

Martyrs of the Sudan, May 16

Liturgical Notes:

In 1983 the government of the Sudan was seized by fundamentalist who declared *Shirah* Law, requiring that all Sudanese convert to Islam on pain of death. On May 16 a handful of Episcopal and Roman Catholic chiefs together with their bishops, clergy and laity in southern Sudan declared that they “would not abandon God as they knew Him.” With that declaration the second cycle of the civil war began, the first having run from 1957 with the departure of the British until 1972. The peace was finally sign on January 9, 2005 but only after 2.5 million were killed, mostly Christian.

The UN and the US State Department has declared that the Sudan is the most devastated country in the world today. Everything in southern Sudan has been destroyed including all the villages, schools and churches and there are no infrastructures. No building has remained standing in an area the size of Alaska. Of a southern population of six million two-thirds of the people are internally displaced with another million in exile throughout Africa and the world, including the bishops of twenty-two of the twenty-four dioceses. There are over eighty Sudanese ministries in the US.

In 1983 it was estimated that only 5% of the population of the south was Christian. Today nearly 90% are either Episcopalian or Roman Catholic. The bishops, most notably Roman Catholic Bishop Paride Taban and Episcopal Bishop Nathaniel Garang, are clear when they say that “we live only on the mercy of God...whether we live or die we are the Lord’s...we have had nothing else but the grace of God and his guidance.”

The Gospel takes on a radically different meaning when it is experienced in communities of trauma. The writings of the New Testament were formed in such a context and they speak with an obvious power that is not easily accessed by communities of comfort, stability and privilege. The faith and conviction of Sudanese Christians is an amazing witness to the world and the Church.

We ask that you offer prayers this Sunday and Monday for the Martyrs of the Sudan and for the exiled and displaced Sudanese, their Church, bishops and leaders. Our hope is that through your local and diocesan observance of this feast day that a petition to the General Convention through the Standing Committee for Liturgy and Music will be added to the Lesser Feasts and Fasts of ECUSA.

Collect for the Martyrs of the Sudan

<p>O God, you who will not be defeated and who is steadfast in the midst of persecution, by your providence the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church: Grant that we who remember before you the blessed martyrs of the Sudan, may, like them, be steadfast in our faith in Jesus Christ, to whom they refuse to abandon, even in the face of death, and by their sacrifice brought forth a plentiful harvest, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen</p>
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Wisdom 3:1-9

1 But the souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them.
 2 They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead; and their passing away was
 thought an affliction
 3 and their going forth from us, utter destruction. But they are in peace.
 4 For if before men, indeed, they be punished, yet is their hope full of immortality;
 5 Chastised a little, they shall be greatly blessed, because God tried them and found
 them worthy of himself.
 6 ² As gold in the furnace, he proved them, and as sacrificial offerings he took them
 to himself.
 7 ³ In the time of their visitation they shall shine, and shall dart about as sparks
 through stubble;
 8 They shall judge nations and rule over peoples, and the LORD shall be their King
 forever.
 9 Those who trust in him shall understand truth, and the faithful shall abide with
 him in love: Because grace and mercy are with his holy ones, and his care is with
 the elect.

Psalms 109, 110, 111, 116:10-17**Psalm 116:10-17 Page 759, BCP*****Dilexi, quoniam***

10
 How shall I repay the LORD *
 for all the good things he has done for me?
 11
 I will lift up the cup of salvation *
 and call upon the Name of the LORD.
 12
 I will fulfill my vows to the LORD *
 in the presence of all his people.
 13
 Precious in the sight of the LORD *
 is the death of his servants.
 14

O LORD, I am your servant; *
I am your servant and the child of your handmaid;
you have freed me from my bonds.
15
I will offer you the sacrifice of thanksgiving *
and call upon the Name of the LORD.
16
I will fulfill my vows to the LORD *
in the presence of all his people,
17
In the courts of the LORD'S house, *
in the midst of you, O Jerusalem.
Hallelujah!

Hebrews 10:32-39

Recall those earlier days when, after you had been enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to abuse and persecution, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion for those who were in prison, and you cheerfully accepted the plundering of your possessions, knowing that you yourselves possessed something better and more lasting. Do not, therefore, abandon that confidence of yours; it brings a great reward. For you need endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

For yet "in a very little while,
the one who is coming will come and will not delay;
but my righteous one will live by faith.
My soul takes no pleasure in anyone who shrinks back."

But we are not among those who shrink back and so are lost, but among those who have faith and so are saved.

Matthew 24:9-14

Jesus said to his disciples, "They will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name. Then many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come."

From the Sudanese Ministry, Trinity Cathedral, San Jose, CA

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