



FIRST-SUNDAY CONTEMPLATIVE SITTING

DECEMBER 2021

DOMINICAN MONTH FOR PEACE

In this Dominican Month for Peace, we embrace our Dominican sisters, brothers, and the people of Venezuela who are living in the midst of turmoil and enormous suffering.

The origin of the current upheaval is the destruction of democracy as a system of government and a way of life. In 1999, Hugo Chavez was elected and continued in power until 2013. During that time, the constitution was changed, and the legitimacy of elections and the rule of law was destroyed.

A Challenge to Build

Venezuelan democracy, with a vision of a government caring and working to improve the lives of its people, was dismantled. Profound unrest and violence continues under President Nicolás Maduro and opposition leaders.

In the midst of this political and social turmoil Dominican women and men minister. With others they seek justice and live love-creating moments of safety, healing, and compassion.



*Being a light a presence of hope,
practicing peace especially in times
of war and violence, requires courage.*

Each image above carries a story and offers each of us a glimpse into that indomitable human spirit to survive, to thrive, and to give one's self wholeheartedly to the great work of seeking justice, truth, and freedom.

You might spend a day reflecting upon one person's story imaged above. Looking deeply, opening your heart, let the story speak to you. Notice whatever arises within you.

*May our yearnings for peace
open wide our hearts. Amen.*

CONTEMPLATIVE SITTING

*Mindfulness frees us of forgetfulness
and makes it possible to live fully each minute of life.*
— Thich Nhat Hanh

Contemplative sitting is an invitation to

- attend to your thoughts, feelings, and emotions with an open heart.
- offer/dedicate your everyday experiences, be they joys or sorrows, comforts or discomforts to the care and safety of others.
- gently shift patterns of behavior that do not serve you or others well.
- become more and more a presence, a being of loving kindness and compassion.
- dwell in Holy Mystery.

Mindfulness Practice

Set a time of 10, 15, 20 minutes, or more. It is helpful to have a set time for meditation. Sitting in your chair or resting in bed, come gently come into the present moment. Begin noticing any sounds around you like voices in the hall, a bell ringing. Gently hear the sounds and let them pass on by. This is Mindfulness of Sound. Then gently focus and concentrate on your breath.

- Begin with taking three breaths, just normal breaths, breathing each one in and out. Gently keeping focus on your breath; you may feel it at the tip of your nostrils or sense the movement in your chest or abdomen. If you can't feel it, place your hand on your chest or abdomen and breathe in and out.
- Each time the mind wanders, take note of where it went, and gently return to the breath. If you do this 100 times, it is just fine!

Simple Practice

- Breathing in, I calm my body, breathing out I smile,
Breathing in present moment, breathing out precious moment.
- Breathing in Holy Spirit, breathing out aah.
- Breathing in the universe, breathing out amazement.

Awareness of your mindfulness experience is key. Awareness of being distracted, or anxious, or crabby, or peaceful, or happy is key with no self-blame or judgment about your experience. Awareness is key!

My responses to this First Sunday reflection:

