

## PASTORAL EXHORTATION

### FROM THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN

Meeting in Juba from 21st – 31st January 2014

### LET US REFOUND OUR NATION ON A NEW COVENANT

1. *The Lord said to Moses, 'Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them'. (Exodus 32:7-8)*

#### Preamble

2. The Catholic bishops of Sudan and South Sudan, meeting in Extraordinary Plenary assembly of the Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference in Juba, South Sudan, from 21st to 31st January 2014, address this Pastoral Exhortation to the people of the two nations and to all people of good will who journey with us. We welcome the new Papal Nuncio to South Sudan, Archbishop Charles Daniel Balvo. We are grateful for the presence amongst us of our brother bishops from the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa (AMECEA) and for their message of solidarity. We encourage them to advocate on our behalf with the member governments of the African Union and IGAD as the lead international peace efforts.
3. We meet at a time of crisis, perhaps one of the gravest situations we have ever faced. Our vision of a liberated nation in which all people will be equal and live in peace appears to be shattered. The blood of the innocent, in their thousands, cries out from the ground! The Lord will judge harshly those who continue to murder, rape and loot his innocent children, and even more harshly those who incite this violence and fail to prevent it in their greed for power. We affirm the dignity and right to life of every human being created in God's image and likeness. The cease-fire signed on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2014 must be implemented in good faith. There are no excuses for not doing so.
4. *Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?' He said 'I do not know. am I my brother's keeper?' And the Lord said, 'What have you done? Listen: your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground!' (Genesis 4:9-10)*
5. At this time more than ever, the bold Prophetic Voice of the Church needs to be heard and we speak from our hearts. You are your brother's and sister's keeper! In November 2010 and again in April 2011 we wrote, "Sudan will never be the same again", in January 2014 we say, "South Sudan must never be the same again". There is no longer "business as usual" Now is the time for our nation to rise from the ashes, but not to take up where the old one left off. Now is the time for a new nation.
6. However Jesus came not to condemn but to redeem. We too do not condemn individuals but we condemn evil and seek to heal both individuals and our nation. We call for repentance and conversion of heart. Let those who have committed atrocities admit it honestly. Admission of guilt is a virtue, not a weakness. We invite the prodigal son to return to the family, the lost sheep to the fold, the sinner to right behaviour.
7. We have been shocked by the events that have rocked our new nation since December 2013. We have witnessed things that should never have taken place on the soil of this nation, as brother fought against brother, leading to so much unnecessary death and displacement of individuals and communities, with many fleeing as refugees to neighbouring countries, and the most appalling destruction. We cannot remain silent in the face of what we have witnessed and heard. We speak on behalf of those who have spoken to us, people now displaced and destitute. We speak on behalf of the silent victims of our

Yau Yau in Jonglei State; in 2012, a Church leader was asked to chair the Jonglei peace process; previously Church leaders were asked to negotiate with George Athor. Why are Church and civic leaders now excluded from the ongoing IGAD talks? Why is it that only those who took up arms are discussing the future of our country? What is the legitimacy of any agreement signed in Addis Ababa built on military groups determining our future? A handful of political leaders instigated a crisis in which their followers have devastated the country; how can they alone be entrusted with negotiating the future of the nation without input from the citizens?

12. *The message of peace is not about a negotiated settlement but rather the conviction that the unity brought by the Spirit can harmonize every diversity. It overcomes every conflict by creating a new and promising synthesis. Diversity is a beautiful thing when it can constantly enter into a process of reconciliation and seal a sort of cultural covenant resulting in a "reconciled diversity". (Evangelii Gaudium, 230)*

#### **Governance and Democratic Institutions**

13. *But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains. (1 Timothy 6:9-10)*
14. *Our young nation has embraced democracy as our political system of governance, which offers those who wish to stand for elected office and represent their communities an opportunity to do so. We must openly challenge each other on the future of our country, but we must ensure that our disagreements are dealt with openly and in a civil manner, firmly rejecting all recourse to violence. Resolving our problems through violent means reveals the lack of maturity and depth in our democratic system. We cannot allow South Sudan to fail due to the actions of a few who are immune to the suffering of their own people, who personalise political power, turning their positions of public service into opportunities for personal enrichment and nepotism. Our state institutions must be strong enough to prevent this, and public leaders must be mature and ethical in their service of this nation*
15. *The country needs accountability and transparency from its elected leaders and government officials. There must be no impunity for crimes committed by political leaders, officials, armed forces, police and others. Impunity for senior leaders gives legitimacy to unacceptable behaviour patterns within our society.*

#### **Responsible Reporting and Public Communication**

16. *We are critical of the conduct of both national and international media institutions. It is often stated that truth is the first victim of war. We still do not know what actually happened to trigger the recent violence, as no investigation has yet been conducted, but the media quickly lost sight of their duty to report responsibly and impartially. Reports based on information which may not have been accurate inflamed violence and revenge attacks and induced panic. Journalists and the whole of society must embrace their identity as peacemakers and reconcilers, ensuring that communication is truthful, and that negative stereotyping of communities does not happen. Responsible reporting should not create hatred and violence*
17. *We call upon our national leaders and all in public office to communicate responsibly. In the interest of peace, stability and national unity we urge them to refrain from hate speech, incitement to violence, propaganda, abuse, misinformation, untrue and exaggerated statements, unfounded allegations, speculations and rumours.*

#### **Reform of the Organised Forces**

through all possible means, while not forgetting the needs in other parts of our two countries. The presence of the Church in the rural parts of Greater Upper Nile will help to bring stability and human development.

25. We offer ourselves, our time and our energy, and the resources of our Church to support the mediation process.

26. We reiterate our support and ownership of the Committee for National Healing, Peace and Reconciliation.

27. We commit ourselves to continuing our long-standing education programmes

28. We offer our Catholic Radio Network and other media resources to support the process of peace and reconciliation.

### *The Building of a New Nation*

29. *Jesus said, 'Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!' (Matthew 7:24-27)*

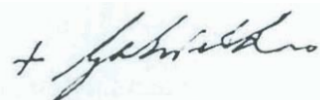
30. We are convinced that we stand at a decisive moment in the history of South Sudan. Fundamental choices must be made about how we deal with our past and present history, about how we govern ourselves as a nation, about how state institutions serve the poor. We must seize from the present crisis an opportunity to re-found our nation on democratic principles of dialogue, inclusion, and respect for diversity, God's gift to humanity. We encourage that which strengthens diversity and weakens barriers. We need to work to support the notion that we are one nation sharing one identity, rich in culture, blessed by diversity, which is to be celebrated. Mature and strong leaders can help us to see beyond ourselves to that which is beautiful in our societies. Insecure leaders will remind us of our differences, drive wedges between our communities, and ultimately destroy us. Where are our Mandelas and Nyereres? Where are those who will lead us in re-founding this newly independent nation? We proclaim our hope and expectation that the people of South Sudan can and will rise above the crisis.

31. Let our nations be built not on foundations of sand but on strong foundations of truth, justice, reconciliation, diversity and peace, on the foundations of the Gospel values enshrined in Catholic Social Teaching. Hear these words and be wise!

32. When the crisis erupted, our people turned spontaneously to prayer. We call on the nation and all people of good will to continue to accompany the peace and reconciliation process with prayer and fasting. Furthermore, we appeal to our leaders to join their people in this endeavour.

33. May God bless you.

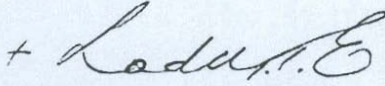
34. Given this 30th day of January 2014 in Juba, South Sudan



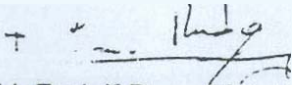
H E Cardinal Gabriel Zubeir Wako  
Archbishop of Khartoum



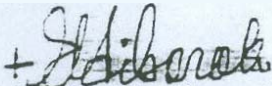
H G Paulino Lukudu Loro  
Archbishop of Juba



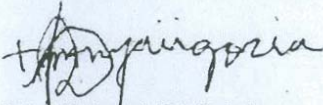
H L Erkolano Lodu Tombe  
Bishop of Yei  
Vice-President of SCBC



H L Rudolf Deng Majak  
Bishop of Wau



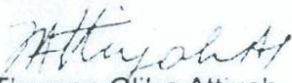
H L Eduardo Hiiboro Kussala  
Bishop of Tombura Yambio



H L Michael Didi Adgum  
Bishop of El Obeid



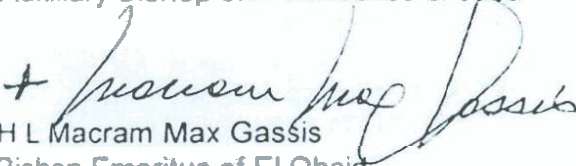
Mgr Roko Taban Mousa  
Apostolic Administrator of Malakal



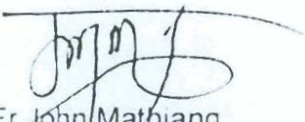
Mgr Thomas Oliha Attiyah  
Apostolic Administrator of Torit



H L Santo Loku Pio  
Auxiliary Bishop of Archdiocese of Juba



H L Macram Max Gassis  
Bishop Emeritus of El Obeid



Fr John Mathiang  
Coordinator of Rumbek