



*Stay with Sudan:  
Build a Future*

## Homily Notes

**July 10 (weekend of Southern Sudan's establishment as a nation)**

**This weekend, South Sudan will officially become the world's newest nation. The prayer of Catholics and other people of faith all over the world helped to ensure that the referendum on secession happened peacefully.**

*"...my word shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it."  
Isaiah 55:11*

During this week of Independence Day celebrations it's a good time to talk about another independence day -- a first independence day that happened yesterday (July 9) in the new nation of Southern Sudan in Africa. When the people of Southern Sudan voted last January to become independent of Africa's largest country, the world got ready for genocide; it prepared for the worst. Sudan has had a history of decades of conflict between the north and the south that had ended in an uneasy peace six years ago. Conflict in another region of Sudan, Darfur, raged even after that and continues to this day.

But leading up to the referendum some very important things happened that didn't really make the papers. The Catholic Bishops of Sudan called for the people of the north and south to prepare for peace. Organizations like Catholic Relief Services partnered with dioceses in both northern and southern Sudan to put efforts in place to help people resist conflict. And people prayed locally and globally. Catholic Relief Services and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops engaged policymakers in the United States, including the Obama Administration and Congress, to advocate for peace in Sudan.

They prayed for 101 days between the International Day of Peace in September 2010 and the World Day of Peace in January 2011. People all over the world prayed, including Catholics in the United States. And when it came time for the referendum, the vote was peaceful and orderly and undisputed, and it resulted in a new nation.

Catholics prayed for peace in Sudan because we believe that prayer changes things. In the words of Isaiah, we believe that the Word of God goes out and does its work. When we pray we evoke that Word and we serve that Word and we believe it will get its work done. Even when the world doubts, we believe in the power of God's Word at work in the world.

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## ***Catholics Confront Global Poverty***



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The people of St. Matthew's community knew that engagement with the world in the name of the Gospel could lead to personal disaster. They knew what the Gospel writer meant by "Brother will hand over brother to death, and the father his child; children will rise up against parents and have them put to death." But as Christians they knew that they were called to face this with love, prayer and deep faith in a saving God. This same love, prayer, faith, and belief were at play in Sudan this year.

This does not mean that the work in Sudan is done. Southern Sudan is one of the world's poorest nations. Many provisions of the peace agreement that brought an end to Sudan's civil war remain unsettled, including final border demarcation, citizenship, oil revenue sharing, and guarantees for the security and rights of minorities, particularly those remaining in the north. Violence in the border area of Abyei and political tensions in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile could escalate. Likewise, the suffering and insecurity of the people in Darfur continue unabated, leaving the region's long-term peace, stability and chances for development in doubt. We, the Church in Sudan and in the United States, must continue to pray and work to ensure stability in this new country and the troubled region that surrounds it. But this weekend, let's celebrate the power of prayer and the testimony that peace is possible. It is at the heart of what we celebrate in today's Eucharist and what we take out into the world.