

NOVENA FOR NATIONBUILDING

Jesus: the Cornerstone

Building on the Principles of Catholic Social Teaching

July 9, 2011 will mark the emergence of a new state: South Sudan. As the country stands at the threshold of statehood, let us look at Jesus and pray that his power source, value system and actions become the cornerstone of our new nation.

This novena begins on June 29, 2011 and ends on July 7, 2011. For nine days we are invited to prayerfully look at Jesus, the source of the Church's Catholic Social Teaching.

The novena follows the "**See, Judge, Act**" method. It is an invitation to stop and analyze our reality in the light of the Word of God and the Teachings of the Church to find in prayer and sharing a path of action.

We shall pray with the principles of the Social Teaching as follows:

Day One: Dignity of the Human Person

Day Two: Common Good

Day Three: Rights and Responsibilities

Day Four: Preferential Option for the Poor

Day Five: Solidarity

Day Six: Integrity of Creation

Day Seven: Reconciliation

Day Eight: Subsidiarity or Participatory Government

Day Nine: Peace

The prophetic voice of the Church, with its commitment to LIFE, offers a solid foundation for South Sudan. It is on this basis that families, communities and our nation can be built bringing about spiritual and social change to improve the quality of life for all groups, especially the most disadvantaged.

Based on the principles of subsidiarity, option for the poor, solidarity and other values, our nation will be able to safeguard and preserve human dignity, guarantee human rights, promote the common good, care for our land and waters and share justly the resources of this land.

Building on Jesus, the Cornerstone, may the people of the Republic of South Sudan have life and life in abundance. (*Jn 10:10*)

First Day: The Principle of Human Dignity

Introduction

Every human being is created in the image of God. Redeemed by Jesus Christ, a person is invaluable and worthy of respect as a member of the human family.

The sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. Every person –regardless of race, sex, age, national origin, religion, employment or economic status, health, intelligence, achievement or any other differentiating characteristic– is worthy of respect.

The Catholic Church proclaims that life is sacred. It is not what you do or what you have that gives you a claim on respect; it is simply being human that establishes your dignity. Given that dignity, the human person is, in the Catholic view, never a means but always an end and people are more important than things.

The human person is the clearest reflection of God among us. In other words, when we look into the eyes of the human person, we see there the greatest manifestation of the presence of God. *(Adapted from Ten Foundational Principles in the Social Teaching of the Church Robert P. Maloney, C.M.)*

Opening Prayer *(Adapted from Daily Prayers in various situations; <http://www.healthtotal.net/Prayers.html>).*

Loving God, we thank you for the gift of life you gave and continue to give to all of us.

Merciful God, we ask your pardon and forgiveness for our own failure and the failure of all people to respect and foster all forms of life in our universe.

Gracious God, we pray that with your grace, we will reverence, protect, and promote all life and that we will be especially sensitive to the life of the unborn, the abused, neglected, disabled, prisoners, sick and the elderly.

We pray, too, that all who make decisions about life in any form will do so with wisdom, love, and courage. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen

Presentation of the symbol: The Sun

The Sun: whether it is night or cloudy it is there, bright: untouched, solemn and magnificent as human dignity.

See: Our Reality

1. During the past civil wars, human rights were violated.
2. Sudanese endured suffering and oppression at the hands of fellow Sudanese.
3. People lost meaning and the sacredness of life: More than two million people were killed during the war.
4. Death penalty is still a common practice
5. Torture, rape, prostitution and abortion are widespread
6. People with disabilities, HIV/AIDS and lepers are stigmatized.

Word of God: Gen 1:27-31

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Judge: Questions for reflection

Jesus’ identity, mission and actions were determined by his experience of sonship. He did not get a sense of self worth from the number of followers, miracles or his charismatic personality. His actions were not based on what Peter, John, James or the Pharisees thought. His worth and dignity was based on his relationship with God. It was clear to him that he was the “beloved Son of God”.

1. Where do you base your worth? Where is its source? From whom do you seek approval?
2. In which instances you have stepped upon people whom you labeled as undignified?
3. What can you do to safeguarded and uphold human dignity around you?

Silence and personal prayer

Prayer sharing in small groups

Action: What can I/we do? (Silent reflection)

Prayer for the Republic of South Sudan

Our Father

Blessing

Second Day: Common Good

Introduction

"The common good is understood as the social conditions that allow people to reach their full human potential and to realize their human dignity"

In Catholic social thought, the person is not only sacred, but also social. The very nature of human beings is that we are communal creatures. We live and grow in community. We cannot survive without community. Therefore, the dignity of the person makes sense only in the context of the person's relationships to others in the community. Human dignity can only be realized and protected in the context of relationships with the wider society.

This principle has profound implications not only for individual attitudes and behavior, but also for the institutions and structures of society. How we organize society –economically, politically, legally– directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. The obligation to "love our neighbor," therefore, has an individual dimension, but it also requires a broader social commitment to the common good.

Everyone has an obligation to contribute to the good of the whole society. The common good, then, consists of having the social systems and institutions, on which we all depend, work in a manner that benefits all people. Something counts as a common good only if it is a good to which all have access. *(From <http://www.cmn-go.net/VincentianSocialValues.html>)*

Opening Prayer

God our Creator, we are your Church
You call us to act as a leaven in the world,
in our family, professional, social, cultural and political life.
Help us to promote the common good
with fidelity and competence.
Empower us to be conscious of our role in the political community.
May we show in practice how authority
can be reconciled with freedom,
personal initiative with solidarity
and the needs of the social framework
with the benefits of diversity.
We ask this, through Christ our brother and our Lord. Amen.

Presentation of the symbol: Hands joint together

See: Our Reality

1. John Mbiti says, "I am because we are". This is true in South Sudan where there is a very strong sense of community.
2. Corruption and nepotism erodes the sense of community as it favors the interest of the few in power.
3. During the last 40 years, Africa has been ravaged by wars that have strong tribal dimensions. In South Sudan there is a fragile relationship among ethnic groups that menace to escalate and ignite tribal conflicts.

Word of God: 1Cor 12:12-17

The body is one and has many members, but all the members, many though they are, are one body; and so it is with Christ. It is in one Spirit that all of us, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, were baptized into one body.... If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members share its joy. You, then, are the body of Christ. Every one of you is a member of it.

Judge: Questions for reflection

Jesus proclaimed the reign of God as something that was beyond individuals and nationalisms. Jesus walked up to the fishermen and said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." To the woman he said, "You will never be thirsty again" He showed the people of Israel a larger picture that included all nations. Clearly and consistently, Jesus conveyed to his disciples and the crowds the significance of what they were doing. People put more passion and commitment on projects when they understand the overall significance of their individual contribution.

1. Is it clear to me that what I do has an impact on others?
2. Am I able to sacrifice my desires and personal interests for the common good?
3. Is my understanding of common good limited to my family, community and tribe?

Silence and personal prayer

Prayer sharing in small groups

Action: What can I/we do? (Silent reflection)

Prayer for the Republic of South Sudan

Our Father

Blessing

Third Day: Rights and Responsibilities

Introduction

In Catholic Social Teaching the basic demands of justice are made explicit by a specific set of human rights. These rights are bestowed on human beings by God and grounded in the nature and dignity of the person. They are not created by society, but rather, are inherent in the very nature of every person. These fundamental rights form a kind of baseline, a set of minimum conditions for social justice.

Every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency – starting with food, shelter and clothing, employment, health care, education, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and the other rights. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities -- to one another, to our families, and to the larger society. For example, people have a right to adequate employment, but they also have a duty to work and a responsibility to provide adequate income for their families.

Moreover, the wider society has a responsibility to organize its economic structures so that the right to employment is protected for all. Without this collective social responsibility being fulfilled, an individual's right to employment would have little practical meaning. (Cfr http://www.olphsalem.org/ministries/justice_peace/cst/img15.html)

Opening Prayer

Loving God, as we build a new nation,
help us to realize that we have rights,
duties and responsibilities to one another,
to our families, and to the larger society.

Send upon us Your Spirit to advocate and work
so that our basic rights be protected and safeguarded.
We ask this, through Christ our Lord.

Presentation of the symbol: Tukul

Tukul signifies overall protection from rain, sun, heat, wild beasts, intruders, etc. Likewise our rights/duties are a protection of or human dignity.

See: Our Reality *SCBC Communiqué April 7, 2011*

As a new nation, South Sudan is to understand civil and political rights, and make political consensus that support these rights. One of the Church's important educational tasks is to help build a broader consensus that the basic

economic conditions of human welfare are essential to human dignity and are due by right.

Those in authority must act justly, and foster openness and participation in spirit and action. Citizens must recognise that great changes are not completed overnight; there is a process which may not always meet immediate expectations. Legitimate authority must be respected, but leaders must work selflessly for the common good and avoid exaggerated political ambition. Leadership is a service to the people, and offices must be surrendered willingly at the end of the requisite term.

Word of God Acts 2: 42-47:

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Judge: Questions for reflection

Jesus carried a mission that would continue the work of creation. He said, "My father goes on working, and so do I." Things needed to be done. He knew the realization of his mission implied demands and that there was a price to be paid.

1. What are the rights more violated in your family, workplace?
2. What can you do to safeguard them? What would be the cost?

Silence and personal prayer

Prayer sharing in small groups

Action: What can I/we do? (Silent reflection)

Prayer for the Republic of South Sudan

Our Father

Blessing

Fourth Day: Preferential Option for the Poor

Introduction

The theme of special care and love for the poor is central to the biblical notion of justice. The Hebrew Scriptures emphasize that God expects those who are faithful to the covenant to pay special attention to the "widows, orphans, and aliens." Indeed, the treatment of the poor is one of the bottom-line tests of the people's faith in Yahweh. In the New Testament, Jesus recalls and carries on this theme. In the Beatitudes, in the story of the last judgment and in the whole of Jesus' life and teaching, it is unmistakably clear that those who seek to follow the way of Jesus must care for the poor in a special way.

The moral test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. The poor have the most urgent moral claim on the conscience of the nation. We are called to look at public policy decisions in terms of how they affect the poor. The "option for the poor," is not a slogan that pits one group or class against another. Rather it states that the deprivation and powerlessness of the poor wounds the whole community. (*Office for Social Justice St. Paul and Minneapolis*)

Dom Helder Camera, a bishop from Brazil, boldly stated that charity is not enough. The Church's option for the poor is mostly defined through actions that lead to the transformation of oppressive systems that generate poverty and injustices. It requires a vigorous commitment to social justice that will empower the poor to be the agents of social change.

Opening Prayer (Based on a prayer by Alan Litherland)

God of justice and compassion,
We ask forgiveness for the widening gulf between rich and poor,
And for the suffering of those people who are excluded from the
table of abundance.

Forgive us for our focus on material goods,

In a world where resources are limited

and where we are already using more than our fair share.

Forgive us for going along with what is easy.

Fill us with a living faith

Make us instruments of personal and social reconciliation.

We ask this, in the name of Jesus, our Lord. Amen

Presentation of the symbol: Table or a tray (sinya)

See: Our Reality

1. In South Sudan a new elite, with great economic power is emerging. Soon the gap between the rich and the poor will be widening.
2. Most humanitarian organizations in South Sudan have created a sense of dependency which does not favor active participation of the people in their process of development and transformation. Peoples and communities were viewed merely as objects and beneficiaries of charity and actions.
3. Rural and urban areas are not given the same opportunities for development forcing huge urban migration and loss of cultural identity and values.
4. Unemployment rate, especially among the youth is on the rise.

Word of God Mt. 25:31-46 (Shorten form)

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?’ “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Judge: Questions for reflection

Jesus revealed that he came to proclaim good news to the poor. He was always looking out for and protecting the little ones, lepers, widows, the little children, the common folks, the fishermen...

1. When was the last time you went out of your way to help someone in need?
2. Which injustices do you identify around you that generate poverty?

Silence and personal prayer

Prayer sharing in small groups

Action: What can I/we do? (Silent reflection)

Prayer for the Republic of South Sudan

Our Father

Blessing

Fifth Day: Solidarity

Introduction

Catholic social teaching proclaims that we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers. We are one human family. Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that loving our neighbor has global dimensions in an interdependent world.

Our responsibilities to each other cross national, racial, economic and ideological differences. We are called to work globally for justice.

In today's global village, citizens are increasingly aware of the social and economic problems around the world. Hundreds of millions of children go to bed hungry every night because they live in desperate poverty. Millions more suffer the effects of war, ethnic conflicts, and natural disasters. The disparities between poverty and wealth are so extreme as to be almost overwhelming.

John Paul II spoke boldly on behalf of global solidarity. He called solidarity a virtue. It is the virtue, he says, by which we demonstrate "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good ... because we are all really responsible for all" (*Pope John Paul II, On Social Concern, 1988, #38*).

The principle of solidarity functions as a moral category that leads to choices that will promote and protect the common good. Solidarity is not a matter of sentiment but has to be translated into action.

Opening Prayer

God our Creator,
Our new country is faced with challenges.
Our sisters and brothers in the towns and villages of South Sudan
Have many and great needs
We want simple solutions,
But you want us to help solve the problems.
Through your church, you call us to listen,
to learn, to reflect and to act.
Give us a deep sense of our place in this web of Creation.
Give us the wisdom of mind and generosity of heart
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Presentation of the symbol: Joint hands with the world

See: Our Reality

1. Opportunism is the sin of the day. Greed and personal enrichment is becoming a common practice.
2. During the war, many South Sudanese lived abroad. Nowadays, people from East African countries seek for better opportunities in South Sudan.
3. The major cities in South Sudan are becoming cosmopolitan. This presents a great opportunity but also great challenges.

Word of God Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Reflection

Jesus established relationships of empathy that went beyond nationalisms, ideologies and social status. He had friends among the rich and was not afraid to touch the sick, lepers, possessed or the outcast. His encounter with the Syrophoenician woman is one powerful episode of mutual intercultural spiritual enrichment. Jesus became transformed through his contact with a 'Gentile' or 'pagan' woman.

1. Do you follow the news and bring to your prayer the situation of people suffering around the world?
2. What can South Sudan offer to the rest of the world? Would the country always be a recipient of help and solidarity?
3. Which encounters with people of other nationality and religious beliefs have changed positively and strengthened your relationship and understanding of God, Father of all?

Silence and personal prayer

Prayer sharing in small groups

Action: What can I/we do? (Silent reflection)

Prayer for the Republic of South Sudan

Our Father

Blessing

Sixth Day: Integrity of Creation

Introduction

We are concerned about the negative consequences for humanity and for all creation resulting from the degradation of basic natural resources such as water, air and land, brought about by an economic and technological progress which does not recognize and take into account its limits.

The goods of the earth are gifts from God, and they are intended by God for the benefit of everyone. We have a responsibility to care for these goods as stewards and trustees, not as mere consumers and users. How we treat the environment is a measure of our stewardship, a sign of our respect for the Creator.

In our concern for creation, we must regain humility and recognize the limits of our powers, and most importantly, the limits of our knowledge and judgment. *(From JP II, Common Declaration on Environmental Ethics, 2002)*

Opening Prayer *(By Jane Deren, Education for Justice)*

As we breathe the very air which sustains us,
We remember your love, God, which gives us life.
Fill us with your compassion for Creation.
Empty us of apathy, selfishness and fear,
of all pessimism and hesitation.
Breathe into us solidarity with all who suffer now
and the future generations who will suffer
because of our environmental irresponsibility.
Move us into action to save our earth
and to build your sustainable Kingdom. Amen.

Presentation of the symbol: A plant

A plant: fragile, needing care. Tomorrow it will grow into a wonderful tree offering shelter to the traveler and fruits to the hungry person.

See: Our Reality

1. The major cities in South Sudan struggle with waste management. The misuse of plastic bags causes great damage to plants. It is also dangerous to animals and human beings.
2. Oil exploitation is often a cause of pollution of water tables because of unsafe practices that have as their sole interest profit making.

3. Gardens and tree plantings campaigns in South Sudan started years after the signing of the CPA.
4. With the dawning of peace, wild animals began their return to South Sudan.
5. After independence, companies and business will boom in South Sudan with its share in pollution and toxic waste.

Word of God (Gen 1:20-26)

And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Judge: Questions for reflection

Jesus had a strong relationship with the environment. In the business of his apostolic life, he took time to look at the lilies of the fields and to contemplate the birds. His parables of the nature of the Kingdom of God are full of images of a healthy relationship with the environment: e.g. a field that produces a hundred fold, a mustard seed that grows and shelters a multitude of birds, a nest filled with fish...

1. What daily practices abuse the environment where you live?
2. What can our community do for a healthier environment?
3. When was the last time you planted a tree?

Silence and personal prayer

Prayer sharing in small groups

Action: What can I/we do? (Silent reflection)

Prayer for the Republic of South Sudan

Our Father

Blessing

Seventh Day: Reconciliation

Introduction

Reconciliation on the social level contributes to peace after a conflict. Reconciliation restores unity of hearts and life in common. In virtue of reconciliation, nations long at war have again found peace; citizens ruined by civil war have rebuilt unity; individuals or communities seeking or granting pardon have healed their memories; divided families once again live in harmony. Reconciliation overcomes crises, restores dignity to people, and opens the way for development and lasting peace among people at all levels. (*Robert Schreiter, Justice and Reconciliation*)

Reconciliation is the ultimate goal of peacebuilding. It occurs when people develop a new relationship based on apology, forgiveness, and newly established trust. It is a meeting ground where trust and mercy have met, and where justice and peace have kissed. Reconciliation brings people together, enabling them to grow beyond the past to re-establish a normalized, peaceful, and trusting relationship in the present.

Reconciliation is a very difficult and slow process. It usually takes just as long to get out of a conflict as it takes to get into one. Yet progress can be made, and even incremental steps can have tremendously beneficial effects. (Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, USA)

Opening Prayer *(Prayer of the Aboriginal People – Australia)*

Holy Father, God of Love,

We acknowledge the pain and shame of our history
and the sufferings of our peoples, and we ask your forgiveness.

Our hope is in you because you gave your Son Jesus
to reconcile the world to you.

We pray for your strength and grace to forgive,
accept and love one another,

as you love us and forgive and accept us

Give us the courage to accept the realities of our history
so that we may build a better future for our nation.

Teach us to respect all cultures.

Teach us to care for our land and waters.

Help us to share justly the resources of this land.

Help us to bring about spiritual and social change

to improve the quality of life for all groups in our communities,

especially the disadvantaged.

Help young people to find true dignity
and self-esteem by your Spirit.

May your power and love be the foundation
on which we build our families, our communities and our nation,
through Jesus

Presentation of the symbol: The rainbow

See: Our Reality *SCBC Communiqué April 7, 2011*

While there is great joy, there are also those who are saddened at the division of our country. There are fears and concerns about the future. Problems still remain: Abyei, the Nuba Mountains, Blue Nile, citizenship, borders and oil. There are concerns about the inclusivity and transparency of the constitutional review process. Not least, the conflict in Darfur continues and there is increasing violence in the South, including the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army. We are saddened that our people have been inculturated to turn to violence when faced with disputes, whether ethnic, or over resources, or over personal or political issues.

Word of God Lk 15: 11-32 (*Shorten form Lk 15:21-25*)

And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

Judge: Questions for reflection

Jesus not only spoke about the importance of reconciliation, but in the most difficult moment of his life - while hanging on the cross- begged God to forgive his executioners.

1. What are the advantages of being reconciled with other communities or groups?
2. Can you recall personal experiences where reconciliation changed your life?

Silence and personal prayer

Prayer sharing in small groups

Action: What can I/we do? (Silent reflection)

Prayer for the Republic of South Sudan

Our Father

Blessing

Eighth Day: Subsidiarity

Introduction

Catholic social teaching emphasizes the belief that all people have a right to participate in the economic, political, and cultural life of society. It is a fundamental demand of justice and a requirement for human dignity that all people be assured a minimum level of participation in the community. It is wrong for a person or a group to be excluded unfairly or to be unable to participate or contribute to society. The ultimate injustice is for a person or group to be treated actively or abandoned passively as if they were non-members of the human race. *(U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1986, Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy)*

In the principle of subsidiarity we believe that people have the ability to assess the situation they find themselves in, to decide what needs to be done and to implement this decision.

As people know their own needs and understand their own problems better than anyone else, they are in the best position to work out how to meet these needs and solve these problems.

Subsidiarity is allowing people to make whatever decision they can for themselves and only referring decisions to a higher authority if people are unable to make these decisions. *(DOR, 10 Steps to Unity in South Sudan)*

Opening Prayer

God our Creator,
you have created us social beings, part of a human family.
you have given us the intelligence and the capability
to solve the problems that affect us.
Give us the strength to actively participate in the political and
social life of our country.
Show our leaders the limits of their governing competence.
Through your son Jesus, you have also shared in the public affairs
of a concrete history and country.
Continue guiding our history
through the paths of justice and peace.
We ask this through Jesus, our Lord. Amen

Presentation of the symbol: Mother holding a child

See: Our Reality

1. Power struggle increases when political competences are not clearly defined.

2. The Referendum showed the will of the people to take the future of their country into their hands. Yet, political decisions and agreements are signed without their knowledge or participation.
3. The erosion of the customary (tribal) structure is at odds with modern political systems.
4. Women are still at the margin of decision making positions both in politics and in the Church in South Sudan.

Word of God Acts 6: 1-7

Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. And the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. "But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. "But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." And the statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them. And the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

Judge: Questions for reflection

Jesus was God and as such had the power to convert stones into loaves of bread. Yet, when great and hungry crowds had followed him for days, he asked his friends what to do and accepted a child's meal to feed the crowds. He delegated equal power and authority to anyone who asked. Jesus said to both women and men, "The Kingdom of God is within you."

1. Do you believe all the good ideas come from someone in authority?
2. What can you do to better participate in the democratic life of your country?

Silence and personal prayer

Prayer sharing in small groups

Action: What can I/we do? (Silent reflection)

Prayer for the Republic of South Sudan

Our Father

Blessing

Ninth Day: Peace

Introduction

Peace is not just the absence of war. It involves mutual respect and confidence between peoples and nations. It involves collaboration and binding agreements.

There is a close relationship in Catholic teaching between peace and justice. Peace is the fruit of justice and is dependent upon right order among human beings. This traditional concept of peace was described by the Second Vatican Council in the following way:

Peace is a task that requires the commitment of individuals and institutions in a variety of social sectors -- political, economic, cultural, and legal. (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*)

Peace is a journey towards harmony with ourselves, others, creations and with God.

Opening Prayer

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love.

Where there is injury, pardon.

Where there is doubt, faith.

Where there is despair, hope.

Where there is darkness, light.

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,

grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;

to be understood, as to understand;

to be loved, as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive.

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life. Amen.

Presentation of the symbol: The cross: the cost of peace

See: Our Reality *SCBC Communiqué April 7, 2011*

We urge all parties, all forces and all citizens to embrace a culture of peace and to reject violence. We call upon them to turn away from division, incitement, hate speech, rumours and accusations and to resolve disputes through dialogue in a spirit of unity. We are all children of God, regardless of geographical boundaries,

ethnicity, religion, culture, or political affiliation, and we insist on respect for diversity. The advice we gave during the 101 days of prayer for a peaceful referendum is as valid now and for the future as it was then: **change your heart, change the world** – and change Sudan. Only thus will a just and peaceful new society be built in our two new countries.

Any major change is a time of uncertainty and potential instability. We encourage you to embrace it positively and peacefully, with joy and patience, as we would await the birth of a new baby, in order to secure the peaceful and prosperous future we all want for ourselves and generations yet to come.

Word of God Jn 14:25-27

"These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

Judge: Questions for reflection

Jesus' life was full of struggles from his birth to his death. He lived in a country occupied by foreign domination. The religious leadership had abandoned the ways of God and political, regional and nationalistic factions were the order of the day. Yet, his parting gift to his friends at the Last Supper was peace, "Peace I give to you, a peace the world cannot give".

1. What can you change in your life to be more at peace with yourself, your family, your community, your country, your world?

Silence and personal prayer

Prayer sharing in small groups

Action: What can I/we do? (Silent reflection)

Prayer for the Republic of South Sudan

Our Father

Blessing

PRAYER FOR THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN

God of Mercies,
We thank you for your great love for us.
We ask you to guide all our leaders
in the process of nation building,
grant them your wisdom, compassion and fortitude.

Loving God,
give us courage to reject resentment as well as ethnic
conflicts.

Through the intercession of St. Josephine Bakhita,
help us to overcome hurt, hostility and bitterness in our
hearts
so that we become reconciled citizens in our new nation.

Renew in us the will for honest and hard work
and bring us closer to you in the spirit of service, unity and
lasting peace.

Loving God, we pray for our heroes,
our martyrs and all innocent people
who died during the long years of war.

We pray in thanksgiving for all those
who stood with us in solidarity
to bring about peace.

Unite us from every tribe, tongue and people.
Send your Holy Spirit upon us
and may your Will be done in us.

God, bless our new nation;
bless the Republic of South Sudan,
bless the Republic of Sudan.
in Jesus' name. Amen.

*Novena for
Nation building approved by SCBC-SS.
Juba, South Sudan -May 2011*