

The Dedication of Emmanuel Cathedral
Diocese of Kajo-Keji
Palm Sunday
17th April 2011

Introduction

The Episcopal Church of the Sudan (ECS) Diocese of Kajo-Keji was singing and dancing in celebration of their new cathedral, Emmanuel, on Palm Sunday this year. Approximately 2000 members of the Kajo-Keji community, including government officials turned out to participate in what proved to be a very lively event. The six-hour service was a scene of laughter, joy and praise to God for the beautiful cathedral the community are now able to enjoy.

The diocese of Kajo-Keji has 8 archdeaconries and 58 parishes. Out of a population of about 197,000, over 75% are estimated to be ECS members. Many churches were destroyed and many pastors were killed in Kajo-Keji during the war – particularly the first civil war. The community were separated and displaced because of the intensity of the fighting in their area. Nowadays however, with peace and resettlement, the community is much stronger and any type of community or social event naturally involves the church. Since 2008, Samaritan's Purse, the International Christian organisation has rebuilt 58 churches in Kajo-Keji, 39 of them for the ECS. Samaritan's Purse also initiated the construction of the new Cathedral.

His Grace, The Most Rev. Dr. Daniel Deng Bul Yak, Archbishop of the Sudan, was present in Kajo-Keji on Palm Sunday to conduct the dedication, greet the local community and take part in the festivities.

Archbishop Daniel along with a provincial delegation and other invited guests were transported from Juba to Kajo-Keji by Mission Aviation Fellowship. The Bishop of Kajo-Keji, Rt Rev Anthony Poggo was at the airstrip to receive them with singing Mothers Union and youth. Archbishop Daniel was welcomed into the Kajo-Keji Ecumenical Centre next to the airstrip constructed with help from Church Mission Society Ireland. Bishop Anthony rose to welcome and thank the Archbishop and his delegation, Samaritan's Purse and the Sharing of Mission Abroad (SOMA) team for coming to Kajo-Keji at that time. Then Archbishop Daniel addressed the congregation briefly by explaining the significance of the weekend, "We have come to dedicate the house of God and the dedication of this cathedral is timely as it will be the first cathedral to be dedicated after the southern Sudanese have voted for their freedom and independence. Following this, His Grace prayed thanking God for journey mercies and the chance to celebrate the dedication of the new cathedral.

The Tour: First Atop, St Bartholomew's Orphanage

For the next few hours, Bishop Anthony led the visitors to different projects within his diocese. The tour began at St Bartholomew's Orphanage who were eagerly anticipating the bishops' arrival. As the bishops pulled up to the entrance they were welcomed with a song and a dance from the children. The visitors sat and took some light refreshments, were given a brief tour of the orphanage, and then addressed the children directly. The Matron of the orphanage, Mama Susan Abiku was the first to speak. "We depend on God completely," she said. "The work is not easy and many children are still in need. 7 children died because of a lack of medicines to treat their illnesses." Despite some of the difficulties and the sad accounts, she also explained that the centre was doing very well in other areas. "We have some children who have grown up through the orphanage and are now at Makerere University." The children, whom she does not call orphans but Children of God, were happy to have their father [the Archbishop] here, she said. The representative of the commissioner added that he was very happy with the Archbishop's decision to come to Kajo-Keji, "This is a safe place and you are highly welcome." Bishop Anthony said a few brief words expressing his joy at being at the orphanage, especially because some of the children present there that day had come from school in Uganda to greet him and the Archbishop. Archbishop Daniel later added that he was very happy to meet the children. "As the future of the country" and "the children of God" they should work hard and not let anything stop them achieving their aims. "There are presidents among you, no one is born the president," he said to the delight of the children. Then, Archbishop Daniel led the prayers of blessing and thanksgiving and the visitors proceeded to their next stop.

Bethlehem Tailors Training Centre

The centre was constructed in 2008 with funds from the Diocese of Bethlehem in the United States. Since establishment, scores of women have received training in tailoring. The courses are nine months long and are geared at giving participants a skill with which they can then earn a living and support

themselves and their families. Mama Grace Stephen, the director of the centre was very grateful to receive Archbishop Daniel and his team. She explained how happy the women were to be at the centre learning a new skill. Bishop Anthony, with the help of Canon John Lomundu, added that many of the items the ladies were producing were for sale and that no one was allowed to leave the centre until they had bought something whether it be clothing, honey, or lulu oil, soap and body lotion that was also packaged at the centre. Archbishop Daniel remarked that Kajo-Keji diocese was teaching the ECS a lot of things. Rather than talk much himself, he handed over to Mama Elizabeth to address the ladies for whom he said, she is an “ambassador.” Having met the ladies only a few days before where she was also in Kajo-Keji she encouraged the ladies to endure being away from their families and the skill they would learn would help them and assured them that she would pray for God to bless them and their manager Mama Grace with strength.

The House of Timayo Mogga

The group stopped next at the house of Rev. Timayo Mogga, a retired priest and a participant of the Church Community Mobilisation Process (CCMP) in Kajo-Keji diocese supported by Tearfund. Ezbon Mogga, the Programme Co-ordinator explained that the programme is designed to help local churches identify their local resources and to address their own needs by utilising their own resources. Every three months, the trainers come and build on what they have taught and conduct a bible study. Through teaching and empowerment, Rev. Timayo Mogga grew cassava, sorghum, and groundnuts, which have now allowed him to support himself in his retirement, help his family, and build a new house. Rev. Timayo thanked the Archbishop and the Bishop of coming to see him. He explained the success he has had in cultivation to the extent that people are now calling him ‘Peanuts’ because he must be the father of nuts to be able to have such a high yield. He is now planting 60 lemon trees for his children. In a recent official Provincial Mothers’ Union visit, Rev. Timayo was able to send the twenty bags of cassava he had harvested to Juba for sale on the MAF plane they had come on. “If my cassava can climb a plane to Juba then I can too,” he said happily. The Archbishop praised the project and Rev. Timayo. “We are standing on wealth. It is good to begin somewhere. We are going to pray for you.”

The final visit of the day was to the cathedral for the rehearsal of the dedication. Archbishop Daniel, Bishop Anthony and former volunteer of the ECS Provincial Office, and friend of the ECS Nicholas Ramsden, ran through the programme with the clergy, the Mothers’ Union, the youth and the choir to ensure that everybody was aware of their designated roles in what they knew would be a very active service involving many people.

Palm Sunday and the Dedication

The service began promptly at 8.45am with short prayers for the pastors and blessing of the oil and water, which would be used for anointing the cathedral. Leading the procession around the cathedral was a youth choir, with the

bishops and the clergy in the middle and the Mothers' Union and other laity bringing up the rear. They then marched slowly into the cathedral once the Archbishop had ceremonially knocked on the main door and the jubilation and ululating continued. After many songs, the consecration of the various parts of, and articles within, the cathedral, dancing and more ululating, the Archbishop stood to give a brief message. We must give thanks to God for this cathedral," he began. "This cathedral will be of use to future generations." To him, the cathedral would serve as a place of resolving issues, and receiving blessing and healing. "The building of the temple is a sign of peace and stability," a meaningful statement for the community of Kajo-Keji who had scores of churches destroyed during the war. He urged the community, and the politicians to keep the peace that they have. "We don't need to take our people back to war. We reject any politician who wants to be violent or tribalistic." In conclusion he praised the bishop and the people of Kajo-Keji for the good work they were doing and encouraged them to complete the finishing touches to the construction.

After the sermon, the Eucharist was conducted. With the large number of congregants, Holy Communion took about 30 minutes and it was very clear with the queues going out of the building how important the celebration of Holy Communion on such an occasion was to the people of Kajo-Keji.

The Commissioner for Kajo-Keji County, HE Muki Batali Buli, who had rushed from the Equatoria conference in Juba to the cathedral, was also full of praises for the beautiful new cathedral. "The temple is your place because you built it, he said," he announced to the people. "The temple of the Lord is standing because it has been built by God-fearing people!" and he thanked Samaritan's Purse and the contractors for the work they had done. He also thanked the church for educating people through the bible and as a result there is greater literacy and comprehension of English. He appealed to the people of Kajo-Keji to support the bishop in his initiatives and not grumble when he proposes a fundraiser because, "Now you have seen what the donations have built. Accept the bishop's appeal willingly." He encouraged the Government Department of Forestry to plant trees around the cathedral to act as windbreaks. Echoing the Archbishop on corruption, the Commissioner spoke of the "animal called corruption" which is absent from the church but is seated in the government offices hindering road construction and other developmental projects because of lack of money." He asked Archbishop Daniel to keep the government in prayer.

Next representatives from SOMA stood up to introduce themselves. They thanked the people of Kajo-Keji for receiving them warmly and said they would be taking back with them a message of hope on the progress Kajo-Keji is making.

The Country Director of Samaritan's Purse, Mr Joshua Jespersen, was also given a chance to speak and began by congratulating the diocese on being such good

partners and seeing the work through to its near completion. He also gave a special thanks to Bishop Anthony for inviting him to the service of dedication and thanked the local authorities for allowing Samaritan's Purse to work freely. He gave a brief account of how Samaritan's Purse began work in Sudan with the construction of a hospital in Western Equatoria in 1997, during war time. Their hope was to encourage the Christians who were suffering in the war. In 2005, they began the reconstruction of destroyed churches and since then they have not looked back, successfully building 428 churches in Sudan, 130 churches in Central Equatoria State, and 58 churches alone in Kajo-Keji county, more churches than they have built in any other single county. He praised the community of Kajo-Keji for being cooperative partners with Samaritan's Purse. In conclusion he hoped that the cathedral would help to deepen the faith people had in Jesus Christ.

Bishop Anthony then gave his address of thanks to many people. Firstly, he thanked Archbishop Daniel and the team that had come from Juba for attending the dedication especially as it falls on a Palm Sunday, which is an important occasion for all Christians. He also heartily thanked Samaritan's Purse for all they had done to support the project and for contributing to the construction of their 39 church for the ECS in Kajo-Keji. He gave special thanks also to the Mzee Modi, one of the elders in Romoggi who walked a long way to the hills to collect stones when they were needed for construction and the Commissioner whose cooperation and encouragement was much appreciated. He told of how difficult it was initially to begin construction in 2009. "We began without funds!" He explained that now, the diocese owed the contractors \$24,500 and thanked them for continuing the work in the faith that they would eventually be paid.

Bishop Anthony thanked all those who had contributed thus far, including some of his fellow bishops, the Governor of Central Equatoria State (CES), the Government of CES, the Government of South Sudan, the Minister for Gender and Social Welfare, Ministers of CES, All Saints Cathedral Nairobi, the Diocese of Bethlehem, Holy Trinity Church in Aylesbury, and other churches and individuals in England, USA, Australia, Canada and others in the Diaspora. He thanked those who even donated animals for the fundraising feast. He thanked HE Stephen Wondu especially for making the initial connection between Samaritan's Purse and people of South Sudan when he was serving the United States as the Representative of Sudan People's Liberation Movement.

The bishop also outlined the challenges facing the diocese at present namely the need to construct a house near the cathedral for the dean, to finish the cathedral within three months and to purchase a new car for the office of the bishop. With all these things needed, it was necessary to hold another fundraiser, beginning there and then! Therefore, the cathedral would now going to auction a cockerel that had been donated to the church. The Master of Ceremonies, Canon John Lomond, assumed the position of auctioneer and the proceedings began. The cockerel was eventually sold for 1000 SDG to

Archbishop Daniel and out of respect for protocol, rather than outbid, subsequent bidders added their donations to the Archbishop's. There were raptures of laughter as Canon John Lomundu pranced about the sanctuary with the cockerel in one hand and a microphone in the other. Eventually, the cockerel was presented to the Archbishop and the auction closed. The Archbishop later donated the cockerel to Bishop Anthony.

One of the final speakers was HE Stephen Wundu. He gave thanks to the Romoggi landlords for being cooperative with the church over the construction of the cathedral on their land. He also thanked all those who raised funds on behalf of the cathedral. He recalled the Kajo-Keji of 1965 when the church on the site near where the cathedral now stands was razed to the ground. Many other churches, the hospital, the pastors' houses and schools were also destroyed. He himself had to hide for safety in the stream until dark. Now because of Samaritan's Purse and the efforts of the diocese and the community they have a cathedral. As a 'Kajo-Keji man' he felt personally very happy with this development and expressed his wish to personally contribute to the fruit trees that the commissioner recommended by planted.

Soon after the speeches, Archbishop Daniel rose and gave the final words of encouragement and benediction, then the clergy proceeded out of the cathedral to unveil the plaque of consecration. This final act marked the end of the day's proceedings and the beginning of the big celebratory feast. Emmanuel Cathedral now proudly stands as a symbol of local development by a community united in Christ with a common cause. As many said that weekend, Kajo-Keji is a model for other areas of Southern Sudan of what can be achieved in unity.