



GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF DOMINICAN SISTERS INTERNATIONAL (DSI)  
REPORT CONFEDERATION OF LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN  
DOMINICAN SISTERS (CODALC)  
May 12-17, 2019, Rome, Italy.

"The General goal of CODALC is to promote Dominican religious life based on an understanding of history in light of the Word of God, building communion amongst all congregations in view of achieving a better evangelization of Latin America and the Caribbean." (Statutes 1.2)

We are present in 24 countries, with the Spanish language as a communication-enabling factor across the continent, although Portuguese is also spoken in Brazil as well as English, French and Dutch in the Caribbean, not to mention the many indigenous languages spoken amongst our peoples.

Congregational, Provincial or Delegate Prioresses meet once every three years as an Assembly, filled with the spirit of sisterhood and communion. It is a space for study, reflection and discernment. It is where we identify the priorities which help us walk in harmony, and select a coordinating team.

#### Priorities 2016-2018

- a) "Building on our identity as women preachers, we give high priority to women and girls in situations of vulnerability."

This preference unfolds at every level: local communities, congregations, federations and in the fields of:

1. Justice and peace and integrity of the creation
2. Predicarte (Dominican artists)
3. Dominican theologians
4. Training spaces: basic and continued
5. Spiritual retreats
6. Animation services
7. Preaching

- b) "Collecting the cherished memory of our fore-sisters and revealing the talents of the sisters whom we walk with."

We have thus endeavored with this Assembly mandate in mind, and in keeping with the inspirational Visitation icon of the CLAR (Confederation of Latin American and Caribbean Religious). We have been encouraged to embrace the prompt and outward mindset needed to share and preserve life. Which has filled our hearts with joy and delight and emotion towards our sisters' commitment across the continent, especially in Cuba and Chiapas where we gathered as Coordinating Team and bore witness of their engagement and passion for the mission.

During that time, we met in person three times, once a year. There were two members from Argentina, one from Mexico, another one from Bolivia and one from the Dominican Republic. (Map.)

## **I Team meeting in Argentina**

Our first meeting took place June 25-30, 2016. The Dominican Sisters of Santa Catalina de Siena hosted us in Buenos Aires. That first meeting gave us an opportunity to get acquainted and start working as a team, building threads of sorority, embracing each of our roles and structuring our tasks so as to carry on the Assembly's mandates. We decided to work with humility, helping one another in sorority while acknowledging each sister's gifts and capacities so as to avoid replicating the very ambiguities that have dehumanized our society and communities. In contrast, we chose to foster harmonious relationships so as to preach in humanizing fashion and fulfill the mission given to us.

We built on the images of Mary and Elizabeth as the encounter of women which led us to contemplating the Word and defining several transversal areas of focus for each encounter or course promoted by CODALC:

- Strengthening our commitment to vulnerable women and girls including our presence within the Church and the Order. In that view, each encounter, Congress or course hosted by or that we shall attend as Dominican Sisters will be taken as an opportunity to emphasize the actions of our own sisters so that they may permeate training and preaching spaces.
- Promoting our commitment to preserving the Common House in keeping with the Laudato SÍ Encyclical in which Pope Francis encourages to keep, as women, our eyes and ears wide open, and heed:
- "These situations [which] have caused sister earth, along with all the abandoned of our world, to cry out, pleading that we take another course.". (L. S. 53)
- Tightening inter-congregational ties and preventing the gaps that might exist among them.
- Promoting the experience brought by our younger sisters, which may be construed in many different ways but have the power to humanize our being and doing.

We drafted the event chart for 2016-2018, making sure that activities would not cluster on a single year so as to foster congregational attendance both in terms of staff and funds availability.

## **II Team meeting in Cuba**

My predecessor's report, Sister Viviana Sisack's, highlighted that we had yet to schedule a visit to Cuba, as the social and political circumstances had been challenging the communities residing there to support the people. We kept this in our thoughts and in our hearts, but also took on the challenge and after a time of reflection, decided to hold our next Team meeting in that very country. We began to reach out and launched the visa process, which was no easy task. Thanks to the invaluable help of Friar Manuel Uña, we managed to overcome these obstacles and obtain the visas.

In Cuba, we spent a day on training and listening with the Dominican and nun communities of Havana and vicinity. Three moments stood out from that gathering:

- sharing who we are;
- Listening to the Word;
- Creating the "Bienaventuranzas de la dominica en Cuba" alongside the collective painting of a mural meant to express the specific way of preaching in the participant communities.

We concluded the day with the Eucharist celebration in communion with the island's Dominican Family.

We tried to plan the team meetings in coordinated fashion with the friars and via CIDALC (Conference of Dominicans in Latin America and the Caribbean). Which brought us to meet with Fr. Luis Javier Rubio, President of CIDALC and Fr. Yamil Samalot Rivera, Secretary. We reached the agreement of carrying out the Trainers Course for Dominican Consecrated Life. We picked a theme, the organizing team, place and date, public and language in which the course would take place.

It was also confirmed that the CODAL-CIDALC Assemblies would be hosted in Argentina, we agreed on the date of the Joint meeting, its topic as well as its location.

We set the next place and date for the joint team meeting for 2018.

### III Team meeting in Chiapas

The CODALC Team met in Chiapas, Mexico, to review and schedule events for 2018 as well as the 2019 Assembly.

We had two gatherings over the course of that meeting. One with the Dominican communities in Chiapas. We spent the day listening and praying as part of a session we called "Walking on sacred ground." The sisters shared their realities, their mission as well as some indigenous cosmology. The reflection was then embedded in a mural. We concluded with the Eucharist celebrated by Fr. Gonzalo Ituarte who for many years has been serving indigenous communities in that part of Mexico.

The other encounter involved the CIDALC brothers: Fr. Luis Javier Rubio, Fr. Yamil Samalot Rivera, Fr. Adhemar Ventura, Fr. Miguel Ángel Gullón. We kept on working in brotherly spirit throughout the Joint meetings of the CODALC-CIDALC General Assemblies.

We shared our progress with regards to the preparation of the Trainers Course.

We visited the Bartholomew de las Casas Human Rights Centre, established by Don Samuel Ruiz and where the Bishop's Walk appears as a core element of peacemaking in Chiapas.

### Weaving threads together

- a) Listening and training encounter with the Dominican communities in Cuba, May 2nd, 2017 in Havana.
- b) Predicarte: September 20-24, 2017 in Asunción, Paraguay
- c) Meeting of the Bolivarian countries' JPICs, November 10–12, 2017, in Cochabamba, Bolivia.
- d) V Latin-American Meeting and III Inter-American Meeting of Dominican Theologists in Lima – September 19-23, 2018
- e) V Trainers Course called "The trainer community as an educational ecosystem," hosted by CODALC-CIDALC, August 16-26, 2018, in Bogotá, Colombia
- f) Listening, praying and training session with the Dominican communities in Chiapas. "Walking on sacred ground", June 7th, 2018
- g) The Assembly of January 31st and February 7th, 2019. Which is also when we defined two priorities for the new 2019-2021 triennial.

*From our identity as women preachers, we commit to:*

- Continue spreading Hope amidst a creation in pain.

- Nurturing creativity in new spaces for preaching based on the pedagogy of silence, art and beauty.

### We promoted and attended

- ✓ The International Conference "Dominicans for the defense of human rights", September 1-5, 2016, in Salamanca, Spain.
- ✓ Workshops for Vocational Youth Pastoral Advisors in the South Cone, August 13-17, 2017, in Asunción, Paraguay.
- ✓ International Congress for the Mission of the Order of Preachers, January 17-21, Rome, Italy.
- ✓ South Cone JPIC Seminary (Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Chile), August 31-September 2, 2018, in Tucumán, Argentina.

### Solidarity

Over the course of the triennial, several so-called natural phenomena – or as described by Pope Francis: "This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her." (L.S. 2) – have occurred on our continent, affecting populations served by a Dominican presence. Our presence was ensured via communicating with the affected congregations and supporting some of them financially.

*(See financial report)*

We tried to visit Venezuela, but the socio political circumstances which we are all aware of have made it impossible for us to do so. We believe that the next team should continue trying a supportive visit to our sisters out there. We did support them in facilitating their participation to courses, seminaries and workshops hosted by CODALC – as well as through the MCS.

### United Nations

As for our involvement in the Commission on the Social and Legal Status of Women coordinated by our Delegate to the United Nations, Sister Margaret Mayce, Latin American attendance was ensured once again, this year. As a team, we reached out to a heterogenous set of Prioresses, considering that they were sisters from various countries and congregations.

We give thanks to Sister Margaret Mayce for her support in helping us be part of that space where the status of women around the world is being reviewed and reflected upon, all the while promoting the empowerment of women.

### Dominican Sisters International (DSI)

Over the past three years, I have attended the Council meeting hosted in Rome. They are a privileged space where hearts may grow not only throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, but also to embrace the life of Dominican women on every continent.

We wish to thank, as a team, the support provided by Sister Marie Therese Clement, Coordinator of Dominican Sisters International, who joined us at CODALC Assemblies and fostered collaboration and sorority amongst congregations in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean as well as North America.

We also wish to thank the Congregations which have been supporting the Solidarity Funds which has allowed us to host the events organized by CODALC.

### Pending challenges:

- Safeguarding, spreading and socializing the memories of our elders.
- Finding a way for emergency aid to be distributed in the critical aftermath of climate phenomena and devise a distribution scheme to overcome access difficulties.
- Difficulties when it comes to meeting physically and reaching federated agreements.
- Low response rates to electronic mail.
- Geographic distances across the continent as well as the strenuous economic situations we live in make it more difficult to attend events.
- We have seldom been able to communicate with English- or French-speaking Caribbean islands.

### Gratitude

The Apostolic Exhortation called Vita Consecrata reminds us that "The first duty of the consecrated life is to make visible the marvels wrought by God in the frail humanity of those who are called." (VC20). Upon drafting this report, I realized how much life we had embraced over the past three years and how many wonders we got to admire. Sisters with a passion for existential outskirts, sisters with questions left unanswered allowing to be listened, communities embracing life in its every shade, aging communities accepting their own fragility, communities of trainers confronting the challenges that have been placed on their paths from childhood or their teenage years, communities supporting indigenous life, communities researching the role of women in the Church and more. All of this, based on the certainty, as Viktor E. Frankl said, of : "saying yes to Life in spite of everything."

### THANK YOU.

Sister Noemí Zambrano, CODALC Coordinator.

