



Where Justice and Truth Meet

November 2018

“As Dominican women we claim or power to nurture mutual relationships that offer healing and courage to a broken world.”

Together Birthing Anew, Chapter 2014

Dominican Month for Peace

Each December (Advent) is a [Dominican Month for Peace](#) to promote global solidarity with



Dominican brothers and sisters who are trying to bring hope in situations of violence and war. This year's Advent focus is on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

The largest country of the African continent has been ravaged by years of war and political instability, making it today one of the poorest countries in the world. There is a striking contrast between this poverty and the immense wealth the country possesses: scarce mineral resources such as coltan, diamonds, gold, copper, cobalt, zinc and manganese; abundant forest resources; diverse animal species such as gorillas and okapis; and vast fertile agricultural lands for crops such as coffee, palm oil and tea.

Unfortunately, the DRC is also plagued by poor administration of justice, massive and systematic violations of human rights, and a crumbling economy leading to poverty, misery, a high unemployment rate, illegal exploitation of its rich natural resources and especially armed conflicts of many kinds. A proliferation of armed groups results from partisan fragmentation in the struggle for leadership, the persistence of interethnic conflicts, tensions with neighboring countries, and internal political crisis as well as the illicit trafficking of minerals.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the UN Mission in the Congo (MONUSCO), the conflicts have led to alarming numbers of violations against children who are directly targeted, recruited and used as fetishes, soldiers, spies, messengers, human shields, sex slaves, etc.

In both 2016 and 2017, the violence has led to the largest internal displacement of people in the world, affecting more people than in Syria, Iraq or Yemen. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the DRC currently has 4 million displaced persons who have had to flee their homes, with an increase of 1.7 million in 2018.

Dominican Presence in the DRC

In this seemingly hopeless context where millions of people are rendered extremely vulnerable, our [Dominican brothers and sisters](#) are trying to bring hope by strengthening the capacity of the people to become agents of sustainable development and peace. Members of the Dominican family live alongside the most vulnerable and underprivileged people, accompanying them both in the promotion of human rights (Dominican Missionaries of the Rosary, Dominicans of Santo Domingo, St Dominic's Parish in Kinshasa) and through projects in civic and electoral education



([PEDUC](#)). In addition, the *Observatory for the Exploitation of Natural Resources and Investments in the Uélé Basin* (OBERIUELE) was established by the University of Uélé (which is largely managed by members of the Dominican family). This organization not only seeks to accompany small-scale miners, but also to ensure that the vulnerable people they accompany benefit from the exploitation of natural resources by multinationals which are increasingly establishing themselves in the Uélé region.

Global Dominican Response

The Dominican Month for Peace is a time of prayer, preaching, and action to promote global Dominican solidarity for peace in a world torn apart by many forms of violence and war. As we prepare to celebrate the mystery of the incarnation of the Prince of Peace, we are invited to focus from the First Sunday of Advent (December 2) through the World Day of Peace (January 1) on solidarity with our Dominican sisters and brothers and the people of the DRC.

The Month for Peace will strengthen the Congolese Dominican family efforts in their struggle against poverty and human rights abuses. We invite you this Advent to join us – in prayer, symbols, songs or other actions – that will assist in promoting lasting peace in The Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ways to express our solidarity might include:

Prayer – intentions for prayer for each week of Advent might include:

- For the people of the Congo, for strength and courage in their efforts to move forward the peace effort in their country.
- For Congolese government officials, that they listen to the people, incorporate their ideas into development plans, see just solutions, and protect the rights of vulnerable communities.
- For our Dominican brothers and sisters and other church leaders as they walk with faith, lead communities in reconciliation, work to rebuild trust, and promote the common good.
- For the youth of the Congo, that the peace effort promote stability in their lives, rebuild family unity and allow them to flourish through educational efforts.

Study – seek and promote awareness and understanding of the situation of the DRC:

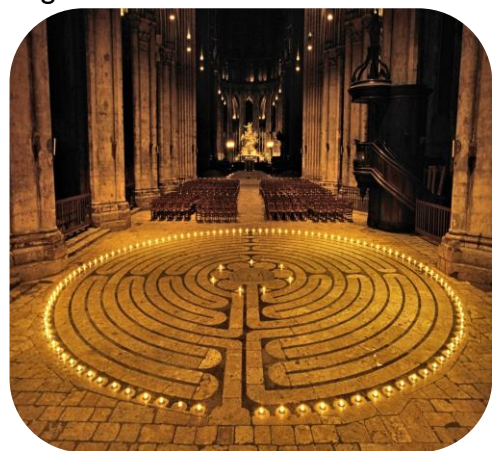
- **City of Joy** (2018) NETFLIX (76 minutes) – Powerful film about women survivors of rape and human trafficking in the Congo; a story of empowering women to resist exploitation.
- **Conflict Minerals 101: 2018 Update, Enough Project** (3 minutes) – Holding companies accountable for their role in mining.

- **Smartphones: The World in your Pocket - Congolese Blood in your Hand**, 2015 (9 minutes) – Tech companies reveal that minerals sold to fund combatants in the DRC may be used in their (your) gadgets, advocate for conflict-free products.
- **Inside the murky business of cobalt mining in DRC**, 2018, France 24 (10 minutes) – Ethical concerns around mining cobalt, used in batteries for smartphones and electric cars.

Become a Source of Peace – Deepening our inner peace—in our own hearts and minds, in our interpersonal relationships and with all creation—expands the global field of peace in our world.

Prayerful experiences of silent contemplation—individually or shared in community—can lead us to discover more deeply the inner peace of the Spirit of God at work in us.

Prayer experiences, such as prayerfully walking a labyrinth, may also contribute to peace. A [labyrinth](#) is symbolic of a journey, a pilgrimage, that one moves through, entering into deeper contemplation as one follows the path, losing track of direction and of the outside world, which can quiet the mind. It can give a sense of entering and getting lost in an unknown world, a difficult situation where one's faith is tested. It thus offers an appropriate space to meditate about peace in one's own life and environment, in the world and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



Chartres Cathedral, France

The labyrinth is a place of healing. While walking the labyrinth you are invited to meditate, reflect and pray with the ears of your spirit for healing in your life, the lives of others, your community, even all of God's creation.