

## APPEAL TO THE ORDER TO CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS A COLOMBIA THAT IS RECONCILED AND AT PEACE

We call on the friars and sisters of the Order to contribute to peace-building in Colombia by taking the following actions:

- I. **Celebrate a Solemn Eucharist** for peace and reconciliation in Colombia, or promote vigils and prayer spaces.
- II. **Create Works of Art dedicated** to reconciliation and memory. Artists of the Order are invited to contribute through:
  - Sending a work of art created locally to Colombia, or to a local Embassy, or to a place with a connection to Colombian people in the country in which the artist is located.
  - Producing a work of art in any of the convents in Colombia. This could be displayed in public squares, symbolic places, parish churches or museums of local memory.
  - A training course in Colombia for potential artists of the Order and of the region that wish to be assisted in producing their own works of art.
- III. **Preach about peace in Colombia:** we ask you to incorporate a focus on peace in Colombia in your regular preaching during Advent.
- IV. **Make contact with the local Colombian Embassy** to make them aware of the Order's focus on solidarity with the peace-building process in Colombia.
- V. **Make a financial donation towards** a Peacebuilding project in the Diocese of Tibú in Catatumbo.



In Catatumbo there is a good resource of people who have been peace-builders in the context of violence. These include peasant leaders, youth, teachers and parish priests, who have begun to be recognized as reference points for peace in their areas.

In recognition of the important work that these leaders do and will continue to do in today's more favourable context, we call them "Pacifcultores"/Peace Makers – the sowers of peace. These leaders need to be strengthened and encouraged. For this purpose, we propose to start a **Diocesan Institute for Peace**. The aim is to train laypeople and others in positions of social responsibility, to promote a culture of peace. The Institute will also seek to inspire significant actions in the regions to encourage the implementation of the Peace Accord. Your support will contribute to this important initiative that will enable us to start creating an infrastructure for peace, in opposition to the culture of violence that has prevailed in the region.

## COLOMBIA

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### FROM WAR TO PEACE

*We were present in the war,  
now let's help construct the peace.*

After more than 50 years of armed conflict and countless failed negotiations, Colombia has now entered a key period of its history: the implementation of the Peace Accord which was signed in 2016 by the National Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (a.k.a. FARC).

The friars and sisters of the Order of Preachers have worked for more than four decades in various regions of Colombia in the midst of this conflict. One of the Order's most daring projects is developing in Catatumbo, a region deeply affected by violence, but which is now preparing to face the complex challenges following the peace agreement.

In line with the characteristic Dominican concern for solidarity, having just celebrated the 800th anniversary of the founding of the Order and the Year of Mercy, we call on the entire Dominican family to help promote peace in Colombia, especially in the Catatumbo region.

### HOW TO SEND CONTRIBUTIONS?

#### Financial Donations

Deposit to Provincial Curia, San Luis Bertrán. Banco de Bogotá, checking account 052034055, SWIFT BBOGCOBB. Through the Intermediary Bank Citibank, New York Swift CITIUS33. BB account 10922754 ABA 021000089.

#### Works of Art

Write to the General Curia: Promoter for Justice and Peace  
un@curia.op.org

#### General Information

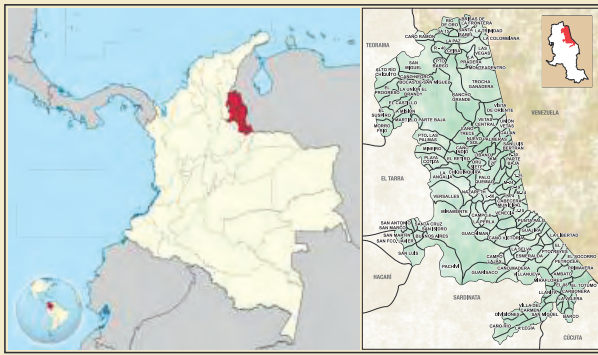
Fray Jorge Ferdinando Rodríguez Ruiz  
frayjorgeferdinando@usantotomas.edu.co  
Phone: 057 320 820 1769

#### Diocese of Tibú

diocesistibu@gmail.com • www.diocesistetibu.com.co



**“SENT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL”**



## THE COLOMBIAN CONFLICT

Socio-economic inequalities, exclusion, discrimination and other forms of social injustice, as well as the precariousness of the State have been some of the main causes of the war in Colombia, which has lasted from the 1960s to now. The social, economic and political costs of the war have been devastating, especially for the poorest people living in the countryside. More than 7,000,000 people have been displaced, 200,000 have been killed and about 60,000 are missing. Although there are different causes of the prolongation of the conflict, drug trafficking has been one of the major factors, as it has been one of the main sources of funding for illegal armed groups since the 1980s. For many years, Colombia has had the shameful honour of being the world's leading coca producer.

Unlike some other conflicts, the war in Colombia has been fought by a multiplicity of actors who have focused on outlying rural regions, where state institutions are hardly present. One of these regions is Catatumbo.

## CATATUMBO: A REGION WITH GREAT CHALLENGES

Located in northeastern Colombia, on the Venezuelan border, Catatumbo is a region rich in water and environmental resources yet with high levels of poverty and inequality. The indiscriminate actions of legal and illegal armed groups, the boom of the Coca economy, and the historical abandonment of the region by the State have contributed to the socio-economic and political marginalization of the majority of the population.



**“THE CONFLICT HAS DONE NOTHING BUT DRIVE US TO POVERTY, RESIGNATION, SADNESS ... ”**

*VICTIM OF THE MASSACRE OF GABARRA (2016)*

Although the predominant armed groups have been FARC, ELN and EPL, one of the darkest and bloodiest pages of the region's history was during a paramilitary incursion in the late 1990s. This left in its path more than 60 massacres, thousands of displaced people and thousands of acres of devastated land.

Fortunately, the future is now more promising for Catatumbo. After more than four years of negotiations in Havana, the FARC, one of the most influential groups in the territory, have decided to give up their weapons and to move into the political arena. Although the inhabitants of Catatumbo still have many fears, they hope that this step will create an opening for democratic processes and the economic development that they have been waiting for, for decades.

## 2016 PEACE AGREEMENTS

In 2016, the National Government and the FARC signed the Peace Accord, which ended more than 50 years of armed confrontation and opened up a political, social and economic space to groups that had been marginalized for decades.

Since the opening of the peace talks thousands of human rights violations have been avoided. However, despite these tangible effects, achieving a lasting peace will require enormous efforts: to overcome the people's great skepticism and distrust of the State; to increase the capacity of public institutions to govern, to prevent the growth of other illegal armed groups; to ensure free participation in democratic processes; and to promote economic development in the countryside.

The Peace Accord does not solve all these problems, but it does create a favorable environment and establishes possibilities of participation and investment to tackle the forms of violence that were rendered invisible by the armed conflict. The local communities will play a vital role in initiating this transformation. If the peace accord is to be sustained, it is crucial that they should be prepared for this task.



For this reason, the Colombian Dominicans have committed themselves to reinforcing the work they have been doing for years in providing spiritual support and assisting the growth of autonomous and participative communities. If the Order, for decades, has accompanied the people through the different pages of the history of violence in this region, there is all the more reason to continue this work, now that the Peace Accord has opened up new possibilities.

## INTEGRAL EVANGELIZATION: THE TASK OF THE DIOCESE OF TIBÚ

The Province of Colombia has made some of its best human resources and evangelizers available to the region. At the moment, the Diocese of Tibú has a serious and transparent Social Apostolate Department that has worked consistently, even through the worst periods of violence (i.e. 1998-2002). The Order is represented in the region by Bishop Omar Sánchez Cubillos, O.P., Bishop of Tibú, and by a community of friars and sisters.

In summary, the desire of the Order to offer Colombia support, accompaniment and solidarity will be realized through different forms of prayer, art and financial support that will contribute to a peace initiative in a region that can be a point of reference of a new reconciled country.

