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The Archbishop of Canterbury addressed tens of thousands of people at an ecumenical prayer vigil in Juba this evening with Pope Francis and the Church of Scotland Moderator.

During his homily the Archbishop called for women to be valued and condemned the sexual violence that so many women in South Sudan have faced.

He also said the young people of South Sudan must not be “deceived into war” and that leaders “can make the choice to listen or not; they can model valuing those who are different from them, or they can create division.”

The Archbishop, Pope Francis and Moderator Dr Iain Greenshields each addressed the large crowd at John Garang Mausoleum on the second day of their historic Pilgrimage for Peace to South Sudan.

At the end of the prayer vigil the three Church leaders gave a blessing together.

Addressing the theme of unity, the Archbishop said: “In a world of famine and thirst, of natural disaster, faith in God’s abundance is hard. But when we are one, we value each other like we value the limbs on our own bodies.”

He continued: “Young people: you are the majority of South Sudan. You are not just the future, you are the present. If we value you, we will listen to your hopes for peace and opportunity and we allow those hopes to shape the priorities of our nation and church. You will not be deceived into war. You will not be forced to kill. You will disagree with others, but you will still love them. You will set an obedient pattern of love to God.

“Young men: you will value and honour women. Never raping, never violent, never cruel, never using them as if they were simply there to satisfy desire. When we are one, we value and honour women.

“Women of South Sudan: I know that on top of the grief of conflict and the responsibility to provide for your families, many of you live with the trauma of sexual violence and the daily fear of mistreatment even in your own homes. Yet you are incredible women of strength. My wife, Caroline, has worked with many of you and has heard the stories of you taking food, clothing and training to those who should be considered your enemies, even risking your lives. May God inspire us with your example and enable us to offer you the care and value Jesus gave to women around him.”

Earlier today the Archbishop, Pope and Moderator heard testimonies of young people living in displacement camps in a gathering at Freedom Hall in Juba. In his speech the Pope said: “The future of South Sudan cannot lie in refugee camps.” The Pope renewed his call for peace in South Sudan so that “violence can end and people can return to living in dignity”.

The Archbishop read the following prayer at the gathering: “Loving Father, you welcome your children. Draw into your arms these young people. May they be close to you and comforted by you. May they know your Kingdom, even as they see the sufferings of our world. May they be the ones who take us by the hand and lead us closer towards your glory. Grant your children the strength and the protection of your presence.”

The full text of the Archbishop’s address this evening can be read [here >>](#)

Notes:

- 1. Photos available to download [here](#).



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