



DIOCESE OF KAJO-KEJI

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

2015 Christmas Message

Introduction

My name is Anthony Poggo. I am the Bishop of the Diocese of Kajo-Keji of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan (ECSS & S). This is my Christmas message to the people of Kajo-Keji in particular and to the public in general.

Christ the Saviour is born

This is the time when we once again celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. In the Gospel of Luke 2:1-14 narrative of the birth of Jesus, we read that he was born at a time when there was a census. Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they could live together as husband and wife, Mary was found to be with a child. As they went for the census, the time came for the baby to be born; so in a manger he was born.

Jesus was born in a manger, as there was no room for them in the inn. The Son of God was born in a humble place. Jesus' humility started right from his birth and also during his life and until his death. Although he had the very nature of God, he did not want to be equal with God. He chose the nature of a servant and became man for our sake. In verse Philippians 2:8, we read that he humbled himself by becoming obedient, even death on a cross. Because of his humility we read in verse 9 to 11 that "God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father".

Some of us are too proud of our positions, our education or our material wealth. We need to confess to God our sin of pride. Some of us have been proud of how we fought for this nation. Let us also remember to thank God for giving us this nation and to give him the glory and not to think that we got this nation because of our own strength without God's help.

Christ the Prince of Peace

The message of Jesus' birth was taken to the shepherds by an angel of the Lord. The angel asked them not to be afraid and announced the birth of a Saviour, the Messiah and Lord. There was a multitude of angels who praised God and sang the following: "Glory to the Lord in the highest and peace to his people on earth". This song of praise is a reminder that Jesus came to this world to bring peace.

May Christ bring peace to the nation of South Sudan. Our prayer is that that peace will prevail in 2016. We thank God for the peace agreement that was signed in August 2015. We are hopeful that this peace agreement will be implemented. We are encouraged by the

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return of the Former Detainees and most recently the return of the advance team of the SPLM/A IO, who arrived Juba on Monday 21 December 2015. May the year 2016 be a year of peace, reconciliation, prosperity and development in South Sudan.

As we commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ, let us remember that Christ, who is also known as the Prince of Peace, expects us to do all we can to work for peace in our nation. Christ said in Matthew 5:9: "Blessed as the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God". Let us be peacemakers not peace spoilers.

Reconciliation

The main purpose of Christ of coming to the world is to reconcile us to the Father. In 2 Corinthians 5:15, we read, "those who live (the children of God) should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again". In v. 17, we read that those who are in Christ have become new creation. The writer goes on to say in verse 18, that: "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation".

This means that we also need to reconcile with each other. The church must and should be involved in reconciliation, as this is one of the core functions of the church. The church takes such a mandate from the ministry of Jesus Christ who as we saw earlier reconciled us mankind to God. The church in South Sudan needs to take a lead on reconciliation and encourage people to forgive each other.

Shun revenge

As we work on reconciliation, let us pray that there will be an end to the spirit of revenge. God's word says we should never avenge ourselves but leave it to the wrath of God for he says that "vengeance is mine" (Romans 12:19), a quotation from Deuteronomy 32:35. We should not take vengeance or bear a grudge against others but should love our neighbour as ourselves.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:38-39 (NIV) "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him or her the other cheek also. Some culture encourages revenge for the killing of any of their kin and kith. The reality about vengeance it promotes the cycle of vengeance. Mahatma Gandhi's is quoted to have said, "An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind". Let us put an end to the cycle of revenge.

Conclusion

I wish you all a Happy Christmas and a wonderful and peaceful 2016.

Rt Rev Anthony Poggo
Bishop
Diocese of Kajo-Keji

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