Voices of Sisters
Religious Life



Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre passes through Melena del Sur, Cuba, in 2011. (Wikimedia Commons/Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0/Rogeliowar)



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As we prepare to celebrate the feast of Our Mother and patroness, Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre (Sept. 8), we remember how our Mambises venerated her. Even today, most Cubans continue to honor her with deep respect, devotion and affection. She has been and remains present in our struggles, always encouraging us, like a faithful mother, not to lose confidence in her beloved Son.



Flags of Venezuela, Nicaragua and Cuba (Pixabay)

This love for Our Mother is not confined to our island; her presence is felt worldwide. Though she is known under different titles, she is the same Mother who welcomes and protects all her children, especially those who suffer the most.

During the novena in her honor, my heart turns to three groups of people who have endured years under dictatorships. One has risen with a strength long contained, and their cries for freedom stem from courage and a firm decision to fight for their independence. I admire this tenacity and ask Our Lady to accompany them, so that truth may continue to triumph, as the world watches the undeniable evidence of their struggle. My prayer for you, dear Venezuela: Do not lose heart, for you are on the brink of reclaiming the freedom that was taken from you. I humbly ask forgiveness for those Cubans who have contributed to your suffering, deceiving you, and attempting to maintain the yoke that oppresses you. You will be free, for it is your right and the greatest gift God has given to humanity since creation.

> Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua: Mary protects us, encourages us and will restore our joy.
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Ermita de la Caridad del Cobre hermitage in Tenerife, Spain (Wikimedia Commons/Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0/Ivan Curra)

> My prayer for you, dear Venezuela: do not lose heart, because you are reaching with your own hands the freedom that was taken away from you. May Our Lady accompany you, and may truth continue to prevail.
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Nicaragua is also in my prayers and in my heart — a victim of selfishness and excessive ambition for power, where repression is on the rise. Those in power continue to attack faith and projects that work for the underprivileged by suspending their legal status. Our brothers and sisters face uncertainty and insecurity, unsure if they can return once they leave their country, fearful for their safety and the loss of their nationality. For you too, dear people of Nicaragua, I offer my constant prayer — that you may rise again as a prosperous, safe and free nation for your children. Trust that you will reclaim your republic.

With greater pain, I turn to my beloved island — my own blood — and see it growing more helpless each day, its will to live dwindling. I feel deep pain and shame when I look at Cuba's history — decades of unnecessary suffering, unfulfilled promises, deceptions and endless rectifications of errors. As if 65 years were not enough, we now face another promise: that in five years, our economy will improve. I refuse to live a lie or to manipulate an entire people. It breaks my heart to see us placated with crumbs, and, worst of all, to see us content with what falls from the table. It is neither fair nor healthy to be accomplices to injustice out of fear or resignation.

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> I suffer as a Cuban when I have to rise without strength, when hope seems to fade, when I tell myself it isn't worth it, when I feel so much helplessness.

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I suffer as a Cuban when I have to rise without strength, when hope seems to fade, when I tell myself it isn't worth it, when I feel so much helplessness, so many

unnecessary deaths from hunger, lack of resources and worse — from negligence. Our pain has become so deep that we cease to care for one another. The soul of every Cuban aches — of those who still believe it could be different, of those who refuse to be manipulated for thinking differently, of those who dream of a new, free and safe Cuba, full of homeland, dreams, achievements, warmth and respect — a thinking and inclusive Cuba. A Cuba-Mother, with space for all her children.

On the feast of our beloved Cachita, I can only give thanks for having the same Mother caring for and awaiting each of our people — a Mother who sustains the faith of those who invoke her. That is why I celebrate Mary's feast with hope, with confident supplication, with the desire to live and believe she will not abandon us. She will help us understand the words of her Son: "Do whatever he tells you," and help us taste the wine we are missing — the wine of freedom, justice and unity as a nation.

Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua: Mary protects us, encourages us and will restore our joy. I whisper to her with confidence: "In you, Mary, I place our hope. You have accompanied our history; you are Mother, homeland and freedom. You are a safe haven, like every good mother. Defend us from the evils that scourge us. Help us to end suffering and walk with us until we are all free, as God wills. May our skies fly flags without bloodshed, without repression, children unbound and with the awareness that we are all siblings under your mantle. This I ask you, Mother; I embrace your tenderness."

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