

AFRECS E-Blast: April 9, 2014

PRAY. TEACH. PARTNER. URGE. GIVE.

Message from AFRECS Executive Director, Richard Parkins:

This past Sunday our Gospel lesson recounted the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. Then on Tuesday, we were reminded that twenty years ago, the world witnessed the unspeakable genocide that will be forever associated with Rwanda. Both the Gospel message and the anniversary of the Rwandans' genocide guide my reflections this week. Also, it is the occasion for anticipating our entrance into Holy Week.

In the Lazarus story, the disciples try to discourage Jesus from returning to Jerusalem because of the risks that he might encounter, fueled by the growing animosity towards him by the established religious leaders. After all, Lazarus was already dead, so returning to a difficult situation, for the sake of Lazarus, made little sense to the followers. Jesus, however, would not be deterred. He felt that hope should not be cast aside if there was still 'light'. As Jesus came face to face with the reality of his deceased friend, he showed his grief before calling forth Lazarus from the grave. Jesus stepped out in faith and entered into the suffering of grief-stricken Mary and Martha before he accomplished the miracle. Usually, the end of the story is what we recall. Nevertheless, there are some important messages throughout this passage for us to contemplate.

Likewise, as we grieve with our South Sudanese friends, we are called to be faithful at this time of danger and uncertainty. As we remember the resilient faith of many of our church friends, their faithfulness gives us hope that our investment in peace and reconciliation in this war ravaged land is a risk worth taking. We join them in being purveyors of hope.

There could not have been a conflict so horrendous as the genocide in Rwanda twenty years ago, nor would many have thought peace and reconciliation was a possibility after so much blood shed. Rwanda is now at peace. While the pain of the past has hardly disappeared, the nation is moving forward with hope. While not suggesting that the situation in South Sudan is a replica of what happened in Rwanda, some of the same human elements are at play and some of the same challenges exist as the church and others contemplate peace building strategies. Let us encourage them as they embrace hope and move out in faith, believing that the peacemakers shall inherit the earth.

In a few days, we enter into Christ's journey to the cross. Three days after His tragic death, we shall celebrate His resurrection. Death does not have the last word. May we partake of events in Holy Week, remembering South Sudan. There, the people of faith are holding fast in the midst of a tragedy that has displaced over 800,000 and killed thousands of innocent people. At the same time, may we embrace the efforts of South Sudanese bishops, pastors and lay leaders as they initiate efforts to bring about reconciliation and healing for their people. Let us

pray for the countless efforts of people standing firm in their faith, not allowing death and destruction to have the last word. .

Have a blessed Holy Week,
Richard Parkins

[Former Kenyan President, Mwai Kibaki](#), urged Inter-Government on Authority Development (IGAD) member states not to relent in their efforts of finding a peaceful solution to the South Sudan conflict, which was sparked by fighting in December last year leading to deaths and displacements of thousands. Speaking after receiving a commendation from IGAD, the former President said leaders of the warring factions must be ready to make sacrifices for the sake of peace in the world's youngest nation. The article entitled, '*South Sudan peace must be safeguarded*,' was posted on the Capital News website on Tuesday, April 8th, from Nairobi, Kenya.

What follows is self-explanatory. It was released last week on Thursday, April 3rd.

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 3, 2014

Statement by the Press Secretary on South Sudan

Four years ago, some four million South Sudanese voted to break with the past and usher in a new period of peace and prosperity. They expected their leaders to act with courage and conviction, to put the interests of the people first, and to be statesmen, not strongmen. Months of fighting between the Government of South Sudan and forces loyal to rebel leader Riek Machar run counter to that vision and threaten to tear the young nation apart. Thousands have been killed. Nearly one million innocent civilians have been driven from their homes. Despite a ceasefire agreement, the cycle of violence and conflict continues.

The United States will not stand by as those entrusted with South Sudan's future put their own interests above those of their people. The Executive Order signed by President Obama today sends a clear message: those who threaten the peace, security, or stability of South Sudan, obstruct the peace process, target U.N. peacekeepers, or are responsible for human rights abuses and atrocities will not have a friend in the United States and run the risk of sanctions. Both the Government of South Sudan and Riek Machar's rebels must immediately engage in and follow through on the inclusive peace process led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and resolve this conflict. They must end military actions and hold accountable

those responsible for violence against civilians. The people of South Sudan are calling for peace. There is no room for excuses or delay.

Click [here to see the Executive Order](#) and [here to read the report](#) to The Congress of the United States which reads in part:

The US President, Barak Obama, "...issued an Executive Order declaring a national emergency with respect to the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States posed by the situation in and in relation to South Sudan.

"The order does not target the country of South Sudan, but rather is aimed at persons who threaten the peace, stability, or security of South Sudan; commit human rights abuses against persons in South Sudan; or undermine democratic processes or institutions in South Sudan

"The order provides authority for blocking the property and interest in property of any person determined by the Secretary of the Treasury in consultation with the Secretary of State..." to have engaged in such activities.

Articles from [ABC News](#) and the [Sudan Tribune](#) give points of view regarding the above actions from the capitals of each country.

Click [here](#) for an article entitled, "Heads of WFP And UNHCR Visit South Sudan And Ethiopia Amid Alarming Spread of Hunger And Displacement". The report was published from Juba on March 31st and reads in part:

"More than 800,000 people have been displaced in [South Sudan](#) by the conflict... This includes 68,000 people who are sheltering in UN peacekeeping bases. A further 254,000 refugees have crossed into neighbouring countries seeking shelter and food. Additionally, South Sudan was also hosting some 220,000 refugees from Sudan in camps close to conflict areas."

In this final section, here is an article of great human interest, entitled '[A Good Man in Rwanda](#)' published by BBC News which recounts the brave, heroic deeds accomplished by one UN peacekeeper during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

And from Aljazeera, here is a story of hope which tells how survivors and perpetrators of the 1994 Rwandan genocide live side-by-side in reconciliation villages: '[Rwandan genocide survivors back reconciliation.](#)'

Thank you to our readers for your interest, your prayers, and your support.
Ellen J. Hanckel, E-Blast Editor

PRAY FOR PEACE AND DEEP HEALING OF THE CONFLICTS AND RIVALRIES IN SOUTH SUDAN.

PARTNER, URGE, GIVE

If you'd like to be doing more to help address the crisis in South Sudan, please consider the following:

- * If you have contacts in South Sudan and are able to get news of various parts of the country and the church from them, keep AFRECS in the loop by replying to this email or using our main contact email address: info@afreecs.org.
- * Pay attention to the evolving events and be prepared to advocate for peacemaking with the US (or other) government, especially if attention to conflict resolution wanes.
- * Give to provide relief for internally displaced persons and others whose resources are compromised by the fighting and instability. One hundred percent of [donations to AFRECS](#) go to ECSS&S entities that can provide direct help to the people most in need.

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