



Andrew O'Brien

Addressing a gathering of Authorities, Civil Society and Diplomatic Corps at the Presidential Palace of Juba yesterday, the Archbishop of Canterbury appealed to South Sudan's leaders to do more to achieve peace.

The Archbishop was speaking alongside Pope Francis and the Moderator of the Church of Scotland on the first day of their historic ecumenical Pilgrimage for Peace to South Sudan.

Read Archbishops Justin's greeting in full:

Thank you. Your Excellency, First Vice-President Riek Machar, Vice presidents and the Diplomatic Corps and the Civil Society representatives, especially greetings to their Eminences the Cardinals and I beg you will accept that all other protocols observed.

To sit here with you today is a sign of prayer answered. I first came to South Sudan with my wife nine years ago. We saw the devastation of war in your country in Bor, the suffering and the grief.

We also saw the beauty of your land, the beauty and the hope of your people, and we experienced the presence of God in your countries.

To be here with my dear brothers in Christ and inspiration, His Holiness Pope Francis and Moderator Iain is an answer to another prayer, not to my prayer, but one that is as old as the church. It is the prayer of Jesus in John chapter 17 that they may all be one.

In 2019, you know that his Holiness Pope Francis, together with a former Moderator, and myself, had the privilege of a retreat at the Vatican for the leaders of church and politics in South Sudan.

We prayed it would be a space for the Holy Spirit to work. And indeed, in that meeting, we saw hope. Pope Francis knelt to kiss the feet of each politician.

Five years later, we come to you in this way again, on our knees, to wash feet, to listen, to serve, to pray with you. We come to encourage the church dear sisters and brothers in Christ.

Remember your wonderful work in building peace. and bringing people together. Even today, the acting Bishop of Kajo-Keji has gone down after the massacre yesterday to comfort the bereaved.

But we come to listen to the young people. 70% of South Sudan, for without listening to their voice, there will be no peace and reconciliation.

And we come to honour the women who have known such terrible suffering. And yet to this day are the sign of resurrection life. As at the time of the resurrection of our Saviour, it was women who first told the Apostles that Jesus was risen, that Jesus is alive.

The diplomatic community here will know how easy it is for the world to forget South Sudan. There are so many crises and we thank you for your presence in this gathering.

I pray, we pray that that may show that you have not given up hope. Yet, forgive me, my dear sisters and brothers and leaders of this country. But I must say that places far and near and so many of the citizens of this wonderful country are becoming tired that more has not changed.

South Sudan's neighbours are part of South Sudan's future. They will be the ones who say to you, make peace. That tiredness is seen in the faces of the people of South Sudan. It is seen in the words of civil society, organisation and churches who try to represent the people with strong opposition.

When I remember the commitments that were made by you in 2019. I am grieved, I am sad that we still hear of such tragedy. We hoped and prayed for more. We expected more. You promised more.

We cannot pick and choose parts of a peace agreement. Every part must be done by every person. And that costs much.

But, the answer to peace and reconciliation is not in visits like this, but it is in your hands. For the heroic and brave and courageous people of South Sudan, who fought for so long for their freedom and won it, are surely the people who have the courage to struggle for peace and reconciliation.

It is within your reach. It is close to you. You can take it with the help of God. The people of South Sudan are loved by God. Yours stories, your suffering is known by God. Your prayers are heard by God.

Together in this visit, we will pray for peace. We will witness to Christ who died that all might be saved.

We will call upon the Holy Spirit to enter our hearts and the hearts of those who carry the weight and the pain of great responsibility so that Jesus Christ might see his prayer answered, that they may be one.

This evening gathered together in the name of Christ. We know Jesus is with us. I pray that this visit will be one of hope and healing, spent together as the family of Christ, following God who brings us closer to one another and to him. And I pray most, that the prayer that was sung to me this afternoon by a group of Primary school children may be answered.

They sang, no more corruption. We want peace in South Sudan. Give us peace in South Sudan.

May God bless you.



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Notes:

- 1. Photos available to download [here](#).
- 2. Other photos and video are available from news agencies covering the visit as well as from the Vatican Press Office.

5 min read

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