

**Talk the Diocese of Bethlehem convention
4 October 2013
Rt Rev Anthony Poggo, Bishop of Kajo-Keji
Ephesians 3:1-12 and Matthew 28:16-20**

Introduction

It is wonderful to be here today at this year's convention. Six years ago, I spoke at your annual convention; I would like to thank Bishop Paul for inviting me to speak at this convention

I bring greetings from Kajo-Keji in South Sudan. My talk will focus on the following areas:

1. The present situation in South Sudan
2. The role of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan
3. Bible Message from Matthew 28:16-20

South Sudan's Post Independence Challenges

There was joy and celebration throughout South Sudan when it became an independent nation on the 9th July 2011. Below are some of the challenges faced by the new nation:

1. Relations between the South Sudan government in Juba and the Sudan government in Khartoum have been tense since the separation of the two countries.
2. Several issues have contributed to this including the pending issue of Abyei. A simultaneous referendum was supposed to be held in Abyei on whether it becomes part of South Sudan but it has been postponed due to conflict over demarcation and residency rights. This has not been resolved to date.
3. There is also no agreement reached on the issue of the boundary between Sudan and South Sudan. There are many areas that are

contested.

4. At the end of January 2012 the South Sudan government closed down oil production. This was due to high demands from Khartoum of oil transit fees and allegation that Khartoum has stolen oil due to South Sudan. Oil represents 98% of government income. The shut down resulted in reduction of government revenue and depleting of foreign reserves. This has affected the much needed services in education, health and infrastructure development.
5. In September 2012, the two countries agreed on nine agreements which included the resumption of oil production. The implementation of this agreement has been dodged by distrust.
6. A few weeks ago, President Salva Kiir visited Khartoum to try to normalize relations between the two countries. The time of visit comes in light of the recent political changes in South Sudan when President replaced his Vice President and his entire Cabinet.
7. The two countries accuse each other for supporting each other's rebels. The Sudan government accuses South Sudan of supporting the SPLM/North and the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF). South Sudan accuses Sudan of supporting the Yau Yau rebellion in Jonglie State.
8. South Sudan has some of the worst social indicators globally. The rate of literacy is very low. South Sudan also has one of the highest maternal and infant mortality rates in the world.
9. In addition to lack of the much needed infrastructure like roads. By 2005 the total

number of paved roads was less than 50 kilometers since the time of Adam and Eve (Late Dr John Garang). The first 198 kilometers paved highway in south Sudan was inaugurated last year. It takes travellers between 4 to 8 hours to cover the distance of 75 miles from Kajo-Keji to Juba.

10. There is a dearth of needed human resource to undertake the needed development.
11. Insecurity remains a concern internally and on its borders especially with Sudan. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was mandated on 9 July 2011 to consolidate peace and security.
12. There is a need to improve agricultural production instead of relying on imported food production which affects the limited foreign reserves.
13. There is no reliable source of electric energy for most parts of South Sudan. Plans are underway to undertake hydroelectric generation on the River Nile.

The Episcopal Church of the Sudan (ECS)

The Province of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan (ECS) is the official Anglican Church in Sudan and South Sudan. ECS has 31 dioceses. Five of these dioceses are in Sudan and the remaining 26 dioceses are in South Sudan.

ECS has played a prominent role in the peace process in Sudan. The church is also involved in reconciliation and conflict prevention. The church is involved in education and health. During the war, the church through its partners was the main provider of services.

Our own Archbishop has been appointed by the President of South Sudan to head a committee on national healing, peace and reconciliation. The committee consists of religious leaders from different denominations and religious affiliations. They have laid down strategies on how this would be done across the country.

Partnerships and companion relationships

We appreciate what we in the Diocese of Kajo-Keji have partnered with you in the Diocese of Bethlehem for over 10 years. This companion relationship has brought mutual benefits to our two dioceses. We thank you all for all that you have been able to do to enable us stand in the midst of the post independence challenges.

We thank God for the different partners that assist the ECS in difference dioceses. Let me give some few examples:

1. A total of 512 churches were built under the Church Reconstruction Program, a partnership between Samaritan's Purse and local congregations across South Sudan that began in 2005. Many of these are ECS churches as well as other evangelical churches.
2. The relationship between ECS Dioceses and other Anglican provinces/dioceses has been fruitful in seeing ourselves as part of the Anglican Communion.
3. There are a number of ECS dioceses linked with The Episcopal Church (TEC). These companion relationships have been of benefit to these dioceses.
4. The Salisbury Sudan link is a good example of

the partnership. This year we celebrated 40 years of the existence of this partnership. 11 ECS Bishops were in England for this celebration.

The role of the church in the new nation

The church in the then Sudan played a significant role during the war. John Ashworth affirms that the church was the only institution which stayed on the ground with the people during the war; it provided basic services like health and education and was involved in mediating conflicts, doing international advocacy.

The church is the largest civil institution that played an important role in peace making during the war and is now playing another important role during peace, healing and reconciliation. The church gave people hope in a situation of hopelessness.

Education

The church has contributed to education in many ways. The Anglican and Catholic Churches in Sudan has played a role in education in both the North and South. This is why your support in enabling us in the construction of the five primary schools, one secondary school and Canon Benaiah Poggo College is helping us meet this need.

Issue of HIV/AIDS

The founding leader of the SPLM/A Dr. John Garang famously stated, "After the war, AIDS is the biggest enemy." Following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in January 2005, South Sudan has various challenges to face, one being HIV/AIDS. The church plays an important role in the awareness on the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The Diocese of Bethlehem through the New Hope Campaign has enabled us in achieving the 3 Es. Your support has enhanced our ministry of evangelism.

Your support in helping us in the construction of the 5 primary schools and one secondary school is helping us in education of the people of Kajo-Keji. Education is one of the ways in which our people will come out of poverty. An educated mother is able to know that we can get water borne diseases if we do not boil or drunk clean drinking water; such a mother also knows that malaria comes from being bitten by mosquitoes and hence the importance of sleeping under a mosquitoes net.

Such a mother is now empowered. Such a mother if involved in micro-economic scheme to stand on their own financially.

We thank the Diocese of Bethlehem with the support of the United Thanksgiving Offering (UTO) in the construction of our diocesan office. Most of the funds came from UTO with contributions also having been made within the diocese.

Our vision

You are helping us in achieving the vision of Diocese of Kajo-Keji which to see a faithful, committed, capable and self sustaining community

Our Mission

Our mission is to preach and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to show the love and compassion of Christ to the oppressed, disadvantaged and marginalised through holistic ministry.

Wholistic Mission

We believe that Mission of the Church should be to meet the whole person namely body, soul and spirit in other words meeting the spiritual and physical needs of the people of God.

It is important to balance the physical and spiritual needs of the person. A story is told of a pastor who went to Nigeria during the Biafra war. He came back to report to his church council the suffering of the people there due to hunger and many other shortages. The response he got from his council was that we will pray for them. He retorted back: this people do not eat prayers

This is why in our gospel reading taken from **Matthew 28:16-20**, we read of the Great Commission. This is a commission that is given to all of us.

This passage is one of the last things that Jesus said before he ascended into heaven. In South Sudan, we take seriously the last words of person who is about to leave or who dies. It follows therefore that we need to take seriously what Jesus said in this passage.

In verse **18**, we read that Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" He issued a command. "Go" and "make disciples". This is what we are to do. We are to go and make disciples. They are to be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. They are also to be taught and they are to obey everything that he has commanded us. He promises to be with us.

This is our mission as Christians. We are to share the word of God in season and out of season. We are to

do this in our various roles and should not leave this to those who are ordained.

The next 3 years (2013-2016) - Three Es

We are called to proclaim the word of God. This is what we in Kajo-Keji, we have come up with what we have called three Es (Evangelism, Education and Empowerment). The fourth E is establishment (referring to the needed infrastructure like offices, vehicles, bicycles etc. that is needed to accomplish the above). We cannot do the 3Es without the 4th E. This is why we are raising money to buy a vehicle for the Bishop to replace the one that Bishop Paul bought for my use 7 years ago when I became Bishop.

Items for Prayer

1. Thank God for the growth of the church in Sudan and south Sudan. Pray for strength and deeper growth.
2. Thank God for independence of South Sudan. Pray for good relations between Sudan and South Sudan. Both countries need each other.
3. Pray for an end to inter ethnic conflicts that have occurred in some parts of South Sudan. Pray for the church's role in reconciliation.
4. Pray for one of the main challenges that the ECS face which is the large number of untrained clergy. Over 50% of the clergy have had no formal theological training.

Conclusion

I would like to thank you for the opportunity of sharing with you today.

In the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.