

The Year of the Father

Compiled by Fr. Bill Turnbull W.F.

- AMECEA's Preparations -

GOD - FATHER OF ALL
PASTORAL REFLECTION ON THE
YEAR OF GOD THE FATHER

In the last issue (no. 346 of June-July) we saw some aspects of what 'Jubilee' means and how the Church is preparing to celebrate the 'Year 2000'. In this issue we continue by considering the final year of preparation for the 'Great Year 2000 Jubilee' which takes the theme of 'God the Father'. Even though we are drawing to the end of 1999 there is still time to see how the Church in other parts of the world is preparing for the new millennium.

In the following pages we concentrate on the AMECEA churches, giving special attention to the Sudan, and how they are building up to the 'Jubilee'. AMECEA has taken the topic of 'God - Father of All' and is using it as a way of reflecting on each Christian's daily life. In this way they are living out the challenge of our faith through the Gospel and giving deeper roots in Africa's various cultures. Despite the problems faced by these local Churches there is an underlying element of hope which shines through everything. The faith we share certainly helps us to look towards the future with confidence.

The following article is divided into two main sections: 'AMECEA's Preparations' and 'The Sudanese Bishops' Quest for Peace'. These parts consist of extracts and resumes from the AMECEA document 'God - Father of All, Pastoral Reflection on the Year of God the Father' and 'The Family of God the Father on a Journey Toward Justice, Peace and Reconciliation' respectively. The reflections of our sister Churches may be of help in our own deliberations on the next Christian millennium and the challenges which face us. The introduction to the 'Pastoral Reflection' for the year sets the scene quite nicely.

At the end of his Apostolic Exhortation 'Ecclesia in Africa' Pope John Paul II invited 'God's people in Africa to set their faces resolutely towards the Great Jubilee'. He also reminded them that the best preparation for the new Millennium consists in 'a firm commitment to implement with great fidelity the decisions and orientations' of the Synod. It has not been an easy task to combine the implementation of the Synod and the preparation of the Great Jubilee and the second tends to take upper hand. The Year of God, the 'Father of all', invites to take up some themes developed by the African Synod.

* The Synod stressed strongly the need to overcome tribalism and ethnocentrism in our small Christian communities, in the Church and in society. A firm faith in a God who is 'Father of all' could widen our horizons to the universality of God's love and inspire a Church, living as a family, to be attentive to the sufferings and aspirations of the greater family of God.

* The globalisation of the market economy has led on the African continent, as elsewhere, to a huge gap between a small class of super-rich, who seem to have little concern about the common good, and the mass of [those] living in abject misery. Remembering that our God is a Father to all His children, particularly to 'the widow, the orphan and the refugee' could re-awaken our consciences to look to a fairer distribution of scarce resources and to search for a different model of economy.

AMECEA is the 'Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa'. It was founded in 1961 and comprises of the Episcopal Conferences from eight countries: Eritrea (1993), Ethiopia (1979), Kenya (1961), Malawi (1961), Sudan (1979), Tanzania (1961), Uganda (1961) and Zambia (1961). There are two affiliated members the Seychelles (1979) and Somalia (1995).

- * The same God is Creator and Father who is worshipped by all religions and could be the fruitful basis of an inter-religious dialogue. The belief of Islam in God the merciful links up with Jesus' revelation of the compassion of His Father.
- * The synod invited us to make the Church a family. The Year of the Father calls us to look at the role of the father in the traditional and the modern family and to reflect on the use of power and authority in a Church as family.

Finally, there is the fact that our Church often looks like a women's affair, particularly our small Christian communities. Our pastoral programme during the Year of the Father could address itself in particular to the men and ask them to reflect seriously on what is their role and contribution to the family, to their small Christian community, to their parish and to society at large.

In their annual workshop the National Pastoral Co-ordinators put together some material on how the Year of God the Father could raise questions and stimulate reflections that are relevant in the context of our countries today. Below you find some themes, some biblical texts and some discussion questions for pastoral use during this last year of preparation before the Great Jubilee.

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The AMECEA Countries



AMECEA Totals		
	1961	1995
Number of Countries	5	8
Eccl. Territories	47	107 *
Total Population	31,841,000	186,100,000
Total Catholics	5,371,072	30,643,000
as % of Pop.	17%	16.5%
Cardinals	-	5 *
Bishops	-	123 *
Total Priests	2,871	6,684
Permanent Deacons	-	15
Total Sisters	4,416	15,724
Total Brothers	1,053	1,957
Total Catechists	43,408	51,085 *
Lay Missionaries	-	406

Source: 'AMECEA in Brief, 1998' * figures for 1998.

The AMECEA countries of Eastern Africa



The actual 'Pastoral Reflection' is divided into various sections. The following is a resume of the first two parts accompanied by the Scripture references given in the document. The sections in inverted commas are actual quotations. It is interesting to see how AMECEA challenges each member of the local Christian Communities to reflect upon their lives following the theme of God's fatherhood. Elements appear which may not be familiar to a 'western culture', but all the same add an interesting dimension to our reflections as the year draws to a close.

ELEMENTS OF THE 'PASTORAL REFLECTION' - The overall aim of the year's reflection may be summed up as 'Understanding more deeply the Fatherhood of God' and 'Learning to live our own vocation to father - and motherhood'. This is being done by focusing on various aspects of how we see God as 'Father' and what it means in our daily lives. The elements put forward are bolstered by numerous scripture references and piercing questions.

PART A. KNOWING GOD AS FATHER

'MY TRUE FATHER' - Jesus showed us how God was truly his father and the centre of his life. It is the same for us and through God we gain our life and he sustains us continually. 'If there is conflict between the demands of our human parents and the claim of God our true father, God must have our first loyalty'. Often this is a problem which is faced by Christians in the younger churches and it can cause a tremendous upheaval in their lives. Our parents gave us earthly life but its true source is God. (Is. 49:15; Lk. 20:38; Mt. 10:37; 23:9.)

'GOING TO OUR FATHER'S HOUSE' - 'If God is my Father who gives me life, life is journey to meet my Father and death is finally coming home.' True parents accept us as we are and care for their children no matter what difficulties they have to face. God is no exception in this respect and we find our true home with him. Jesus showed this throughout his life and is preparing a place for us when our earthly

journey is over. (Jn. 14:2-3; 20:17; Hb. 13:14; Rev. 23:3.)

'GOD - ALMIGHTY FATHER, CREATOR AND SOURCE OF ALL LIFE' - 'African traditional religions are rich in beautiful names to describe God as Creator and Source of Life.' We all share this life and 'are called to live in harmony ... with the whole of creation'.

'GOD - 'THE FATHER OF ALL'' - As the 'Father of All' and origin of all life, God is the source which

can bring unity to a divided Africa. God 'gives every person his/her inalienable dignity whatever his/her race, religious or ethnic background. ... This biblical vision of God who is a Father of the whole [of] humanity has enormous political, economic, cultural and religious implications'. It becomes 'the foundation of all human rights' and means that the 'riches of nature are given to all' of us. Globalisation, 'without concern for the weaker members of society', goes against this and has led to 'extreme poverty [among] the greater part of humanity and [has also] increased class division'.

In the light of God's universal fatherhood, and the Christian message, the African Synod laid great stress on the 'inculturation of the Christian faith'. If this is done it would help to counter Islamic and Christian fundamentalism which 'are moving toward violent confrontation. Only a living awareness' of our common roots 'can avoid catastrophic conflict'. ... God is Father of the whole of humanity and it is 'not possible to call God 'Our Father' when we are sowing seeds of hatred, tribalism, regional-

ism or racism.' (Mt. 5:45; Eph. 4:6; 1 Th. 2:11; 1 Tim. 2:4)

'GOD, FATHER OF ALL, DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE' - 'Part of the conflicts on the African continent stems from exclusion and discrimination of people ... God, the Father of all, does not discriminate'. Jesus reflected this in his life and we are asked to 'show the same kind of universal love to all'. (Lk. 20:21; Mt. 5:43-48; 22:16; Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Gal. 2:6; 3:28; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25.)

'ABBA - THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST' - Jesus showed how close he was to God calling him 'Abba' in an expression of this unity and love. (Mk. 1:11; Lk. 2:49; Jn. 5:19; 10:30.)

'THE FATHER OF ALL MERCIES READY TO FORGIVE' - 'The fundamental characteristic of the Father of Jesus is compassion and mercy' and Jesus' relationship with him is one of 'unconditional love'. We are invited to enter into this relationship and to share the Good News as children of God. (Mt. 6:9; Lk. 15:20; Jn. 14:9; Rom. 8:15-16; 2 Cor. 1:3)

AMECEA Countries - Catholic Church Information								
Country	Eritrea	Ethiopia	Kenya	Malawi	Sudan	Tanzania	Uganda	Zambia
Population ∞	3,582	53,098	30,520	9,790	28,100	30,340	21,300	9,370
Eccl. Territories *	3	8	22	7	9	29	19	10
Bishops *	4	9	22	9	11	32	24	12
Diocesan Priests	65	141	712	245	107	1,258	1,001	243
Religious Priests	208	249	835	152	108	651	320	389
Sisters	328	703	3,387	660	271	6,544	2,878	953
Brothers	78	66	592	84	65	544	386	142
Catechists	na	1,553	8,263	6,369	3,410	11,761	11,074	8,655
Lay Missionaries	na	15	159	6	10	129	40	47
Catholics no. ∞	126	346	6,367	2,350	2,279	7,355	9,143	2,677
% of pop.	3.5%	1.0%	20.8%	24.0%	8.0%	24.0%	42.9%	29.0%
Orthodox	41.76%	55.7%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protestants	-	2.4%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Christians	-	-	53.2%	42.6%	3.2%	20.3%	28.4%	43.5%
Muslims	46.0%	31.8%	5.6%	16.6%	74.1%	31.0%	7.2%	0.2%
Trad. Religions	8.74%	9.5%	16.1%	13.0%	13.3%	23.9%	14.0%	19.6%

Source: 'AMECEA in Brief, 1998' ∞ figures in thousands, * figures for 1998, all others for 1995.



‘GOD IS FATHER AND MOTHER’ - ‘Calling God ‘Abba’ is not making God a man or giving God male attributes. In fact, there are also passages [in scripture] where God is compared to a mother.’ (Hos. 11:1-4; Ps 13 1:2; Is. 66:13; Mt. 23:37)

PART B. CALLED TO BECOME FATHERS AND MOTHERS IN GOD’S IMAGE

God is Father because he is the ‘Giver of Life’ and he shares this life with us through Jesus as we are his ‘image’. We are co-creators with God and ‘become Givers of Life’ and ‘we share in the Fatherhood of God’ (Gen. 1:26-28).

‘FATHERHOOD IN TRADITIONAL SOCIETY’ - ‘The African Synod invites us to link our faith with our living culture’. The concept of fatherhood which we have influences how we view ‘God

as a Father. We look at the mystery of God through the spectacles of our human experience.’ This is especially so in the ‘traditional society of the extended families’.

‘FATHERHOOD IN TODAY’S SOCIETY’ - ‘There are many indications that the whole idea and ideal of Fatherhood is being lost with the increasing influence of the ‘global’ media culture, particularly in urban areas’. There are the universal problems of single-parent households, ‘many men are not taking responsibility for the children’, drink related problems and the way the media portrays people.

‘YEAR OF THE FATHER - A CHALLENGE TO MEN’ - ‘Go to a small Christian community and in most places you find that the men are conspicuously absent. Apart from the clergy the

AMECEA Countries - Christian Churches Information

Country	Eritrea	Ethiopia	Kenya	Malawi	Sudan	Tanzania	Uganda	Zambia
Population	3,531	55,053	28,261	11,129	28,100	32,892	21,297	9,456
Anglican	-	0.7	1,580	172	870	1,120	4,750	20
Baptist	-	2,253	648.7	304.5	0.66	175.7	28.75	152.5
Catholic	8 §	165 §	5,520	2,000	1,867	5,550	8,270	1,600
Indigenous	-	13.1	2,323.3	1,100	6.2	199	195	528
Lutheran	20.32	990	43.1	18.3	-	1,900	-	5.65
Methodist	-	-	220	55.9	-	-	-	92.4
Orthodox	1,020	18,801	565	630	197	10	32.8	3.14
Pentecostal	4	719	1,473.25	199.66	5.3	374.1	426.1	256.54
Presbyterian	-	100	886.3	1,100	104.48	-	-	155.66
Other Churches	31.93	300.92	4,705.56	601.35	153.05	1,369.63	195.49	1,502

Notes on the Various Churches

Indigenous: these Churches are the local ‘Independent Churches’ which have developed in Africa over the years.
Pentecostal: the major ones are the Apostolic Church (Ethiopia, Zambia), Assemblies of God (Kenya, Malawi, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda), Church of God (Kenya, Uganda, Zambia), Church of God (Cleveland)(Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia), Church of God of Prophecy (Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda), Church of the Foursquare Gospel (Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia), Elim Pentecostal Fellowship (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda), International Church of the Foursquare Gospel (Ethiopia, Kenya), Pentecostal Assemblies of God (Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia), Pentecostal Holiness Church (Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia), United Pentecostal Church (Ethiopia, Malawi, Uganda).
Other Churches: the main ones are the Africa Inland Church (Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania), Christian Brethren (Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia), Christian Missionary Fellowship (Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania), Church of the Nazarene (Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia), Churches of Christ (Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia), Religious Society of Friends (Kenya, Uganda), Salvation Army (Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia), Seventh-day Adventist Church (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia), United Church (Malawi, Uganda, Zambia).

Source: The figures above are of the ‘Community’ for 1995, taken from ‘World Churches Handbook’ (pub. Christian Research, 1997). They are in thousands and some have been rounded up. § also includes the Coptic Church.

Catholic Church seems to be largely a women’s business. ... the African Synod has called on the Church in Africa to become a family. ... The Year of God the Father could be a chance to have men in the Church discuss and reflect how exactly are their role and responsibility in the family, in society and in the Church in these times of transition.’

‘CALLED TO SPIRITUAL FATHERHOOD’ - ‘There are different ways of being father and mother ... Paternity can be physical, moral and spiritual ... Christian parents have a responsibility to help their children in the discovery of God and of spiritual values and promise to do so at the baptism of their children.’ Parents, Godparents, ‘Catechists, Teachers and educators have a vocation of spiritual fatherhood towards the young entrusted to them.’ (Mt. 18:14; 1 Cor. 4:15).

‘INITIATION INTO FATHERHOOD AND MOTHERHOOD’ - ‘Traditional societies realised the vital importance of the family and the need to initiate the next generation into parenthood.’ This was mainly done through initiation rites, but these practices are dying out in some areas and have not been replaced by anything else.

‘Modern societies invest a lot into the education of the young, but exclusively in terms of academic and professional training. There is no structure foreseen to impart to the next generation a vision of life, a sense of moral values or to educate to responsible parenthood, or it is given exclusively as ‘sex education’ ... The Church has rightly struggled against that simplistic and false vision of sexuality and wants to promote family values. ... The Year of the Father could stimulate us to invent a modern and Christian form of initiation for the young.’

‘BE COMPASSIONATE AS YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN IS COMPASSIONATE’ - ‘If we want to enter the mind of our heavenly Father, become fathers and mothers in His image and teach our children in turn, we have to learn compassion and forgiveness. God our Father is always ready to forget, if we are ready to forgive. ... The Year of God the Father invites us to stop blaming others for what goes wrong.’ (Gen. 3:12-43; Mt. 6: 14-15; 18:21; Lk. 15:21)

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Taking part in the daily work around the house



- The Sudanese Bishops' Quest for Peace -

'Government and rebel human rights abuses caused major famines in southern and central Sudan in 1998, where a fifteen-year civil war continued. Militia and army looting of food supplies (cattle and grain), killing or kidnapping of civilians, burning of homes, disrupting relief efforts, and displacing of hundreds of thousands were among the major causes of the famines. The Islamist government fought the southern and Nuba Mountains-based Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) in the south and central Sudan, while facing new challenges nationwide from a broad coalition of armed opposition movements, united since 1995 in the Eritrea-based National Democratic Alliance (NDA). This brought together the SPLA, marginalized peoples of the east, banned northern-based political parties, and secular nationalist forces. What was once portrayed as a war between the Muslim north and the non-Muslim south became more complex, as northern Arab-speaking Muslims - and southerners of various religions - fought on both sides in new areas of conflict.

Government and some opposition forces violated the laws of war through attacks on civilians, summary executions, arbitrary and often unacknowledged detentions, and the looting and destruction of civilian property. Government forces continued to violate international norms by forcibly recruiting underage soldiers and militia. Reports of underage SPLA recruitment dropped off sharply as the SPLA embarked on an agency-assisted programme to demobilize underage soldiers and prevent further such recruitment.' ('Human Rights Watch' 'World Report 1999': Sudan: 'Human Rights Developments')

The situation in the Sudan has never been simple. In the above quotation 'Human

Rights Watch' gives an idea of its growing complexity in a quick resume of the situation at the end of 1998. It is claimed by some that the circumstances found in the Sudan is purely that of a 'religious war' and it is often portrayed as such in the media. This is not so and there are many people of 'good will' among the Sudanese population - be they Muslims, Christians or Animists. The numerous human rights abuses in the Sudan have been well documented over the years - by the U.N., human rights organisations, NGOs and the different Churches - and there are few signs of improvement. Atrocities are carried out by all the groups involved and, as in all such conflicts, it is the ordinary person who suffers the most.

As we have seen in the first section of this article Sudan is one of the AMECEA countries. There is no doubt about the courage that the people have shown over the years. This bravery is reflected in the life of the Catholic Church and especially in the words of the Bishops' Conference. In their pastoral letters the Bishops have often spoken out about the situation in the Sudan despite the dangers which they face for doing so. The letter which they produced for the final year of the 'Jubilee' preparation is no exception.

The following is the preamble and first part of the pastoral letter - 'Expression of Concern for Justice and Peace and Restoration of Hope' - as it appeared in the 'AMECEA Documentation Service' newsletter. The whole letter is a call for peace and reconciliation in the Sudan which is to be implemented amongst the Christian Communities in the 'pastoral programme' which is given in the second part of the letter. This call goes out to all people of good will in the Sudan and shows the hope which is supported by the strength of people faith in very difficult circumstances. In the words of the Bishops:

'As Bishops, we present to all Christians a pastoral programme intended to bring our lives to the service of Justice, Peace and the restoration of Hope among our people. We prepared and shared this pastoral programme with representatives of the priests, religious and laity. We now call upon priests, religious and laity to give the necessary enlightenment and implementation to this pastoral programme in all our Christian Communities. We hope that our programme will be useful to all people of good will.'

THE FAMILY OF GOD THE FATHER ON A JOURNEY TOWARD JUSTICE, PEACE AND RECONCILIATION DEVELOPMENT OF VISION, MISSION AND VALUES OF THE SUDANESE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE



The Sudan has been torn apart by civil war for more than thirty years and caused untold suffering to millions of her people. The conflict makes it impossible for the episcopal conference to meet in their own country. In September this year [1998], the Sudanese Bishops met in Nairobi to reflect how the

Church could contribute to peace and reconciliation. They elaborated a mission statement they had formulated the previous year during their ad limina visit to Rome into a whole pastoral programme to be reflected and discussed in all the Christian communities.

Gharb Kurdufan, Janub Darfur, Janub Kurdufan, Junqali, Kassala, Nahr an Nil, ShamaI Bahr al Ghazal, ShamaI Darfur, ShamaI Kurdufan, Sharq al Istiwa'iyah, Sinnar, Warab ('CIA FactBook')
See also the facts and figures on page 29.



The administrative divisions of the Sudan are as follows: A'ali an Nil, Al Bahr al Ahmar, Al Buhayrat, Al Jazirah, Al Khartoum, Al Qadarif, Al Wahdah, An Nil al Abyad, An Nil al Azraq, Ash Shamaliyah, Bahr al Jabal, Gharb al Istiwa'iyah, Gharb Bahr al Ghazal, Gharb Darfur, (continued opposite)



PREAMBLE

We, the Bishops of Sudan, gathered in Nairobi, Kenya, for our Plenary Assembly send our greetings of peace and love in the name of Christ, our peace. In preparation for the Jubilee 2000 and for the Centenary of Evangelization in Sudan, we are launching the following pastoral programme for all Christians in the Sudan. It is a programme that is intended to deepen the understanding and the implementation of the 'Vision, Mission and Values' published by the Bishops of Sudan in September of 1997 in Rome.

THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE SUDAN

We, the Catholic Bishops of the Sudan, being critically aware of the devastating civil war in our country, and mindful of our responsibilities as Bishops, have discussed among other things the question of war and peace in the Sudan. We also reflected on the situation of human rights in general as well as on famine currently affecting various parts of the country, especially the hardest hit areas such as Bahr El Ghazal.

We noted with the greatest concern the devastating consequences of the on-going civil war on civilian population and property as represented by the continuing loss of innocent lives (this amounts to ethnic cleansing) and destruction of property; rampant sense of frustration and hopelessness; broken families; spread of crime and immorality including rape; dislocation and displacement of whole populations resulting in unprecedented suffering, impoverishment and dehumanization. The influx of refugees to the neighbouring countries no doubt relates to the agonizing effects of this war.

We also noted with regret certain practices which undermine the dignity and worth of the human person. In particular, we deplore extrajudicial punishment, disappearances,

slavery and slavery-related practices, tortures, restrictions on freedom of worship, lack of freedom of expression, discriminative laws, practices and attitudes, manipulation of the media, lack of genuine dialogue between Christians and Muslims. We disapprove of the use of food for faith or as a weapon. Furthermore, we express our concern for civilian population in crossfire especially in situations involving aerial bombardment. And finally, we deplore the slow, almost cynical response to the famine situation and the denial of food aid to some areas including the Nuba Mountains. By way of warning, we express our fears that another more devastating famine is looming and may most likely hit again in 1999 because of this year's insufficient rains and draught and other reasons. The situation will demand timely concerted effort both at the national and international level.

We cite the situation of war to express our total rejection of it. This conflict in fact should challenge and disturb the conscience of any believer in God or any person of goodwill. This situation is unacceptable and we call upon the principle parties to the conflict to seriously work for a negotiated settlement and to stop the perpetration of the heinous crimes.

As we reflected on the war situation, we could see that there are signs of hope and some light at the end of the tunnel. The Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) involvement in the peace process although slow is commendable and encouraging. We also praise and encourage the role of friends of IGAD in the peace process. In addition, we commend the parties of the conflict for courageously coming to the negotiating table last August. This effort and spirit should continue. Equally, praiseworthy is the acceptance of a limited cease-fire by both parties.

As far as the people are concerned, there are also signs of hope. The people are becoming increasingly aware of their destiny and are closing their ranks in unity and supportive of one another. They are more conscious than ever of their dignity and rights and of their duties and obligations towards the community and the Church. Many young people and intellectuals are more prepared now than ever, to involve [themselves] in community and Church affairs. They are involved in educational, cultural and religious programmes. For example, the Bible is presently being translated into many indigenous languages. The youth and women, in collaboration with the Church are working whole-heartedly for better understanding of the Scriptures and for the spread of literacy. The Gospel has now reached areas previously untouched and the spirit of the people, both young and old, to learn the Good News is at once genuine and determined. We thank the selfless efforts and commitment of the youth, women and pastoral workers.

Signs of hope are spreading in other communities. We note with appreciation that people outside the Christian community are fostering our same values and are sharing with the larger community in its efforts and concern. We encourage this to continue for the good of our nation, the Sudan.

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A. EXPRESSION OF CONCERN FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE AND RESTORATION OF HOPE

We need to revisit the 'Vision, Mission and Values' proposed in September, 1997 by SCBC plenary assembly in Rome and make it practical in our daily Christian life.

We recall the words of the opening lines of the 'Vision, Mission and Values'.

'The Catholic Bishops of the Sudan during their annual plenary assembly in Rome [September 1997] looked at the terrible situation of non-peace in the Sudan. It was frightful and detestable. So we asked ourselves: "What kind of peace does the Sudan need

Singing God's praises in Juba Cathedral



today? Not just any peace, but the kind of peace for which people are prepared to struggle to expand their energies and even to die". This is how our 'Vision of the Sudan' was born. From now on, we will not be just working for the Sudan but for the kind of Sudan we saw in our 'vision' - our vision of a better and happier Sudan' ('Vision, Mission and Values').

What Kind of Peace and Justice do We, as the Church, the Family of God Want to Promote in Civil Society?

PEACE IS A GIFT OF GOD AND AN INVOLVING PROCESS

1. PEACE IS OF DIVINE ORIGIN

Peace is God's gift to humanity. God created us in his own image and, through Christ, redeemed us and made us His adopted children. By reason of His adoption as God's children we are destined to enjoy, among others, the gifts of freedom and justice. The kind of peace we are seeking follows from the faith acceptance that we are all God's children with the right to exist and to share in all of God's creation.

2. PEACE DEALS WITH THE DIGNITY GOD HAS GIVEN TO US

When God created us in his image and likeness He planted in each one of us the seed of dignity and self-worth. God expects that we should respect human dignity. Our human rights are derived from this dignity. In fact throughout the Bible we see God punishing any violation or denial of human dignity and rights from Cain and Abel (Gen. 4) to the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk. 16: 13-19). Cain was punished for shedding innocent human blood and the rich man was punished into hell for not acknowledging and honouring the dignity of poor Lazarus. We are striving for the kind of Peace and Justice that upholds and promotes human dignity.



3. PEACE IS INVOLVEMENT IN A DYNAMIC AND NEVER ENDING PROCESS

The 'Vision and Mission' for peace calls us to become participants in the vocation and mission of Christ. This means first of all that we must acknowledge that all men and women are made in the image and sacredness of God. Secondly we must respect the dignity of every individual and express it by living in rightful and harmonious relationships with everyone. Thirdly, as sharers in Christ's mission we take example from his sacrificial death and total offering of self in order to justify us and bring us peace. In the never ending process of peace we are called to give ourselves selflessly to the point of total sacrifice for the common good as Christ did in order to free the world from injustice and captivity. We ourselves have to be co-responsible in building the Kingdom of God through justice, reconciliation and peace.

4. PEACE IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

The kind of peace we are seeking is a gift of God that on account of our sinfulness has to be regained time and again. On our part it requires the upholding of God's values and His order within the human community through responsible, social action and political leadership. But it also demands the co-operation of each one of us with a totally unselfish and honest involvement in the process of peace.

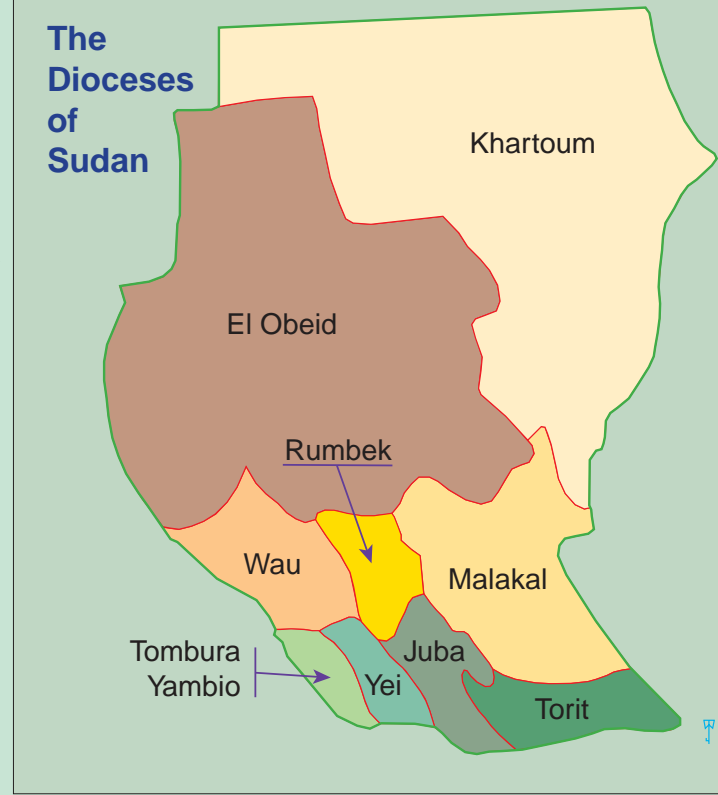
'In our present situation, such a vision of the Sudan seems a dream precisely because there are so many forces working in the opposite direction. Our 'Mission Statement' spells out our programme of work to weaken the forces of evil and strengthen those of good. It is our commitment. It is the very mission Jesus Christ took upon himself and handed on to his disciples for all times.

Such a Mission Statement is demanding. So, we set before ourselves certain 'values' to sustain us in our effort. These values are

based on Christian faith, hope and love. They must become integral to our Christian Vocation and Ministry as Bishops. They are values that should help and urge us reach out imploringly to God with whom nothing is impossible. They have to be cultivated with patience and perseverance until they become nature to us.

We now share our 'Vision, Mission and Values' with you. Our hope is that they become the 'Vision, Mission and Values of the Church in the Sudan' as it struggles together with all Sudanese of good will to restore peace to our country.

We ask you to pray for us, your Bishops, that we may continue to be light and salt in our country. We ask you to gradually make our 'Vision, Mission and Values' your very own. Through the intercession of Mary our Mother, of Blessed Josephine Bakhita and Blessed Daniel Comboni, we shall and will obtain from God all the graces we need to bring peace to our country.



THE ORDINARIES OF THE SUDAN

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| M. Rev. Gabriel Zubeir Wako (Khartoum) | Rt. Rev. Erkolano Lodu Tombe (Yei) |
| M. Rev. Paolino Lukudu Loro (Juba) | Rt. Rev. Antonio Menegazzo (* Admin. El Obeid) |
| Rt. Rev. Joseph Gasi Abangite (Tombura-Yambio) | Rt. Rev. Rudolph Deng Majak (Wau) |
| Rt. Rev. Vincent Mojwok Nyiker (Malakal) | Rt. Rev. Daniel Adwok Kur (Auxiliary, Khartoum) |
| Rt. Rev. Paride Taban (Torit) | Msrgr. Caesar Mazzolari (* Administrator [now Bishop] Rumbek) |
| Rt. Rev. Macram Max Gassis (El Obeid) | |

Nairobi, Kenya, 14th September, 1998. The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross
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* Apostolic Administrator

