

Sunday 22 October 2017
29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

Where there is hatred, sow love
Help bring peace to South Sudan

Introduction

Peace is something we all crave: peace in our hearts, peace of mind, peace in our families, peace in our land, and peace here on earth.

Even though we may not like it, conflict is a normal part of life. When conflict is expressed in a non-violent, honest and open way, seeking mutual understanding and collaboration, the result will always be genuine and lasting peace. Bridges are built between peoples based on mutual trust.

When conflict is handled with mindless violence, creating hatred and fear, then walls are built between people; walls that take decades, even centuries to break down. As Pope Francis advises, 'The best way to deal with conflict is the willingness to face conflict head-on, to resolve it and to make it a

SOUTH SUDAN is over twice the size of the United Kingdom with a population the size of London. About 60% of the population is Christian and the largest community is the Catholic Church.

After decades of violent inter-ethnic and civil war, South Sudan became independent in 2011, breaking away from the predominantly Muslim north.

After a hopeful beginning, the country has steadily become more politically polarised and ethnically fragmented. It is now considered the most unstable country in the world.

Many people in the Church, like Bishop Paride Taban, are working towards a peaceful future. They need our help, our support and our prayers.

Please see inside of folder and Gift Aid envelope for more information.

link in the chain of a new process. "Blessed are the peacemakers!" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 227).

After decades of civil war and inter-ethnic violence, the government and people of South Sudan continue to face life and death choices about the future of their country.

Homily Notes:

The Word of God today give us insights into how God chooses people like us to be his instruments of peace, and what we must do in response.

First Reading: **Isaiah 45:1,4-6**

Cyrus the Great was the Persian king of a great empire in the 6th Century BC. In Sacred Scripture he is the only non-Jewish person to be called God's 'anointed one'. He was known as a gifted administrator who respected the customs and religions in all the lands he conquered, including Israel.

God chose someone who 'does not know' God, to be his instrument of peace, someone we might say is unsuitable or even unable to be an instrument of God's grace.

God calls us by name to be instruments of his peace. Why me? Am I suitable, worthy, able enough? Why would God choose me to be his instrument of peace? Pope Francis wrote that 'the Gospel is buried under a pile of excuses' (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 277). If God trusts us to be his messengers of peace then we need to have the humility to respond to his call. After all, God does know what he is doing!

Second Reading: **1 Thessalonians 1:1-5**

St Paul's Letter to the Thessalonians picks up on the theme of being chosen for a purpose. This purpose is motivated by faith, love and hope.

It is love that draws us away from our own small worlds to reach out to those across the world in great need. It is our hope for 'peace to God's people on earth' that encourages us to support those actively working for peace in the world.

'Grace to you and peace' is the first and foremost greeting of St Paul.

Gospel: **Matthew 22:15-21**

In today's Gospel, Jesus is once again in conflict with the Pharisees, many of whom were good and holy people believing they were defending the integrity of their religion. They cannot see who Jesus is, nor can they hear and understand his teaching about the Kingdom of God.

In the dramatic exchange, Jesus deals with them with open honesty and gentle firmness. He stuns them with the challenge to think deeply about what truly belongs to God.

Along with justice, Jesus made peace a central theme of his ministry and teaching. Peace on earth was the opening proclamation of his birth. His ministry of forgiveness and reconciliation brought people together again, with God and with each other.

Being a missionary disciple of Jesus is to be a peacemaker and we are called to work together across the world for peace with justice.

Pope Francis' Message for World Mission Sunday speaks of the power of the Gospel in overcoming evil: *'We can think too of countless testimonies to how the Gospel helps to overcome narrowness, conflict, racism, tribalism, and to promote everywhere, and among all, reconciliation, fraternity, and sharing.'*

Hearing the Gospel and responding to it requires giving to God our full unconditional commitment, and giving back to Caesar our deep-seated prejudices, false assumptions and irrational fears.

World Mission Sunday is celebrated in every parish throughout the world. It is a great opportunity to express solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Christ who are living in situations of poverty, violence and oppression.

Missio, the Holy Father's charity for overseas mission, helps the churches too poor or too young to support themselves. What you give in the special collection today will make a difference to people in places like South Sudan tomorrow. Please help give peace a chance.

PERSONAL WITNESS

'I have worked as a Mill Hill Missionary in Kenya and South Africa, and as Missio National Director I have visited countries emerging from many decades of violent conflict including Sri Lanka, Myanmar (Burma) and South Sudan. In each and every place I have seen for myself the way in which the Church has been a very effective agent of peace by publicly renouncing all violence, by calling people in conflict together and offering ways to live in peace, and by standing up for the rights of those who are poor, marginalised and oppressed.

In South Sudan, the Church is the only institution trusted by the people, the only place where the poor and powerless will find help, the only voice giving hope for the future of the country.'

Fr Anthony Chantry,
Missio National Director

Prayers of the Faithful (inspired by Evangelii Gaudium)

On this World Mission Sunday we unite with the whole Catholic Church in praying for the coming of God's Kingdom of peace and justice.

- ◆ For Pope Francis, our Bishop... and all the leaders of the Church: may they ensure we are all in a permanent state of mission.
- ◆ For all missionaries, priests, religious sisters and brothers and lay people: may they keep their mission focused on Jesus and their commitment to the poor.
- ◆ For those who have not yet heard the Good News of Jesus Christ: may we obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all those in need of the light of the Gospel.
- ◆ For the poor of the world who are the privileged recipients of the Gospel: may the Church be for them a sign of the Kingdom of justice that Jesus came to establish.
- ◆ For those who live in places of war, oppression and injustice: may we heal wounds, build bridges, strengthen relationships and bear one another's burdens. We especially remember the people of South Sudan and pray for peace in their troubled land.
- ◆ For those opposed to the Gospel: may we have the courage to proclaim the newness of the Gospel with boldness in every time and place.

Celebrant

God our Father, your Son Jesus Christ calls us to be missionary disciples. May your Church so abound in love and compassion that the joy of the Gospel will fill the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus.

We ask all this through the same Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Final Blessing

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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