

Archiepiscopal Visit to the Diocese of Nzara
Dedications and Thanksgivings
7-10 May 2011



A bit about the diocese

Nzara diocese is just over a year old. However, in that time major renovations and construction has meant that Nzara can now boast a clinic, a youth and training centre, a house for the bishop, diocesan offices, 5 guest tukuls and other buildings that will be put to use for the diocese's benefit. Nzara's bishop, the Rt Rev Samuel Peni has spearheaded this development. However, what is so special is the support he has received to achieve this from the Diocese of Iowa in the United States and individual donors not to mention the financial contributions from within his diocese. Nzara Diocese has 10 archdeaconries and currently, all the new buildings are in one archdeaconry alone. With the rate at which the bishop and his diocese are developing though, it certainly won't be long before every corner of Nzara sees significant development.



Arrival

Festivities actually began in the Diocese of Yambio where Archbishop Daniel, Rt Rev Paul Yugusuk, Assistant Bishop of Torit and support staff were welcomed off the World Food Programme plane by Rt Rev Peter Munde, Bishop of Yambio, Rt Rev Samuel Peni, a singing youth choir, the Governor of Western Equatoria, His Excellency Joseph Bakosoro, the Police Commissioner for Western Equatoria Mayom Deng Biar and ululating Mothers Union members. In All Saints Cathedral Yambio, Diocesan Secretary Joseph gave a welcoming message on behalf of the Christians of Yambio. Bishop Peter confirmed the sentiments encouraging Archbishop Daniel to 'feel free' as 'this [was his] place.' HE Joseph Bakosoro remarked on how blessed Western Equatoria was to have such a big person from the church come to them. 'We will be with you and protect you all the time you are here with us,' he said. He also took the opportunity to thank the Mothers Union for their wonderful songs. Archbishop Daniel responded with praise and gratitude to the church and the government. He spoke briefly of why he had come, the importance of remembering the Lord when one has been able to achieve something but quickly added that the hard work certainly wasn't over. 'God has given the people of Western Equatoria a good governor,' he said. Notwithstanding this remark, he cautioned the government telling them that the good people of Western Equatoria state were a watchdog therefore the



Top - Bottom: Archbishop Daniel being welcomed at Yambio Airstrip, welcoming crowd, Archbishop Daniel and Governor Bakosoro during lunch

government should continue to do good work and found their endeavours on the fear of God. After the formal welcome, Archbishop Daniel, the other bishops, the government dignitaries, and members of the congregation advanced to the dining hall for a hearty lunch.

In All Saints Cathedral Nzara later that afternoon, Archbishop Daniel continued to encourage the Christians of Western Equatoria. To the congregation he remarked that it was not every diocese who could achieve as much as Nzara had, especially in such little time. He added that these blessings were a sign that God wanted more to be done. However, the effort and funds should eventually come entirely from the people of Nzara themselves not always from abroad. Lastly, he stated the somewhat sober point that they were not just coming together to dance but also to hear the word of God.



Nzara County Commissioner, HE Elia Richard Box

The Commissioner for Nzara county, HE Elia Richard Box walked into the cathedral a little after proceedings began. He apologised for being late giving the reason that the Archbishop had arrived one hour before he anticipated and the time he had been given. He spoke expressing his personal pride and the pride of the whole county in Bishop Samuel and his achievements. After introductions from the guests had been given and all the speeches made, the congregation danced out of the cathedral to their homes, some following Bishop Samuel and his guests to the compound of his official residence.



Thanksgiving for Maridi's new car

A side celebration was held later that day. Rt Rev Justin Badi, Bishop of Maridi, had arrived in Nzara in a newly purchased Toyota Landcruiser for Maridi diocese and so called for thanksgiving prayers to be held. The car had been purchased with a combination of funds from the youth of his diocese who had managed to raise over \$5,000 in four months, and their partner diocese in Northern Ireland, Down and Dromore. Bishop Justin gathered some of the youth from Maridi and Nzara and thanked

them for their generous contribution. Then, Archbishop Daniel prayed with the bishops laying hands on different parts of the car. After prayers, everyone sat down to enjoy cold drinks and sweets. In an exercise of good housekeeping, Bishop Justin encouraged all the youth to throw their litter into one cardboard box, not to toss it onto the ground leaving an eyesore on Bishop Samuel's new residential compound. All present, including the bishops dutifully obeyed.

In the evening Bishop Paul Yugusuk, gave his evening devotion on the theme, Obeying the Lord. The message was powerful and of course was joined by further signing and dancing but the solemn sentiment of obedience was not forgotten

The dedications

The dedications began at 9.00 am sharp starting with the prayers outside the cathedral and processions around the buildings to be dedicated. The first building to be dedicated that day was the Bishop's Residence followed by the diocesan offices, the youth and training centre, the five guest tukuls and finally Grace House and Compound. Each building was circled three times in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Then with sweets from the youth and songs from the Mothers Union, the procession returned to the cathedral for the remainder of the service. Archbishop Daniel's central message in his sermon was on the importance of hard work and working



Procession around the diocesan offices



Archbishop Daniel cutting the ribbon over the threshold

together. He remarked firstly on the incredible achievements of the diocese saying that their wisdom in selecting the right bishop had given them the leadership that allowed them to achieve. He also spoke of the good fortune Western Equatorians had living in a forest where food 'fell from the sky' and was in abundance and challenged the assumption and that they are poor and hungry. He encouraged the congregation that God was with them therefore it was important that they organise themselves and their wealth in order to rebuild their land.



The Bishops pray for Bishop Samuel in his office

Western Equatoria is an area of South Sudan which is densely populated in relation to the other states. Nevertheless, he instructed, people of Western Equatoria should remember that they were part of the greater nation that will very soon be declared so they should allow their identity as south Sudanese to superimpose their tribal identity. People should no longer be begging in the streets of other countries but overcome the poverty in their hearts, open their eyes to the riches around them and work together for the good of the nation. Recalling his experience when on a short visit to Singapore, Archbishop Daniel joked about the warning he was given soon after landing. Somebody told him, 'You know, you must make sure you don't throw your litter to the ground. Otherwise you will face a fine of \$50.' Additionally, citizens are able to fine people on behalf of the local authorities if they see people littering. 'We should do that here!' he joked, 'You do your part and I'll do mine.' This is how we will fight poverty and help ourselves.' The sermon was extremely well received and both the Governor and the Commissioner commented on the need for the church and the government to work together for peace, harmony and development. The governor highlighted how much the church has already achieved, by building concrete churches, symbols of God's glory 'not just settling to pray under trees,' a development which he sincerely praised the priests for. He noted that ECS' development was most conspicuous along the road from Nzara to Juba where ECS schools and churches can be spotted but every few miles.

Bishop Paul Yugusuk rounded up the messages instructing the people of Nzara to support their God-fearing government.

Just before sundown, HE Elia Richard Box, Nzara's County Commissioner, paid a brief visit. He reiterated his approval and support to the work that Bishop Samuel and his staff had started. 'Because of funding constraints I have only been able to refurbish one of my buildings, leave alone building new ones,' he said smiling. He also thanked Archbishop Daniel again for coming and for his example and words of encouragement. He then said his goodbyes and the bishops and clergy were left to talk and joke amongst themselves for the rest of the evening.

The youth of Nzara, well known for their dynamism and musical talent were singing and dancing several hours after the dedication service had ended. They congregated under a small lamppost in front of the church and danced to their own guitar, keyboard and drum compositions and could still be found at 10pm when Bishops Samuel and Paul went out to join them. Whilst with them, Bishop



The youth playing gospel songs

Paul gave a brief homily on the family of God using the example of Noah. ‘Are you inside the ark or outside the ark? Are you close to God or are you far from God?’ he called those youth who felt far from God to come forward for prayer. After a few minutes dozens of youths came to the front to commit themselves to Christ. They prayed together being led by Bishop Paul and then continued their singing and dancing, this time noticeably more subdued to start but with everyone taking part and growing gradually more energetic.

Monday morning was devoted to the dedication of the diocesan health clinic and the blessing of the foundation for what will eventually become St Timothy’s Pre-School.



Bishop Samuel sharing a few words at the blessing of the foundation of St Timothy’s Pre-School

Again, proceedings began with a song and a procession. Then prayers and blessings were given, sweets and future hopes for upcoming projects shared and the procession made their way back under the shade of the towering palm, mango and teak trees back to Bishop Samuel’s official residence. Shortly afterwards, once some rest has been taken and lunch eaten, Archbishop Daniel and delegation made their way to

Yambio with Bishop Samuel. Another service was held with the youth, then they were left to prepare for that evening's big event, dinner with the governor.

Dinner at the Official Residence of the Governor



L-R: Bishop Peter, Archbishop Daniel, Governor Bakosoro, and Rt Hon Speaker Bokulu

Governor Joseph Bakosoro had invited the Archbishop and delegation to a banquet at his official residence. It was very good that he was expecting a large delegation to accompany him because a coach of the Yambio diocesan youth choir plus several cars made their number up about 100 or so. The programme began once Archbishop Daniel had been seated. Bishop Peter was the first to speak. He affirmed the strong relationship between the church and the government and reminded everyone that the biggest threat to the

church was the LRA. 'It is for us to rebuild our nation and our churches together,' he concluded. Then Yambio diocesan choir gave the first of several lively performances after which members of the government were invited to speak. The Speaker of the Western Equatoria State Legislative Assembly, Rt Hon Edward Bokulu remained true to his word keeping his speech relatively short. He spoke of the insecurity in the northern part of Western Equatoria caused by clashes between agronomists and pastoralists, arguing that the senseless killing of human beings over animals was unbiblical and went against the order set by God with the creation of man. He likened the violence over the cattle in Sudan to the worship of the golden calf in the Book of Exodus where the Almighty God was being forsaken for the worship of an animal, an analogy that got everyone laughing but also thinking. The Speaker then closed inviting His



Archbishop Daniel and Governor Bakosoro shake hands

Grace to come and speak. Archbishop Daniel was equally brief, firstly thanking the governor for his kind invitation, then encouraging the government to allow their brothers and sisters in other states to learn from them so that the relationship between church and government could be strong all over the south. He encouraged all the politicians and citizens to read Ezekiel 34 to learn the qualities of a good and godly leader and to work cooperatively. 'HE Bakosoro is the choice of the people and the choice of God whether we



Governor Bakosoro dancing with the Yambio Diocesan Choir

like it or not,' ha said, and in his parting words, he encouraged all the politicians to support their governor.

When HE Joseph Bakosoro rose to give his address he admitted, 'I am among the youth. If it wasn't for these protocol issues I would have joined you in all the singing and dancing.' He praised the youth saying, 'I love you, youth. We want to and have to take care of you. How can I begin a rebel movement when I see you dancing and praising God like this? You

have to move from state to state with this message of love and togetherness.' He also reminded the youth that they should feel free to use the community music studio in order to record their songs. Lastly, he encouraged Western Equatorians to have a vision for an independent south Sudan. On July 9 everyone must plant a plant to show that we are coming to a new country.' He then announced that the banquet was served and all were welcome to help themselves. The spread was abundant and colourful and every guest, including the choir who were busy performing were fed to their heart's content. During the choir's final performance, the governor and his ministers stood up to join them in the singing and dancing. All the guests laughed and cheered as the governor stepped in time with the choir to the music. Just before Archbishop Daniel was leaving for the evening, the governor thanked him and all the people he had brought for coming. 'We love all the church leaders the same way we love our Archbishop,' he said. 'When there is any cause you call on us, please also pray for us.'

The next day Archbishop Daniel, Bishop Paul and support staff made themselves ready to return to Juba. Upon reaching the airstrip they were informed that unfortunately, their flight had been cancelled. The Governor who had come to see them off immediately called his Minister of Finance, HE Evans Doctor Ruba who promptly released his car and driver to Archbishop Daniel along with a police escort. This final act of kindness was exemplary of the willingness of HE Joseph Bakosoro and other government officials to serve their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Long may this spirit of love and benevolence survive.



The bishops together with Governor Bakosoro in Yellow, a Major General in the Police Force in blue, a Brigadier in the SPLA second from the right, Minister of Finance HE Evans Doctor Ruba on the far right, and soldiers.