



The Archbishop of Canterbury concluded his joint visit to South Sudan with the Pope and Church of Scotland Moderator today by saying their ecumenical pilgrimage was “a sign to the world”.

The pilgrimage by the Archbishop, Pope Francis and the Rt Revd Dr Iain Greenshields reflected their united concern for the people of South Sudan. It also expressed their desire to demonstrate the hope of reconciliation and unity after centuries of division between their churches.

Sneaking on the last day of the joint visit by leaders of Roman Catholic, Anglican and Reformed traditions – the first of its kind in history – the reminds people, that the normal is for the Church to work as one.”



Image credit: Vatican Media

Speaking on board the papal plane today, the Archbishop said: “In South Sudan, my cry and prayer is for the human hearts of the leadership to be changed. When I was speaking there the last couple of days, you could hear the shouts from the crowd when any of us mentioned peace, the security of women, and the need for an end to corruption. The people of South Sudan are calling for peace. The leaders must give it.”

Archbishop Justin was accompanied on the pilgrimage by his wife, Mrs Caroline Welby, who has made several visits to South Sudan to support women in the Church in their role as peacebuilders, particularly the wives of Anglican bishops and archbishops. The Archbishop was hosted in South Sudan by the Primate of South Sudan, the Most Revd Justin Badi.

The three spiritual leaders made their Pilgrimage for Peace “as servants” to “amplify the cries of the South Sudanese people” who continue to



Day One

The Pope arrived in Juba on Friday afternoon after flying from Kinshasa where he had concluded a three-day visit to the Democratic Republic of Congo. After it had landed, the Archbishop and Moderator boarded the papal plane to greet Pope Francis, who then received a welcome ceremony and guard of honour on the tarmac.

The three leaders then travelled to the Presidential Palace to meet with the President and Vice-Presidents of South Sudan. The Archbishop, Pope and Moderator later addressed a gathering of political and civil society leaders and the diplomatic corps in the garden of the Presidential Palace.

Each Church leader gave their own address, urging political leaders to recommit to the peace process in South Sudan and respond to the suffering of the South Sudanese people.

In addressing the leaders who he had last seen in 2019, Archbishop Justin shared his disappointment at the lack of progress, saying: “We had hoped and prayed for more. We expected more. You promised more,” and said he looked forward to a positive impact from the Pilgrimage of Peace.

In his address the Pope issued an appeal for peace and said the country’s political leaders are “the fathers and mothers of this young country” and called to “renew the life of society as pure sources of prosperity and peace, so greatly needed for the sons and daughters of South Sudan.”

Meanwhile the Moderator Dr Greenshields said the world needs leaders who care about values, the conditions in which people live and act out their faith and work amongst the most vulnerable and marginalised.



Day Two

On Saturday morning the Archbishop joined thousands of Anglicans for a Eucharist at All Saints' Cathedral in Juba, where he preached on hope despite ongoing violence and sectarian conflict in the country.

During this sermon he said: "My heart breaks, I can hardly speak, with sorrow for South Sudan. I beg that at every level, from the President to the smallest child, that people find the mercy of God and are transformed, and that there is peace and good government. That no one steals money. That no one kills their neighbour for cattle."

He added: "There is a darkness over South Sudan and many other countries in this world. But the light is not overcome by the darkness. The people of Christ are the light of this nation."

"If South Sudan finds peace, the world will find hope."

During the service the Archbishop commissioned a group of bishops, clergy and lay people from the Episcopal Church of South Sudan who are involved in grassroots mediation and peacebuilding efforts across the country.

The Archbishop later joined the Pope and Moderator at Freedom Hall in Juba where they met with people displaced by conflict in South Sudan. During the meeting the three leaders heard testimonies from young people growing up in displacement camps.

In his address Pope Francis highlighted how "the future cannot lie in refugee camps" and yet how those assembled are "the seed of a new South Sudan."

He said: "I see you with empty hands but hearts full of faith. You bear the burden of a painful past, yet you never stop dreaming of a better



Ecumenical Prayer for Peace

Over 50,000 people congregated that evening for the open-air service of Ecumenical Prayer for peace in South Sudan.

Referring to Pope Francis and Moderator Iain as his brothers, Archbishop Justin said in his address: “We here as your family, your fellowship, to be with you and share in the knowledge of your suffering. We have travelled on this Pilgrimage of Peace in a way that has not been done before. Because we love South Sudan.”

Archbishop Justin called directly to young people as the future of the country, and condemned the sexual violence experienced by so many South Sudanese women.

He urged the unity of Christians through the Love of God in Jesus Christ, saying: “Nothing can separate us from one another - because we share that love. My sister, my brother, will never, never be my enemy”, passionately saying: “You are not forgotten.”

The three leaders gave the final blessing together at the end of the service, concluding a historic moment not only in South Sudan’s relatively showing a unifying force.



Day Three

The Archbishop and Moderator attended Mass with the Pope and around 70,000 worshippers at John Garang Mausoleum on Sunday morning.

Heralded by a 300-person choir and attended by the majority of political leaders in South Sudan, the Pope's homily focused on the futility of evil as an agent for change. He directly asked for all to "Leave the time for war behind and let a time of peace dawn!"

During the service the three leaders shared a unified sign of peace for the people of South Sudan.

After a farewell ceremony at Juba International Airport, the Archbishop and Moderator joined Pope Francis on the papal plane back to Rome.

During the flight the three leaders held an unprecedented joint press conference with journalists who had travelled with the Pope in DRC and South Sudan.

"The heart spoke to the heart," said Archbishop Justin, referring back to Pope Francis' pleas to the leaders of South Sudan at the retreat at the Vatican back in 2019.

"And what we now need is a serious change of heart from the leadership. They have to agree to a process that will lead to a peaceful transition of power."

"So my prayer at the end of this visit is not just lots of activism, but also that the Holy Spirit of God brings a new spirit of reconciliation and healing to the people of South Sudan."

Speaking to reporters, Moderator Iain said that "strong words have been spoken. The truth has been spoken. To the heart as well as to the mind. I think the situation now clearly is this: that actions speak louder than words."

At the start of the press conference, Pope Francis reiterated the ecumenical nature of the visit to South Sudan. "I wanted the two of them to be in the press conference," he said, "especially the Archbishop of Canterbury, who has a years-long history along the path toward reconciliation" in South Sudan.

Speaking to reporters, the Pope said: "The whole world is at war and self-destruction, we must stop in time!"

During the press conference the Pope also re-emphasised the "injustice" of the criminalisation of homosexual people and that "to condemn such people is a sin".

The Archbishop said he agreed with "every word" the Pope said and that he would quote the Pope at this week's General Synod of the Church of England.



During the flight on the papal plane, the Archbishop presented the Pope and Moderator Iain with the Lambeth Cross for Ecumenism. In his citation for the Pope's Lambeth Cross, the Archbishop wrote that by his example and prayer the Pope has 'given new impetus to Catholic



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.

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