



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

December, 2010

To the People of Australia:

As we emerge from the Christmas season and watch the clock tick over into 2011, most of us will be looking to the future, and wondering what the next decade will hold.

For the people of Sudan, a new decade may well bring a new era of peace as a referendum in January provides the opportunity to shape a future free from the devastating violence and turmoil of their past.

On behalf of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, I call on all Australians to pray for peace in solidarity with the people of Sudan – who in the coming weeks may face unimaginable challenges as they prepare to vote on their country's future.

On 9th January 2011, Sudan will conduct a referendum – offering the people of Southern Sudan the opportunity to become an independent nation. This vote forms the keystone of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and brings hope to the Sudanese people that they may finally close the door on an era of civil war, violence and bloodshed.

While the referendum has the potential to bring much-needed change to a region plagued by instability, it also brings fear, with tensions already rising and the threat of intimidation and violence an ever-present reality. Any violence resulting from the referendum in Sudan is feared to reach far beyond national borders and implicate myriad African nations in a bloody conflict; a conflict the likes of which the world has not witnessed since Rwanda.

As we face a new year – a year as yet untarnished by injustice and conflict – we urge the Australian public to consider their role as global citizens, and to pray for the Sudanese people who have endured half a century of violence that killed an estimated 2 million of their people and displaced millions more.

For more than a decade Caritas Australia – the aid and development agency of the Catholic Church – has worked in Sudan to improve water and sanitation, education, and livelihood opportunities as well as offering emergency relief in times of crisis. With the hope of a better future for the Sudanese people, tempered by the persistent threat to their human rights, the international Caritas network has begun planning its response to the turmoil that may result from displacement, mass migration or the outbreak of civil war.

Together with our international partners, Caritas Australia is committed to being a presence on the ground in Sudan to provide aid in emergency situations, but also working in the long-term to achieve lasting peace and stability.

In this time of uncertainty, it is critical that the world stays alert and informed of Sudan's situation and so we urge you to learn more about Caritas Australia's work in Sudan by visiting www.caritas.org.au/sudan.

We ask too, that you pray for the Sudanese people, as they confront critical challenges in the coming weeks, and prepare to build a peaceful future for their country.

Yours sincerely,

+ Philip Wilson.

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PRAYER FOR PEACE IN SUDAN

Lord Jesus, you said to us;

“I leave you peace. My peace I give you.”

Look upon your sisters and brothers in Sudan
as they face this moment of referendum.

Send us your Spirit to guide us.

Give us the wisdom we need to choose a future where we will know your true peace.

You call us out of slavery,
oppression and persecution,

So that all people may have life in abundance.

Grant us peace with one another.

Give peace among ethnic groups.

Help us to work together for the good of all.

We ask this in your name, Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Mary, Queen of Peace, pray for us.