

AFRECS E-Blast: July 10, 2013

PRAY. TEACH. PARTNER. URGE. GIVE.

IN THE CHURCH:

Message from AFRECS Executive Director, Richard Parkins

HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL

As the Republic of South Sudan celebrates its second anniversary and the work of the Peace and Reconciliation Commission begins, our prayers for both peace and reconciliation are needed. Knowing of the many seemingly intractable challenges that face South Sudan as well as Sudan, it is easy to fall into a cynical mood about the future of both countries. Fortunately, we have a faith that demands optimism. And that optimism combined with prayer and work needs to guide us.

A daily Gospel reading (Mk 5:22-43) In the month of July (7/26/13) calls to mind powerful expressions of optimism. A woman with a long history of illness and suffering reaches out in hope to touch the garment of our Lord in her quest for healing. The presumably dead daughter of another, even as his gesture is ridiculed by neighbors, seeks Christ to restore his daughter to life. Both accounts speak to audacious faith in the midst might seem to be hopeless situations. Faith and courage lead to healing and new life in both accounts, even though such outcomes would have seemed improbable to the cynical observer.

In a recent Smithsonian magazine article about those who planned and participated in the 1963 March on Washington, comments from key participants in that historic event relay how this history changing event occurred against a background of despair by those whose rights were being denied and fear by those concerned about the upheaval and possible violence that a massive demonstration might produce. Yet thousands marched on Washington and served as a catalyst for the momentous changes for those who had for decades been severely marginalized. If cynicism and fear had prevailed, the achievements toward racial equality that occurred in the sixties might not have happened as soon as they did. Faith, courage and persistence made the "march" an iconic event in our country's struggle to embrace justice and equality for all its citizens.

It would be easy to provide a litany of all of the obstacles that could prevent positive results from current efforts in South Sudan to unite the nation and overcome the divisive influences of the past. Likewise, peace-making efforts by the African Union to end the ongoing warfare that continues to bring death and destruction to countless Sudanese could also be met by a recitation of past failures that dim prospects for a reversal of the violence that now seems inevitable, especially in Abyei and the Nuba Mountains. Submitting to such despair and hopelessness, however, is counter to who we are as people of faith.

A writer of religious material, Kathy Coffey, has this to say in a reflection on our sometimes decline into cynicism: "Can we surpass walls that seem impenetrable, honoring what St. Ignatius called our God-implemented desires, or do we languish in cynicism? Blocked by stones that seem immovable, do we dare push forward?" As faithful followers of Christ, we dare move forward in hope with our brothers and sisters in Sudan and South Sudan.

Richard Parkins

IN THE TWO SUDANS:

[Eric Reeves posts a story in AllAfrica](#) which examines the future of the neighboring countries of Sudan and South Sudan based on the resource of water, not oil.

IN SOUTH SUDAN:

This article in '[The Guardian](#)' gives a welcomed view by the international media of both the challenges and the progress in the new nation of South Sudan. Among other things, it points to the importance of a unifying vision for the future. This is addressed by the committee for national healing, peace and reconciliation, a group of religious leaders named by President Salva Kiir to head the effort. 'The process will be based on "spiritual values"' said the chair of the committee, archbishop of the Episcopal Church of Sudan, Daniel Deng Bul. 'The committee's first major activity,' according to the article, 'was a national day of prayer on Sunday (7/7/13).'

A hopeful celebration of the [Second Anniversary of Independence](#) is held in Juba. Reported by Hannah McNeish with Voice of America.

The [Niles Weekly Wrap Up](#) also reports on this event - a mixture of joy and a more serious look at reality.

IN SUDAN:

"We need laws to govern the media" proclaims this headline in the Niles Weekly Wrap Up. [See here](#) for the story.

News from AFRECS:

The AFRECS National Conference is scheduled for October 18-20, 2013. Please save the dates of Friday, October 18th through Sunday October 20th and plan to join us in downtown Chicago.

PRAY:

Give thanks for the restart of the Healing, Peace & Reconciliation Committee in South Sudan under the leadership of Episcopal Archbishop Daniel Deng Bul with the support of Roman Catholic Bishop Paride Taban. Pray for the strength of the leaders, the members and for this

process to proceed towards healing, peace & reconciliation for all concerned in the new nation of South Sudan.

Pray for an overwhelming response to the advocacy efforts detailed in these E-Blasts. Pray especially for the cessation of indiscriminate bombing in the South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan and for the people of Yida, as well as other refugee camps, located in Unity State of South Sudan.

Pray for the family of Joseph Taban Lasuba, former Principal of Bishop Gwynne College in Juba, South Sudan. The BGC community far and wide still mourns his death which left his widow, Esperanza, to raise three young children. [See here](#) for the homily delivered by Dr. Ellen F. Davis, Professor of Old Testament, Duke Divinity School, at a memorial service, held recently in St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Durham, near the campus of Duke where Joseph earned an advanced theological degree.

GIVE:

Give a modest amount today to further the work of AFRECS by becoming a member. ([See here for how to join.](#))

LEARN:

Learn more by reviewing the last E-Blast, [June 26th](#), and by going to the [AFRECS home page](#).

In Christ, with thanks for your efforts and prayers for peace,

Ellen J. Hanckel, Editor.

PS If you have received this E-Blast as a forwarded message and would like to sign up to receive it regularly, [subscribe here](#).