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A Sermon to the People of Hispanola,
Delivered on December 21, 1511

by FRIAR ANTONIO DE MONESINOS, O.P.
TRANSLATED BY JIM BARNETT, O.P.



So that you might know your sin, I am here as the voice of Christ in the desert of this island. You must listen well to this voice with all your heart and understanding. This voice will be surprising to you, sharp and difficult for you to hear, the most terrifying and dangerous voice you have ever heard.

This voice proclaims that you are all in mortal sin, that you live and die in that sin because of the cruelty and tyranny that you perpetuate on this innocent people.

Tell me, by what right, and in the name of what justice do you keep this people in such cruel and horrible servitude?

Tell me, by what authority have you waged such detestable wars on this people who were so gentle and peaceful in their own lands which you have pillaged and to which you have brought death as never heard of before?

How is it that you have so oppressed and abused them without giving them anything to eat, without taking care of their sickness? You have given them such heavy work that they are exhausted and dying - or should I say, you are killing them in order to mine and gain more gold for yourselves each day.

And what concern do you have that someone might teach them to know their God and Creator, to be baptized and hear Mass and keep the Sundays and feasts?

Are they not human beings? Do they not have rational souls? Are you not obliged to love them as you love yourselves? Do you not understand this? Do you not feel it? How can you be in a sleep so deep, so lethargic? Know this for certain - that in the condition you are in, you cannot be saved!