

Day of PRAYER and FASTING for Peace for SOUTH SUDAN and DRC February 23



Pope Francis

has designated Friday, February 23, 2018, to be a

day of prayer and fasting for peace,

with focus on the African countries of **South Sudan** and the **Democratic Republic of the Congo.**

Civil wars in South Sudan and the DRC have all the ingredients for a **humanitarian catastrophe:** violence, hunger, disease, and homelessness.

In the DRC, continuous ethnic and political conflicts, fueled by illicit profits from the country's extremely rich natural resources (gold, diamonds, oil, and cobalt) have displaced nearly **4 million people.** There are more **internally displaced** persons in DRC than any other country in Africa. More than **600,000** have fled to neighboring countries as **refugees.** Currently, **Uganda** hosts the largest number of DRC refugees, over **200,000.** Pope Francis has expressed a desire to visit both the DRC and South Sudan but the violence has forced him to postpone his visit indefinitely.

In South Sudan, the civil war has entered its **fifth year.** Many thousands

of people have been forced to flee and live in one of the UN protected areas or Internally Displaced Persons camps. **Maryknoll Father Mike Bassano** is a chaplain at one such camp in **Malakal.** Several thousand more have taken refuge in church compounds, including St. Mary's Cathedral in the city of **Wau.** **Maryknoll Father Tom Tiscornia** is in Wau, as a chaplain at a nursing and midwifery school. **Maryknoll Lay Missioner Gabe Hurrish** is in **Yambio,** as an instructor at a teacher training college.

Nearly **2 million** South Sudanese are internally displaced and **700,000** have fled the country as refugees. **Uganda** hosts over **one million** South Sudanese refugees; more than **85 per cent** women and children. **Maryknoll Fathers John Barth and David Schwinghamer** have recently moved to **Palabek Refugee Camp** in Uganda to minister to the **41,000** residents – **60 per cent** of them children.

Prayer for Peace in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo

May the risen Lord break down the walls of hostility that today divide brothers and sisters, especially in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

May he comfort those women who are the victims of violence in war zones and throughout the world.

May he protect children who suffer from conflicts in which they have no part, but which rob them of their childhood and at times of life itself. How hypocritical it is to deny the mass murder of women and children! Here war shows its most horrid face.

May the Lord help all the little ones and the poor of our world to continue to believe and trust that the kingdom of God is at hand, in our midst, and is “justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17). May he sustain all those who day by day strive to combat evil with good, and with words and deeds of fraternity, respect, encounter and solidarity.

May the Lord strengthen in government officials and all leaders a spirit which is noble, upright, steadfast and courageous in seeking peace through dialogue and negotiation.

May the Lord enable all of us to be peacemakers wherever we find ourselves, in our families, in school, at work, in the community, in every setting. “Let us wash the feet” of one another, in imitation of our Master and Lord. To him be glory and praise, now and forever. Amen.

Prayer by Pope Francis in Rome on November 23, 2017.

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“Solidarity Teacher Training College is run by a group of international religious from various congregations and institutes. Our college has 15 tutors from 9 different countries. There are 125 students from all over the nation and a few from Sudan in the north. The compound has classrooms, a library, a computer room, dorms for women and men, a cafeteria and several warehouses. The religious staff have their own house and everyone has their own room.”

—GABE HURRISH, Maryknoll Lay Missioner

Standing on right; read more at <http://bit.ly/2BDZTB0>



“The settlement population at Palabek Refugee Camp rises weekly. We are now up to 41,000 people – 60 percent of them school-age children. Our top priority is to build and staff primary and secondary schools for these children. Maryknoll is teaming up with Salesian missionaries to provide four nursery schools to enroll 200 each. Most of the teachers have been hired in the camp itself with others coming from the Ugandans living nearby. Today the school doors opened (actually there are no doors yet, just a roof and brick pillars.) Maryknoll is supplying uniforms, school supplies and porridge each day for the next year.”

—FATHER JOHN BARTH, MM

On left; read more at <http://bit.ly/JohnBarth>

