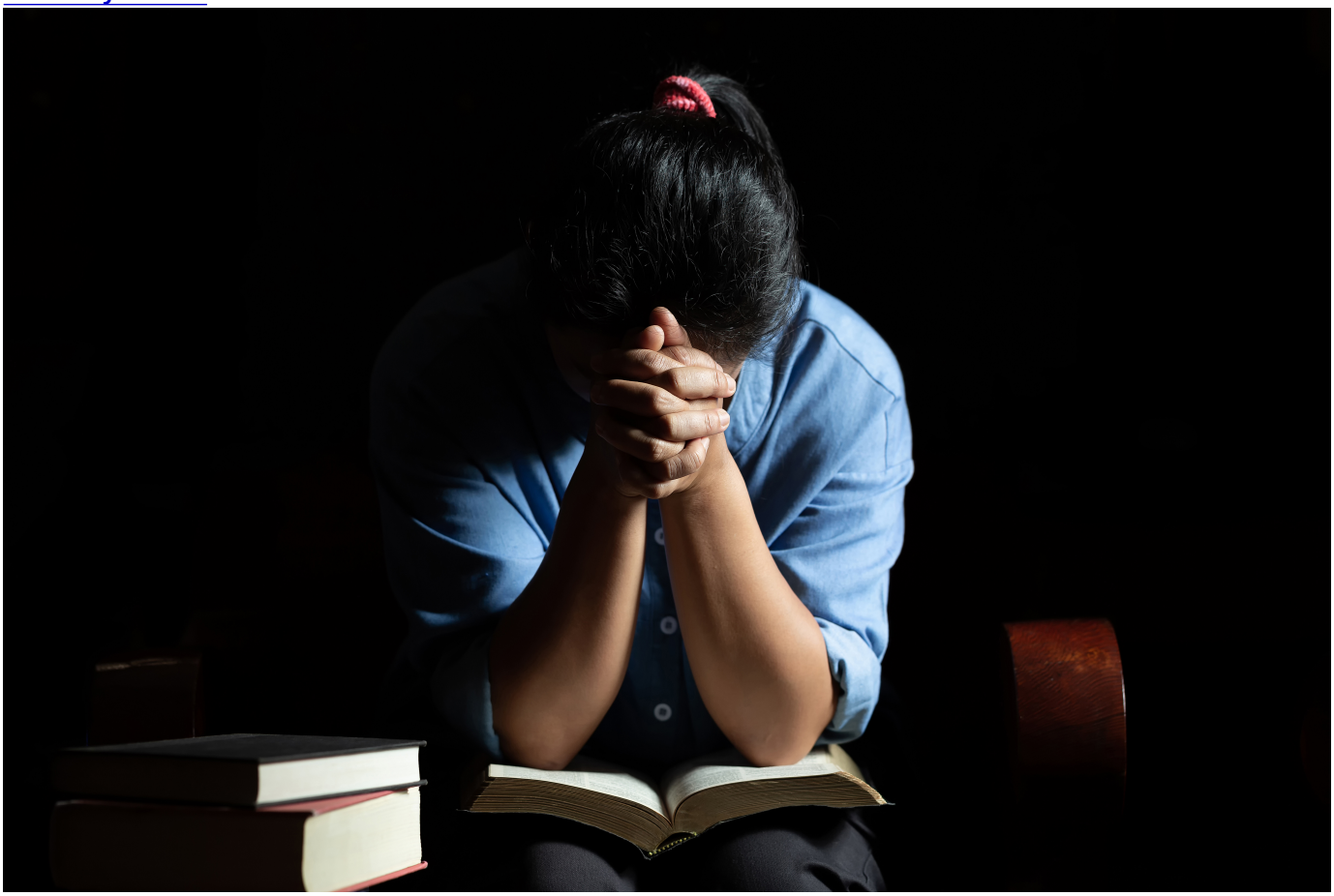
Voices of Sisters
Social Justice



Lord, I humbly ask that the Cuban people be allowed to live with respect and dignity. (Freepik)



by Sr. Nadieska Almeida

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Lord, weary from the journey and lacking strength, I have arrived, returning to you.

Just as each morning, I rise to dedicate the first hours of my day to you because you give me the strength to navigate life and make sense of my days.

Today is one of those mornings when I humbly request your grace once more, not only for myself but for all of us trying to avoid sinking into the depths of despair.

All that has been unfolding in our country lately drains the joy from the heart of the nation. We find ourselves compelled to forge a new and more profound relationship with Russia, among other alliances. I wonder, as do many others, if there aren't any alternatives from within.

Is it possible that there are no other pathways to escape the hole in which we have been placed for years? Must the only solution now be to become someone else's territory, with ownership of nothing?

And so, with these temporary shadows that serve only as palliative care, they will endeavor to persuade us that this is the best way, and once again, we might find ourselves bowing our heads, as if we believe it.



I persistently resist the notion that people's voices are not respected, that we are not consulted. I resist the imposition of solutions upon us, and the attempt to make us believe in this new spectacle, as if we were not thinking individuals who wish the

best for everyone. It's as though they forget that we are fully aware that together, we could find ways out of this old and painful situation.

God! I refuse to silence this pain! I cannot bear the thought of students being forced to learn Russian again. I don't want to see our mothers suffering at the thought of their children serving abroad, far from Cuba. The burden is heavy enough when our young people have to go on compulsory military service. We are all too aware of the toll this service has taken and continues to take on us, including the tragic loss of lives.

Will you make our voices heard? Will you prompt the appearance of someone with authority in our country who will genuinely address the current situation of violence, insecurity and the pervasive sense of uncertainty with no apparent solutions? Will someone address the hunger that plagues people, with limited access to food, and the diseases coupled with a shortage of medical supplies?



Lord, I refuse to silence this pain! Can you make our voices heard? (Unsplash/Stephan Valentin)

Will our dignity and human rights be respected? Will we be able to live in safe and healthy cities, with clean streets and functional sewers? Is it reasonable for a country to experience flooding due to the collapse of its drainage infrastructure,

especially when the timing of the rainy and hurricane season is well-documented? Will they consider the aftermath of these floods? How will they address and resolve the material losses incurred?

Help us, Lord, to shift our focus from other nations like China or Russia and turn it inward to ourselves. We need to recognize the need to come together, to find common ground, and rewrite our own history.

As your children, we understand that our unity is more important than that of any earthly nation. Let us set aside our arrogance and open our hearts to diverse, valid, intelligent and accurate perspectives. May we engage in respectful dialogue and together seek truth and wisdom.

We pray for the strength to reject absurd impositions and oppressive systems and to adopt a new form of governance that aligns with our values. It is time for us to humbly acknowledge that what has been attempted and imposed for decades does not serve us well, and we must move forward toward a brighter future.

May the Cuban authorities have a change of heart and recognize that withdrawing from their course of action would be a wiser choice. Don't allow them to continue with the same outdated model, which even those of us without any official authority can clearly see has not been the way forward for a long time.

May they be open to listening to those of us who think differently and understand that expressing our honest beliefs does not make us enemies. And to us, Lord, grant the strength not to remain silent or to be accomplices to the suffering and senselessness that we witness daily.

May we find the courage to raise our voices against new laws, even when we fear the possibility of losing.

Lord, if we remain silent, we will die — withering away slowly — consumed by sadness and all the burdens we bear.



Lord, before you I present my desire that we may be heard, that this cry may reach the ears of those in positions of authority. (Pixabay)

Grant us the gift of resilience to hold onto our fragile hope, for I, like José Martí, believe in the potential for human betterment. I continue to believe in the possibility of happiness for people and firmly believe that you are the master of life and history.

I lay before you my sincere wish that our cry can reach the ears of those who govern. May their hearts, as human as mine, be moved by the stark reality of those

who endure the most suffering. I pray that the soul of our nation may no longer be hardened by so much pain and suffering.

May the authorities grant the release of those who are unjustly imprisoned, including those in July, November, San Isidro and Caimanera.

May there be an end to the scarcity of bread on our tables and the basic necessities that many cannot afford to buy, as you are well aware.

Let there be no more lives lost due to the shortage of medicines in our hospitals.

May our streets be free from insecurity and violence, and may we see an end to police brutality.

May there be an end to repression and defamation against those who hold different beliefs.

Let there be no more unfulfilled promises.

May those who wield power for personal gain and use it to threaten those beneath them face accountability and consequences for their actions.

I humbly ask that the Cuban people be granted the opportunity to live with respect and dignity. I ask that those in positions of authority be willing to listen to us. Meanwhile, we will continue to pray, hoping that our needs and concerns will be heard, and we will continue in our efforts to alleviate the suffering and despair of those who have exhausted all options.

As we receive your body and blood, given to us as nourishment, may we also receive the support and strength to redefine our commitment and service to our people. May we, with renewed determination, seek solutions from within and among us, uniting for the common good.

Amen.

This column was originally published in Spanish on Aug. 9, 2023.

This story appears in the **Hope Amid Turmoil: Sisters in Conflict Areas** feature series. View the full series.