

Lent to Pentecost 2015



Pope Francis encourages us: "Work so that the world becomes a community of brothers and sisters who respect each other, accept each other in one's diversity, and take care of one another."

What can we do in Lent and through the Easter season to contribute to building a new world? We can begin by changing ourselves! God is calling each of us to change our hearts. Our hearts have become discouraged because of injustice, suffering, violence, evil. Let us work together, encourage and pray for one another as we begin this holy time of Lent in preparation for the feast of Easter.

We look at our own lives and at the life of our communities, our country. The Bishops of Sudan and South Sudan have written important messages to guide us. Quotes are included from the Pastoral Exhortation in 2014, *Let Us Refound our Nation on a New Covenant* and the recent Message issued January 2015, *Go Deeper*.

This booklet offers reflections and suggestion to be shared at the Sunday Mass / Prayer for each week.

1ST SUNDAY OF LENT 22 MARCH

Behold I establish my covenant with you and your descendants. Gn 9:9

Make me know your ways, Lord; teach me your paths. Ps 25:4

Repent and believe in the gospel. Mk 1:15

Our faith begins with God's love for each of us. The rainbow we hear about in the first Reading reminds us that God makes a promise, a covenant with us. God wants to be in relationship with us. What helps me to believe that God loves me?



Action

1. Take a few minutes to sit very still. Close your eyes. Be silent. Let God's love cover you, surround you with peace. Do this with your children, your family so that together you might know God's love and care for you.
2. To repent we need to turn our hearts to God. Pray for persons and situations that need to turn to God. Ask God to help you know what you can do to make your community a better place. Do it.

Pastoral Exhortation from Catholic Bishops of Sudan and South Sudan

Our history is an open wound that desperately needs healing. We must heal our society by allowing our communities to tell their stories openly and without fear. Negative narratives fester and poison our social relations. We retell them in our villages to our children. Let us end these vicious cycles by creating space where we can speak and work towards peaceful coexistence and reconciliation.

Refound our Nation January 2014

2nd SUNDAY OF LENT

I trusted even when I said I am greatly afflicted. Ps 116:10
"This is my Beloved Son, listen to Him" Mk 1:11



Abraham thought God wanted him to sacrifice his son. He trusted God and came to know that God does not want human sacrifice. God wants us to protect life, to stop killing. In suffering, God often seems hidden to us. Yet, loving actions can show the face of God.

Action

1. In our traditions, we sacrifice an animal at important times of birth, marriage, death and other events. In our Catholic tradition, the word *sacrifice* means *to make holy*." Reflect on what God is asking you to change in your life to *make it holy*. Is it to stop speaking against someone or group? Do I keep the spirit of conflict in my heart or the spirit of peace? **This week, hold back from saying something negative about people.**
2. At the Transfiguration, Jesus let his friends see his glory. There are times when people help us to see God's goodness through their actions. **Tell your children and families about the good things that happen, especially in times of suffering.** Who were the people who helped you? Who fed you? We can show God's love to one another.

Pastoral Exhortation Catholic Bishops of Sudan and South Sudan

"There are no quick fixes to the deep social divisions and trauma within our society. With time and by promoting processes that are holistic and people-centred, we believe that our painful history and our trauma can be healed and our nation reconciled"

Refound Our Nation, January 2014

3rd SUNDAY OF LENT

I AM the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt where you lived as slaves. Ex 20:2

During this Lenten season, we need to change our hearts to listen to God who helps us to respect each other. As people brought to a new freedom from slavery, God calls us to life and invites us to build our own new nation guided by the Ten Commandments given as a way to be able to live together in respect and justice.



Actions

1. Meditate on the Ten Commandments and build in your heart the spirit of good relationships, with God and one another. As children of One Father, let us construct a culture of forgiveness and peace among ourselves. Look at the Ten Commandments and examine your conscience. What needs to change to lead to good for all?
2. As we pray for and with catechumens this Sunday, let us look at our own lives to see our motives for why we do what we do. This is a first step to a good confession, not just looking at our acts, but at our motives. This may be what needs to change. Right actions will follow.
3. Begin preparing for the Sacrament of Penance (Confession). Ask your parish priest when your parish will celebrate this sacrament of Penance-Confession the sacrament of God's mercy and forgiveness.

Message From the South Sudan Catholic Bishops: Go Deeper

Lenten Call: We reflect on the message of Pope Francis. God is not indifferent to us, but often we are indifferent to others. "We are unconcerned with their problems, their sufferings and the injustice they endure. Our heart grows cold. It is a problem which we, as Christians need to confront...Let us no longer be indifferent to the suffering and death within our own country. Through prayer and fasting let us grow close to Christ and let us all serve our sisters and brothers throughout the nation by our actions for peace and reconciliation.

Go Deeper 30 January 2015

4TH SUNDAY OF LENT

God loved the world so much that he sent his son. Jn 3:16

Jesus tells us that to enter the kingdom of God, we must first believe God's love and be baptized. To believe, Jesus implies a change of heart. Now, God asks us to care beyond our family, clan and tribe. God asks us not to desire power, honour, status and not to expect others to serve us. God wants us to respect people of all tribes.

Actions

1. This week, let us meditate on the meaning of the cross.
 - That new life will spring from the cross.
 - That Christ will give eternal life to those who believe and follow Him.
 - That in face of difficulties, Christ will give us strength to overcome them
 - That hope in Christ can rebuild what we have lost



2. Pray the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary, holding in prayer those suffering in our communities, our country and our world. They are the suffering Christ in our midst.
3. Visit an elderly person in your community and respond to their need for food or doing a task for them.

Pastoral Exhortation Catholic Bishops of Sudan and South Sudan

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.

5th Sunday of Lent

“Unless the grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains only a single grain but if it dies it yields a rich harvest.



Good soil is essential when we plant seeds. The soil welcomes the seed and invites it to die so that fruits and vegetables can grow. If the seed does not die no vegetable or fruit will come. It is the same with us. We are like the seed that must die to our selfish ways. Jesus, raised high on the cross with arms extended invites all of us to his love and draws us to himself. We are like the soil nourishing the seed of God's love which God has planted in our hearts.

Actions

1. Dig up some soil and put it near the door of your tukel to remind you to let the seed of kindness grow in you. When we are kind to one another, peace grows in us, just as the seed grows in the soil. A smile is the beginning of peace. Smile at everyone you see today and say: *Peace be with you, Salaam, Dor, Male, Meer* or in your own language.
2. Find a mango seed and plant it. Watch it as it grows. Remember the seed and how it had to fall into the ground to die. What inside of you, do you want to change?
3. Pray the Stations of the Cross, while walking on the road. Think of people you know who are like those Jesus met along the way. Pray for them.

Pastoral Exhortation from Catholic Bishops of Sudan and South Sudan

We commit ourselves to the rebuilding that is necessary within our new nation. The task ahead is daunting, but we stand in solidarity with those who need our support. We express our solidarity with our pastoral agents, local personnel, missionaries and laity. They have chosen to stay with their people at great personal risk.”

PASSION SUNDAY / PALM SUNDAY

My God, my God why have you forsaken me. Ps 22:2



Jesus entered Jerusalem. The people waved palm branches to welcome him. Later, Jesus was betrayed by one of his apostles and sentenced to death on a cross. Today we begin Holy Week. The Gospels tell us that Jesus dies because some people were against him for telling the truth, for talking about corruption. God loves His Son so much that he raised Jesus from the dead. God shows us that his love and power are stronger than evil and death Jesus conquers evil, suffering, sin and death. Jesus, the Christ, fills us with his own Holy Spirit so that we share this victory with Him. This holy week, turn to Jesus and his great forgiving love. Through him we learn more and more to forgive and to be forgiven.

Actions:

1. Think about those to whom you need to say "I'm sorry"? Go and do it.
2. Ask God: "Lord make me an instrument of your peace."

Pastoral Exhortation from Catholic Bishops of Sudan and South Sudan

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."

Refound Our Nation, January 2014

THE TRIDUUM

is the name given to the three most important days in the church year. It is three days but one event, just as an African wedding takes several days with all the rituals at the home of both families. It is one extended feast.

In these three days we remember and enter into the core of our Christian Faith. It is one event as we *passover* with Christ from death to life, suffering to joy, darkness to light.

On **Holy Thursday**, we unite ourselves with Christ as we celebrate the Last Supper of the Lord, where he washed the feet of his disciples and instructed us to do this for one another. At the Last Supper, Jesus gave us His own body and blood in the bread and wine and asked us to do this in memory of Him. The risen Christ is truly present with us.



On **Good Friday**, we enter into the mystery of Jesus dying on the cross. We unite the suffering in our communities, our country, our world with the sufferings of Jesus.



At the **Easter Vigil** Service, we pass from darkness to light. The large Easter candle, called the Paschal candle, reminds us of Christ's presence among us. We each have a candle and take the light from the Easter candle as a sign of Christ sharing his life with each of us. The waters of Baptism offer new life. We share in the risen life of Christ.

ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA!



EASTER TIME

The Easter season opens with the celebration of the Easter Vigil and ends on Pentecost Sunday. These fifty days give us time to come to a deeper understanding of the presence of the Risen Lord in our midst. Jesus overcame death, the impossible. Easter is a time of great joy and hope, knowing that Jesus risen continues to be with us helping us to overcome the evil in our world and in our lives. With him we can be transformed.

REJOICE IN CHRIST RISEN!

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

*Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me,
so I send you. Jn 20:21*



This time of Easter until Pentecost is a very special time. The Risen Jesus wants to give us a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We ask for the gifts of the Spirit as we build our new country.

- Look at the map of South Sudan and Sudan. Find your state.
- Ask God to send the Holy Spirit to our country.

By giving us the Holy Spirit, God gives us divine life and power abundantly.

*Let us pray these 50 days to Pentecost
for the gifts of the Holy Spirit*

SPIRIT of WISDOM.

COME, HOLY SPIRIT OF WISDOM.

COME to leaders of political parties and individuals who want to lead in our country. Grant them a conversion of heart so that they turn from violence to become peace-makers.



Pray for a conversion of heart for Salva Kiir and Riek Machar and other leaders.

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, It is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead. Lk 24:45

We pray for and work to bring into our lives and world the gift of understanding. To understand the Word of God and live it, takes work, reflection, prayer, action.

In our traditions, when there is a conflict, a mediator is called in to help restore peace. This mediator needs the gift of understanding so that both sides sense they are understood and respected.

- Name some people and chiefs who are good mediators in conflict. Pray for them for a spirit of UNDERSTANDING.



SPIRIT of UNDERSTANDING.

COME, HOLY SPIRIT OF UNDERSTANDING.

COME, help us to understand one another and to respect all our tribes.

Message From the South Sudan Catholic Bishops, Go Deeper

A legitimate government is one which is able to bring peace, development and stability to its people. Any party that continues to fight the war against the innocent citizens of South Sudan has no legitimacy; once you are at war amongst yourselves you have already lost your legitimacy!.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own and my own know me in the same way as the Father knows me and I know the Father I lay down my life the sheep.

Jn 10:14-15



Over and over, Jesus shows his outpouring of care and love for us as a good shepherd cares for his sheep. Shepherds and cattle herders take very good care of their animals. Even more, are we to care for one another as Christians and for all in need.

Pray for all family, community, civic and military leaders that they may work for good of those in their care

SPIRIT of COUNSEL. *(Good Judgment)*

COME, HOLY SPIRIT OF COUNSEL.

Come and help us to know one another and to help one another to know what is right and what is wrong.

Message From the South Sudan Catholic Bishops, Go Deeper

This war is about power, not about the good of the people. The aspirations of individuals and factions have led to a cycle of revenge killing. The whole nation, including leaders and fighters, is exhausted with war and is being worn down by attrition. We say to all who are involved in any way: if you continue fighting you will finish yourselves and you will finish the nation. The nation needs to be salvaged from this sin.