.
- Sentences of the Supreme Court to void decisions made by the National Assembly.
- A sentence by the Supreme Court, on March 29, 2017, suppressing the parliament and promoting the overtaking of its powers. This can be interpreted as a Coup to the Legislative Power. This triggered a long period of civil protests, on the streets that lasted more than four months and has resulted in many deaths; as El Nacional pointed out “more that 126 murders (...) according to numbers given by the Public Ministry, 5,058 detainees, out of which 1,383 are still in jail, according to the association Foro Penal, 620 political prisoners certified by the ASO” by August 5, 2017. There have been many violations to the Law, to the legal procedures to arrest, put in jail and judge the civilians. The national and international manifestations made the Supreme Court to suppress the sentences but the decisions made by the National Assembly continue being ignored. Obstacles to their work are still blocking their competences, decisions, resources and power.

- The President of the Republic calls a National Constituent Assembly, and assumes the initial constituent power, which resides in the people who is the one that decides whether to call a constituent process or not. The President can take the initiative and through a consultative referendum, the citizens decide whether or not to convene a Constituent process. This procedure was violated by the president and endorsed by the Supreme Court, resolving a demand for interpretation of articles 347 and 348 empowering the President in this way to convene the National Constituent Assembly, a consultative referendum not being necessary or constitutionally binding.

- Overtaking of the functions of the Attorney General by the Supreme Court; they voided the naming of a new Deputy Attorney General and appointed another person as Deputy Attorney General. Afterwards, they dismissed the Attorney General and assigned her powers to the Ombudsman, Tarek William Saab, who is a faithful member of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), the Government’s party, so as to avoid investigations and legal actions against the irregularities made by the corrupt Government. Let us remember that the dismissed Attorney General, Luisa Ortega Díaz, comes from the ranks of the Chavezism and she responded to the guidelines of the socialist revolution of the 21st Century, according to her, abiding by the Law. She belongs to the group of chavists dissidents of Nicolás Maduro and his Constituent Assembly.

- Judgement to civilians by military courts, “Which is a serious violation to the human rights and the complete abandonment of the rule of the law; this puts us under the rule of the military and this is unacceptable and incompatible with the minimal judiciary guarantees that should exist in a civil democracy” (Cocuyo, 2017), as stated by a communication released on May 8, 2017, by the Commission of Families and Victims (COAFAVIC), an NGO for the protection and promotion of human rights.

- The Constituent Assembly was installed illegally. On the one hand, there was a very low participation of voters, many of them were obliged as the Attorney General affirms based on complaints filed at her office. On the
other hand, the company Smartmatic, which was in charge of the
electronic vote and worked for the National Electoral Council (CNE),
made complaints about the irregularities of the elections.
The Constituent Assembly is the coarser and more miserable mask of
democracy that hides the dictatorial actions, persecuting the dissidence
and pretending to create a State structure that limits the freedom and
independence of the citizens and their social organization, trying to
subjugate them to a totalitarian, dictatorial government that serves the
corrupt elite, which is also involved in drug trafficking, as pointed out by
national and international reports.

THE NATIONAL ARMED FORCE

The Venezuelan National Armed Force is an institution that has marked the
Venezuelan society and is crucial for the exercise of power by the Government.
Today, it is the only institution that keeps the Government of Nicolás Maduro in
power despite the continuous violations to the Constitution, and to the form of
government that it clearly states. Let us take Article 6 of the Title I of the
Principles of the Constitution:

“The government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the political
entities within it is and will always be democratic, participative, elective,
decentralized, alternative, responsible, pluralist and of revocable mandates.”

Living in the country, we can witness how all the principles established in the
article are violated by the national Government and by its leaders since long ago.

The National Armed Force is seen as a partialized institution that responds to
the orders of the Government and its party, the PSUV. It is widely known that
they have slogans and symbols that promote the communist influence of the
Cuban government of the Castro brothers. There are many complaints on the
Cuban government meddling in the intelligence, security and the
Armed Forces.

The military are participating more in the public administration, where the
civilians are becoming fewer. Also, there is an increase of retired military that
are being named as mayors, governors, and other titles. There is a clear
deviation of the civil powers towards a military way of administration, adding to
this the fact that they are faithful to the party of the Government and its
ideology, in the detriment of excellence and the wellbeing of a whole nation.

The security enforcement institutions, in particular the National Police
Department and the National Guard (one of the components of the military
force), which was created to keep public order, have been using firearms since
January 2015, in compliance to Sentence 6810 of the Defence Ministry and in
opposition to the Article 68 of the National Constitution forbidding the use of
firearms and toxic substances in the control of non violent protests. They have
also increased the use of violence and disproportioned force. All this aims at
frightening the people not to participate in non-violent demonstrations organized by the opposition and the civil society. Additionally, they work along with illegal paramilitary groups who have the freedom to commit criminal acts with the support of the government.

Below, there are only parts of the facts that are widely rejected by the Venezuelans and generate the rejection of people toward the law enforcement institutions and the military forces, because they are expressions of evil that are not justified:

- Wuilly Arteaga is a young violinist that protested and used his violin as his voice for the freedom of Venezuela. On May 24, 2017, he was assaulted by members of the National Guard who destroyed his instrument, and in further protests he received such a physical aggression causing loss of hearing in one of the ears. He was imprisoned and tortured. He was sentenced to probation.
Wuilly Arteaga, brutally attacked, loses the hearing in one of his ears (Digital, 2017)

- Neomar Lander, 17-year-old boy who was convinced to fight for the freedom of Venezuela, He was in a protest holding to his slogan: “the fight of a few is worth the freedom of many”. The courage of this teenager and the joy that jumped out of his eyes scared the security forces, who on June 8, 2017, killed him in the middle of a protest. They shot a gas bomb right to his chest to cause his death.

Neomar Lander in the protests for the Freedom of Venezuela (caraotadigital.net, 2017)
Neomar Lander, teenager killed by the law enforcement organs (amilcarespitia, 2017)

- Cross is the name of a dog, the pet of one of the neighbours of the residential buildings placed in El Paraiso, an important neighbourhood of Caracas. On June 13, 2017, the building was illegally seized by the law enforcement organs, whose members destroyed cars, TVs and other possessions. They also wounded this pet dog, which, afterward, had to be sacrificed. As the dog was barking while the officers were breaking into the apartment, one of them shot the dog on the eye.

Cross, the pet dog that was shot by the law enforcement organs (pitazo)

- On July 5, 2017, celebrating one more year of the Independence of Venezuela, the paramilitary broke in the National Assembly (the parliament) in a violent fashion. Some of them were armed with guns and knives. Under the eyes and protection of the National Guard, they attacked physically the congress persons; they threw gas bombs and shot in the air.
The National Guard’s permissive witnessing of the Assault to the National Assembly (Pelaez)

- Other interesting fact is that the detainee teenagers were transferred to El Dorado, a dangerous high security prison in the south of Venezuela. The prisoners of El Dorado, protested in rejection of the transfer. They did not want the young student protesters to be in jail because they did not consider them criminals.
These actions, the testimonies of the victims documenting the tortures by the armed forces and by the government in general, make us think of a barbarian government. Unfortunately, it was a government onto which many of the hopes of the people were put. Before they took over power, Venezuela was like Cavafy’s poem *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Chavism was for many a “kind of solution”.

In the poem, those Romans who were waiting went home with serious faces and confused souls because the Barbarians did not arrive to legislate. The serious faces of the Venezuelans and the desolation are caused by the fact that the barbarian-like government has been already almost two decades ruling; making laws and now they imposed an unconstitutional constituent assembly reorganizing at will our nation.

The perception that the population has of the forced arms is that of an institution whose officers are very well paid and enjoy advantageous benefits compared to the rest of the public workers. Their higher benefits come from sinecures and opportunities of managing programs and state institutions allocated through connections and friendships, mainly where there are high amounts of money implied and a low control. This gives place to corruption, drug trafficking, human rights violation and an overcharge of power that do not allow individuals within the armed force to go against the government, which would mean to renounce to all the advantages they have and to admit their collusion in the violation of the Constitution, human rights, corruption etc.
With this military status quo, it is unlikely to expect from them an opposition, or at least a reasonable stand defending the Constitution and, hence, democracy.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Catholic Church, represented by the Venezuelan Episcopal Conference, face to the government has been critical and has tried to express ideas of light for the exercise of power with a clear pastoral voice in a transparent and unanimous manner. This is the result of the practice of hearing and prudent thinking, with solid roots in the Gospel and in the life of the people, especially the poorest.

The government, thus, has carried out a discrediting campaign against the Church, leading to defamation, jibe and even persecution. In particular, many bishops have been the object of that campaign aiming at undermining the credibility, acceptance, love and the presence of the Church in the society and, more importantly, in the poor areas. The campaign is meant to displace the Church from the hearts of Venezuelans by obstructing its social work.

The government has expropriated properties of the Church; has tried to intimidate us, to demoralize us and to humiliate us with the help of the paramilitary through verbal and physical aggressions against some bishops, priests and seminarians. Let us remember the five seminarians, some of them under age, who were brutally attacked and stripped and whose clothing was burnt in the streets of the city of Merida, in the state of Merida.

The Church, through its institutions, universities, hospitals, schools, nursing homes, parishes and personally through the priests, has brought company, hope solidarity and fraternity to the citizens who suffer the products of hate, division and the fundamentalism that has been sown in the Country throughout the years. They have used many strategies, including the promotion of the Santería, as well as the manipulation of His Holiness, Pope Francis, trying to spread the image of a divided Church and separated from Rome. They have tried to create the idea of an opposition between the Venezuelan bishops and the Holy Father. This was evidenced when the Vatican was called on to assist in the dialogue between the opposition and the government in October 2016.

Certainly, there were many priests, religious community members and laics that joined the wave of change proposed by the populist discourse of Chavez.

A church, in which the theology of liberation resonates as a proposal for listening to the Word of God and for the evangelical commitment in favour of the poorest and most excluded, seemed to find in that discourse and character, which came from the poor, a sort of salvation that would translate into concrete actions for the poor. But it was actually an ideological approach that “ends up using the poor in the service of other political or personal interests”, as Pope Francis said in his speech at the León Condou stadium, in Asunción, Paraguay. Nothing is further from the theology of liberation than an ideology.
This Church, present in the life and feeling of the national reality, continues to be one of the institutions with the greatest credibility in society, continues to be a voice that calls for a return to constitutionality and the rule of law, continues to demand respect for human rights, respect for the right to protest, and continues in its work of solidarity and charity with the most needy and excluded. That is why it pleads for the opening of a humanitarian channel of medicines and food; it stands in solidarity with those who suffer the persecution, torture and deprivation of liberty of political prisoners and of those who exercised their right to peaceful protest; from our work in prisons, we also continue to demand compliance with minimum human conditions for prisoners. It is a church that remains committed to justice and peace, open and available to facilitate a true dialogue in reasonably optimal conditions that lead to a reliable dialogue to reach real agreements with guarantees to be fulfilled by the parties involved. It is a church that continues fundamentally announcing the message of Jesus, our strength and hope in the possibility of building a more just and humane society from a life grounded in fraternal love.

THE ORDER OF PREACHERS IN VENEZUELA

The presence of the Order in Venezuela, from the Dominican Family immersed in the social interweaving, makes its contribution in the construction of a more just and humane Venezuela in the promotion of evangelical and democratic values, from each of its presences and apostolate, fundamentally in the parishes, vicariates, schools and some social works.

In Justice and Peace O.P. Venezuela we have started a path of joint work with the Dominican Family and the Justice and Peace promoter of the Order. In this work team we see the need to train ourselves to address the reality of violation of Human Rights and the promotion of these rights in our presence as an Order. We have seen the need to have a common coordination to join forces and enable a single voice of protest, denunciation, solidarity, company, strength and hope for the Dominican Family and for the citizens who today fight for truth, democracy, justice and peace.

We would like on our part to offer better answers through actions to the different events in the country in the most prompt, efficient and timely manner, but the reality of each of the members, the resources we have, our institutional realities (the vicariate in the case of the friars, the congregations in the case of the sisters, the lay fraternities and the youth groups that make up the Dominican Youth Movement), and different circumstances, do not make it possible to give a better response to this situation of humanitarian crisis and the destruction of the democratic system as a form of social organization.

As a Justice and Peace team we are initially consolidating a common work plan that consists of training, strengthening the social works that are held and the promotion of Justice and Peace as a fundamental element in the life and mission of any Dominican presence.

In this regard, we propose:
Urgent Agenda for Democracy

1- Participate and support networking, which is carried out with different NGOs, federations, universities, movements, etc.

2- The attitude that we want to express and generate in our Dominican Family is to ACCOMPANY AND BE SOLIDARY.

3- “Fortaleza y Esperanza” Campaign; we suggest that those who participate in public demonstrations use the slogan "Fortaleza y Esperanza Venezuela. Justicia y Paz O.P." (Strength and Hope. Justice and Peace O.P.)

4- Participate in public demonstrations.

5- Humanitarian channel.
   a. Campaign that demands and supports the humanitarian channel for medicines and food.
   b. Create a distribution network by contacting and coordinating with the brothers in the places where we are present.
   c. Friars and sisters who leave the country and wait to return, willing to collaborate, to bring medicines as part of their luggage.
   d. Support and encouragement to the communities, which already have a job of caring for the sick or helping with food, either by preparing or already prepared (such as the “solidarity pots”).

6- Strengthen daily personal prayer, participation in community prayer, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist; we invite you to keep in mind the intention for a life in justice and peace. Specifically we propose to meditate a part of the rosary, we suggest the Friday of each week, for justice and peace in Venezuela.

PASTORAL THEOLOGICAL ILLUMINATION

Faced with this situation that is not fair because of so many lies and decisions taken behind the back of the people that seemed to overshadow and kill our hope, we listen to the Word of God, which sustains our life and gives us consistency to continue walking with certain hope that life will sprout in the middle of the dark night. “See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. The wild animals honour me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen, the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.” (Is 43, 19-21)

This is the God who walks with his people and sustains our hope, makes us see that the most important thing is to seek the Kingdom of God and his Justice, because everything else will be given to us in addition. “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Mathiew 6, 34)

Our mission is to manifest the hope we carry within, as Peter's letter proposes. (1 Peter 3, 15…)
We cannot leave aside the words of Pope Francis, who encourages us and enlightens us with a discourse of life in our journey: "Our hope is not a concept or a feeling, but a Person, it is the Lord Jesus whom we recognize alive and present in us and in our brothers... Christian hope is solid, it does not disappoint. It is not founded on what we can do or be, much less on what we can believe. Its foundation is the love that God himself feeds in each one of us... The Lord has poured out abundantly in our hearts, his Spirit, which is the love of God, as an architect and as a guarantor, precisely, so that he can nourish within us the faith and keep hope alive.”

Let us continue generating life and life in abundance where our brothers and sisters need us.

COMMUNICATION

From the Justice and Peace team of the Order of Preachers in Venezuela, we express our concern for the systematic violation of human rights in Venezuela, which have been occurring in recent months in a significant manner, rights of various kinds ranging from the right to life up to the right to peaceful demonstration, the right to vote, right to freedom of expression, even rights of a procedural nature such as defence and due process, all these rights established in our legal framework are violated by the Venezuelan government who has the inalienable function of protecting and ensuring the guarantee and enjoyment of these rights by citizens.

We see with deep concern the absence of autonomous and independent institutions, as well as the criminalization of any dissenting voice to the current government, all of which represents a deviation from a democratic system to an authoritarian system with an autocratic and repressive model of state.

It is our duty to enlighten but also to encourage the meeting of all Venezuelans to a path of peace and fraternity that guarantees respect for the rights and dignity of the human being. When a country does not provide minimum guarantees for access to food, health, justice, it is a clear sign of a model that moves away from the democratic ideals that constitute the nature of our legislation and, as citizens, we must all make the effort to restore the violated legal order, within the framework of articles 333 and 350 of our constitution.

Article 333. This Constitution shall not cease to be in effect if it ceases to be observed due to acts of force or because or repeal in any manner other than as provided for herein. In such eventuality, every citizen, whether or not vested with official authority, has a duty to assist in bringing it back into actual effect.

Article 350. The people of Venezuela, true to their republican tradition and their struggle for independence, peace and freedom, shall disown any regime, legislation or authority that violates democratic values, principles and guarantees or encroaches upon human rights.

To conclude, we ask each of you to entrust your prayers to our country and, if anyone wishes to contribute with resources that will serve to support the Justice
and Peace project in Venezuela, please contact Fr. Miguel A. Espinoza S., OP to the email justiciaypaz.opvenezuela@gmail.com

Coordination team:

Fr. Miguel A. Espinoza, O.P.
Sister Dilcia Zambrano, O.P. (D. of St. Rose of Lima)
Sister Giselle Ortega, O.P. (D. of the Presentation)
Sister Nicida Díaz, O.P. (D. of the Presentation)
Sister Belén Sánchez, O.P. (D. Holly Family)
Sister Maria García, O.P. (D. of Saint Dominic)
Mrs. Liliana Rodríguez, O.P. (Fraternity of Barquisimeto)
Mr. Ricardo Atencio, O.P. (Fraternity of Maracaibo)
Julio Cesar Sánchez (Dominican Youth Movement Merida)
Jesús Vivas (Dominican Youth Movement Barinas)
Edgar Albarracín, (Invited Laic)
Miss Jamile Levy. (Invited Laic)
Miss Joselyd Rodríguez, (Invited Laic)

CARACAS, SEPTEMBER 5, 2017