

December 29, 2010

Dear Brothers and Sisters in faith,

As the pivotal January 9, 2011 referendum in Sudan draws near, we urge your continued prayer and advocacy for the people and the Church of Sudan. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) have encouraged Catholics in our nation to support our brothers and sisters in Sudan these last several months through our *Catholics Confront Global Poverty* initiative. We asked you to pray, learn, advocate, and give, and we are inspired by the energy and engagement that continues to grow for the people of Sudan at this critical time.

Since September 21 (the UN International Day of Peace), we have joined the Church of Sudan in the 101 Days of Prayer that ends this January 1 on the Church's World Day of Peace. Parish and university groups have hosted prayer rallies and peace vigils; religious education groups have developed creative activities to remember the precarious reality of the people of Sudan; and thousands of people have called, texted, emailed, and written to Congress and the U.S. Administration to express concern and demand action. As a direct result of such advocacy, the U.S. government is now fully engaged with the parties in Sudan and with other world leaders in creating conditions for peace. While there is momentum for peace, there are many risks ahead. We ask all Catholics to intensify their prayer, and to be attentive to the events unfolding in Sudan.

During the Epiphany we are reminded that our God is a God of the "now" and the "not yet." Now we are a Christmas people, celebrating Emmanuel, the incarnate God with us. But there is much of our relationship with God that lies in the "not yet." The reign of God is not yet fully among us. Our world is not yet fully just nor is it fully peaceful. It has not yet embraced the love of God fully. Our work as disciples is not yet finished, and we call to mind in a special way our brothers and sisters in Sudan who stand on the brink of peace that is not yet.

The Church in Sudan and Catholic agencies from around the world are responding to this crisis, but we still need your prayers and your help. The goal of CRS and USCCB is to help you: **pray** with the people of Sudan; **learn** about the referendum and underlying issues; **advocate** by sending brief e-mails to the Administration and Congress; and **give** to support CRS' peacebuilding programs in Sudan. We urge parishes, schools, religious communities and others to offer special prayers for our brothers and sisters in Sudan, especially on January 9<sup>th</sup> and in the weeks that immediately follow the start of the referendum voting process. Current information and prayer resources can be found at [www.peaceinsudan.org](http://www.peaceinsudan.org).

Sincerely yours in Christ's Peace,



Most Reverend Howard J. Hubbard  
Bishop of Albany  
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



Ken Hackett  
President  
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