



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

July, 2011

To the People of Australia:

On July 9, 2011, the world will welcome its newest state: The Republic of South Sudan. For a region mired by conflict and extreme poverty, the birth of this new nation holds the promise of peace and genuine reconciliation.

As the communities of southern Sudan stand on the threshold of Independence - we look on with great hope and anxiety for the future of this fragile region. This week we will celebrate in solidarity with the people of The Republic of South Sudan offering our prayers for a peaceful transition to Statehood and a future free from poverty.

In January of this year, the communities of southern Sudan voted to determine their nation's future. In accordance with the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the overwhelming vote for independence was conducted and received without violent dispute.

Yet in the six-month period of Transition to July 9, the tensions of a four decade civil war have re-emerged throughout the border regions of Southern Kordofan, Abyei and Blue Nile. Mounting hostilities continue to obscure the path to lasting peace and widespread internal displacement increasingly weighs upon already vulnerable communities and stretched humanitarian resources.

In the lead up to January's elections, I urged you to join with the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, The Bishops of Sudan, and Caritas Australia to pray for peace in Sudan. Thousands of Australians stood in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Sudan, offering their prayers for those communities cast to the margins of peace and justice.

While independence has the potential to bring much-needed change a region steeped in conflict and poverty, the threat violence and instability are an ever-present reality. As entire communities flee brutality, and hundreds of thousands attempt to return to south Sudan in peace, I ask once more for your compassion and your support.

In the lead up to July 9, Caritas Australia has launched an appeal for Sudan. Our generosity towards this appeal will not only see Caritas Australia bolster its humanitarian assistance at this time of urgent need, but also enable the Caritas network to continue authentic human development programs long into the future.

And as we pledge our support to the Caritas Australia Sudan Appeal, we may also offer our prayers in solidarity the Sudanese people. From June 29, Sudan's Bishops are leading their nation in Novena - praying for the peaceful division of the northern and southern states. At this crucial time, I urge you to accompany the world's newest nation in its prayers for peace, dignity, Creation and the common good.

As the world prepares to embrace a new nation, we must pray that the Republic of South Sudan will embrace peace.

I thank you for your ongoing support for Caritas Australian and urge you to learn more about their work in Sudan by visiting www.caritas.org.au/sudanappeal.

Yours sincerely,

+ Philip Wilson.

Philip Wilson DD JCL
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