

LENT 2021

**A Resource for
Parishes Exploring
the Impact of
Conflict on Families
in South Sudan**

**'Here are my hands, hold them.
Please don't leave South Sudan alone.
We need your prayers. We need your
support. We need your love.'**

**Fr James Oyet Latansio, General Secretary,
South Sudan Council of Churches**



Trōcaire

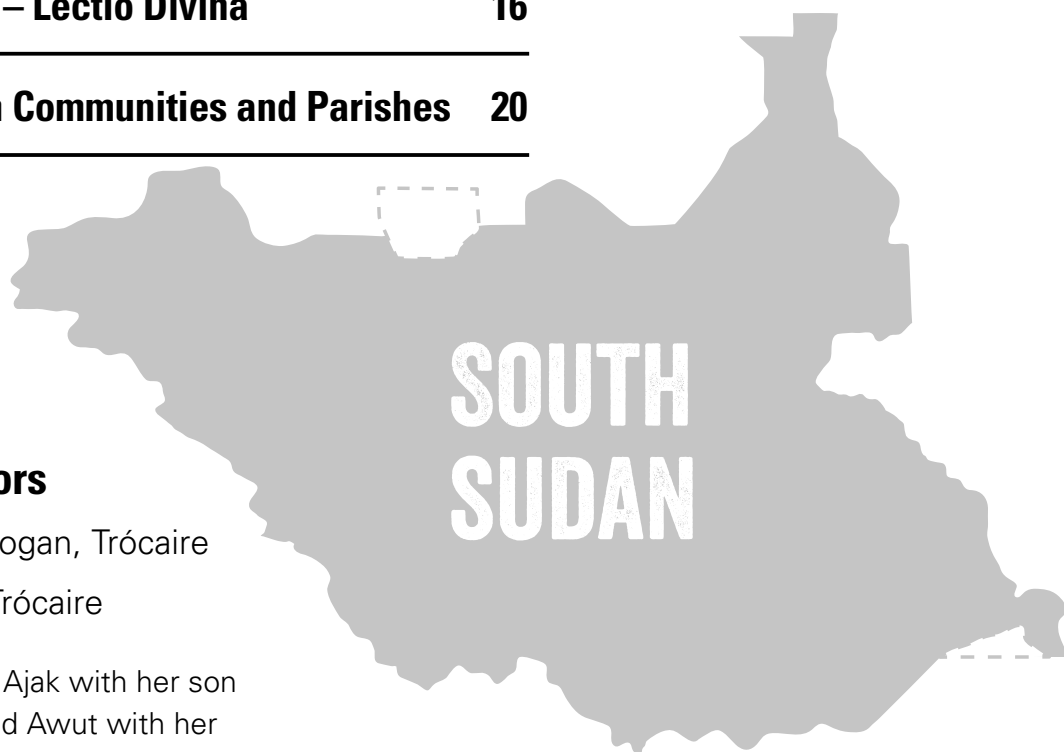
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Cover Photo: (L–R) Ajak with her son Ngor (8 months) and Awut with her granddaughter Nyajima (2). Photo credit: Achuothe Deng



HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

The activities in this booklet focus on parishes and communities that Trócaire works with in South Sudan.

Throughout the booklet, we learn more about the challenges facing families and communities who have been displaced by conflict, how they support each other through these challenges, and how they help each other to survive and thrive. We can learn from these families how to best support ourselves and each other during the current Covid-19 pandemic.

We also hear from one of Trócaire's partner organisations, the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC).

This resource includes the following activities that can be used in your parish community. These activities can be used by a liturgy group, parish group or by individuals:

- [Prayer for Peace](#)
- [Parish Workshop](#)
- [Prayers for Use in Communities and Parishes](#)

Please adhere to current Covid-19 recommendations for your area in the delivery of these activities. Trócaire staff are also available to guide your group through these activities in whatever way is safest

for all participants and in line with government guidelines.

Additional Lenten resources, including homily notes, reflections, *Exploring the Sunday Gospels with Children* and Stations of the Cross are available [here](#).

It is important to note that this is only one perspective from South Sudan. Avoid reinforcing negative stereotypes as you move through this resource. Conflict and poverty are a reality for these families, but not everyone in, or from, South Sudan has had this experience. Remind people that this is only one part of the story of South Sudan. Where possible, focus on positive aspects of the country as a balance. South Sudan is only one country amongst many in the entire continent of Africa; therefore, avoid describing the families as living in Africa. If you have access to the internet in your home, parish or school, encourage people to research five facts about South Sudan before starting any activity. Emphasise the diversity in the country and focus on positive aspects of its culture. Research corresponding facts about Ireland and compare.

ABOUT TRÓCAIRE

Trócaire was established in 1973 as the overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland.

The organisation was created as a response to the widening gap between rich and poor and our collective duty to reduce it. Trócaire's founding document outlines that these duties are 'no longer a matter of charity, but of simple justice'. Trócaire is rooted in the principles of Catholic social teaching. Catholic social teaching is based on the belief that God has a plan for creation, a plan to build his kingdom of peace, love and justice. In the words of Trócaire's founding document, in which the bishops of Ireland gave the organisation a strong and clear mandate, 'We know that we cannot claim to love God if we do not love our fellow men and women.' Saint John tells us, 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.'

Pope Francis emphasises the importance of human interconnectedness and social friendship in his recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*. We will see this come to life through the stories of Awut and Ajak this Lent.



In light of the words of the Gospel of John and of Pope Francis, we invite you, along with your parish community or group, to participate, share and respond to this parish resource, in the joy of knowing that all things are possible through God.





Awut and her
granddaughter
Nyajima (2). Photo
credit: Achuo
Deng

LENT 2021

This Lent, we learn more about the suffering of people who have lost their homes and loved ones to war, and how they are rebuilding their lives through love, friendship and solidarity.

Awut and Ajak lost their homes and loved ones to the conflict in South Sudan. They fled their villages with nothing but the clothes on their back, trekking through miles of dangerous bushland with no food or water for themselves or their children. Awut arrived in the community of Malek frightened, but was welcomed with loving arms by her new neighbours. Some time later, Ajak returned to Malek after having been away with her husband who was a soldier. Here,

in this remarkable community, people whose lives were brought together by pain and suffering are starting new lives based on love, friendship and kindness. Every day remains a struggle for Awut and Ajak and their families. They struggle to earn money, grow food and attend school. Life continues to be full of challenges and obstacles for these amazing women, but they face these challenges together, with dignity and solidarity.

ABOUT SOUTH SUDAN

South Sudan is the world's newest country, having gained independence from Sudan in 2011 after many years of conflict.

South Sudan is a diverse country, with sixty languages spoken by dozens of ethnic groups in a population of around eleven million. Each community/village belongs to an ethnic group.

There were hopes that people in the world's newest country could finally put war behind them and move towards a brighter future. These hopes were dashed, however, in December 2013 when a civil war broke out between rival political factions.

Almost four hundred thousand people – equivalent to every person in Kildare and Meath – were killed during this conflict. A peace agreement was signed in September 2018, but fighting continues in many parts of the country. About 3.8 million people in South Sudan – one in every three people – fled their homes and remain displaced within South Sudan (IDPs) or are living as refugees in neighbouring countries to this day. The following table of statistics – from UN OCHA – emphasises the impact of the conflict in South Sudan.

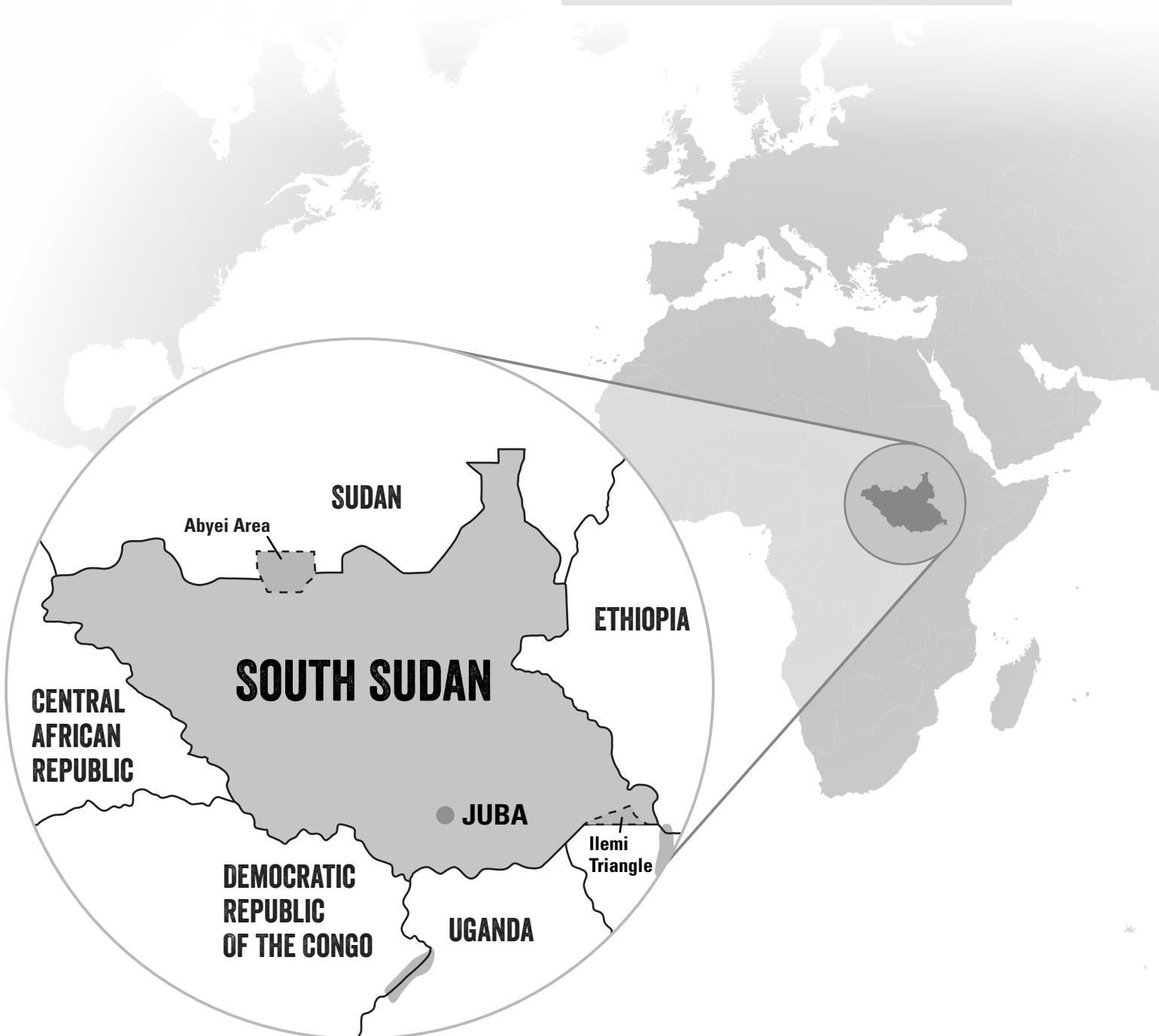
Internally displaced people (IDPs)	1.6 million
Displaced in neighbouring countries (refugees)	2.19 million
People requiring humanitarian/protection assistance	7.5 million

For more information on South Sudan, read the UN OCHA Humanitarian Snapshot from October 2020 [here](#).



Trócaire works with local partners in South Sudan. You will hear more about one of those partners later in this booklet. Our programmes in South Sudan support communities and families in the following ways:

- Emergency aid such as food, water and sanitation and hygiene items.
- Seeds, tools and agricultural training to help people grow their own food.
- Counselling support to help people overcome the trauma they have experienced.
- Promoting peaceful coexistence between all the people of South Sudan.



MEET AWUT AND AJAK

Awut and Ajak are survivors. They survived a war, but each day remains a battle: a battle to earn money; a battle to grow food; a battle to pay for their children's school; a battle to survive and thrive.

Their lives have been torn apart by a war they never wanted. This is the injustice of war. It is not just that they lost their homes. It is not just that they struggle each day to survive. They are supporting each other but they are living in fear, and it is not just.

These two remarkable women were strangers when they lost their homes and their husbands to South Sudan's brutal war. Far away from the villages they once called home, they are working hard together to rebuild from the ashes of war.

After Awut's husband was killed, she fled with the eight children she was looking after, trekking through the dangerous bushland until she arrived at Malek. There, she was welcomed by the people and given her own patch of land. Awut still finds it hard to talk about this time. She feared herself and her family would die stranded in the dangerous bushland, trying to flee the war.

'The experience of fleeing was horrible,' she says. 'We suffered a lot in the bushes with hunger

and thirst. Myself and the children trekked for long days without food or water.'

She was alone with her children. She had no home. No money. No food. She arrived into the town of Malek scared, hungry and fearful. But in this very special place she found what she thought she had lost forever: love, hope and the welcoming arms of strangers.

It was March when Awut and her family arrived, a time of year known as 'the hungry months' when the last harvest is exhausted but the new one is yet to bear crops. People in Malek had little of their own, but what they had, they shared with this widowed mother and her family.

'We were feeding on wild fruits,' she remembers. 'Then Trócaire's partner came in and started providing help. This help changed our lives. The people gave my family land and Trócaire's partner gave us seeds. Now I plant my own crops. I am working hard and providing for my family. We also



started a savings and loan group in the community.'

Soon, she had a chance to pass this love and support on to others.

Ajak returned to Malek because her husband was injured as a result of the war. She was looking after seven children. Awut knew that this was her opportunity to support Ajak just as others had supported her.

'She welcomed and settled us next to her,' says Ajak. 'On the first day, she allowed me to share her plates and utensils. She gave me food to start up and settle in. I had nothing. So she tried to help me and my family.'

Awut and Ajak came from different backgrounds and different regions, but have been brought together by the tragedy of war. Today, they are close friends and support each other.

'I am thankful to her,' says Ajak. 'She lifted me when I was in need, when my husband was terribly sick and I had nothing. She accommodated me and provided for me and my family until I picked up. We sit together and discuss ways of life. We share a lot. When she is down, I lift her up and vice versa. She is a very dear friend. We help each other at the times of need.'

Awut agrees and says that the determination of the people of Malek to help each other has allowed them to survive.

'We share everything we have,' she says. 'Ajak and I do everything



Ajak and her children: Yomjima (11), Pawany (7), Majak (4), Chiech (6), Malong (14) and Ngor (8 months). Photo credit: Achuothe Deng

together. We farm together and make sure we have enough to support our families. We make sure our kids stay together and live in harmony.

'As displaced people, it is good to join hands and work out ways to survive together. Most importantly: always stay in peace! It is my desire for people to live in peace without conflict. Let's live as one people and one world!'

Awut and Ajak have shown incredible resilience and strength, but many challenges remain for them and their families.

'We work hard but it is difficult when the rains fail,' says Ajak. 'I am a widow with seven kids. It is difficult. I try hard but I can't always provide school fees, shoes, uniforms and all other school requirements. That is why they stay at home without school. It is a struggle but I have hopes for my children.'

Awut and Ajak and their families are shining examples to all of us of perseverance, solidarity and courage. In times of great adversity for Awut and Ajak and their families, they have come together to help one another, and continue to do so throughout the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. May their courage and generosity inspire all of us on our daily journeys through life.

The solidarity and friendship between Awut and Ajak is also an example of the social friendship and connections that Pope Francis talks about in his recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*. The Pope's message is a powerful call to action to create a world based on solidarity and friendship. At a time of uncertainty and fear, it reminds us to always work together and protect the most vulnerable.

'No one can face life in isolation ... We need a community that supports and helps us, in which we can help one another to keep looking ahead. How important it is to dream together... By ourselves, we risk seeing mirages, things that are not there. Dreams, on the other hand, are built together. Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travellers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all.'

***Fratelli Tutti*, 8**

TRÓCAIRE'S PARTNERSHIP MODEL

Trócaire has worked through local partner organisations since its foundation in 1973. Partnership is at the heart of how Trócaire works.

We work with local faith and non-faith-based organisations who share our values and who are working on any or all of our core programme areas, which are women's empowerment, peacebuilding, resource rights and humanitarian preparedness and response. These organisations understand the needs of their communities and are best placed to work with communities to deliver sustainable long-term change. Our role is to support our partners through technical advice and financial support. In line with the principles of Catholic social teaching, Trócaire and our partners work with people of all faiths and none.

Trócaire is committed to building long-term relationships, based upon mutual trust. We have worked with some of our partner organisations for over twenty years. Working in partnership stems from the belief that a vibrant civil society is fundamental to a just world.

In 2015, Trócaire and CAFOD (international development charity and the official aid agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales) made



the strategic decision to combine their South Sudan offices. The new organisation is known as CAFOD and Trócaire in Partnership (CTP). One of CTP's partners in South Sudan is the South Sudan Council of Churches.

The South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) is an ecumenical body of seven Christian churches. These partners are well placed for the delivery of peacebuilding and humanitarian interventions, as they are trusted and accepted by local communities. One of their primary objectives is to promote peace and encourage the negotiation of conflict at all times. The

Catholic Church, and more broadly the Christian Church, is respected by those on all sides of conflict, which grants it a favourable position for access, programming and dialogue. This is demonstrated well by the spiritual retreat held at the Vatican in 2019, hosted by Pope Francis, the Archbishop of Canterbury and former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, for the President and proposed Vice Presidents of South Sudan. One of the attendees at this retreat was Fr James Oyet Latansio.

Father James Oyet Latansio is the General Secretary of the SSCC and he has the following to say about the impact of the partnership with Trócaire and CAFOD:

'The impact of the partnership on families and communities is really big. Families know that in the Catholic Church, through Caritas South Sudan, through Caritas in the Diocese there is always CAFOD and Trócaire in Partnership. I want to testify to this, because I am also the beneficiary of the support from the Catholic Church through CAFOD and Trócaire. So, the partnership has helped families, it has helped lives in communities, it has resulted in change for the better.'

MEET FR JAMES OYET LATANSIO

Father James Oyet Latansio is the General Secretary of the South Sudan Council of Churches.

Father James shares with us the challenges and hopes for the world's newest nation, as we approach the ten-year anniversary of South Sudan's birth.

Father James' hope for the communities in South Sudan is that they may be able to live their lives

in peace. His biggest concern is that people will be drawn into more fighting. He believes that everyone needs to work together for peace. Father James tells us about the particular impact of conflict and Covid-19 on the children of South Sudan:

‘Children are victims. My prayer is that one day things might change for the better. But this will be a lost generation; these children who are impacted by war, by the conflict, and, even today, by Covid-19. Our children are going through all this, and they don’t go to school. The schools were closed to avoid the spread of Covid-19 and we don’t have enough internet for children to learn from home. They try and do it through radio, but not all families have got radios. So, it’s just a desperate situation. Children become victims. Children become impacted by all these things, and I don’t know what the future will hold. However, the hope will never get lost.’

The Church is well respected in South Sudan. Father James says, ‘Faith is very important in the lives of our people, and the churches are very much involved in efforts to cultivate peace, from the community level, right up to the top levels of government. At a local level, churches work to bring communities together; for example, in “neutral forums” so there can be non-violent resolutions to conflict.’

Father James also says the following: ‘It is great to work in solidarity with Trócaire, our sister agency. Connecting with them means we can better engage with communities, responding to their needs. In Yirol, Trócaire is working with families to train them in the best farming methods, provide water and empower women and girls who have experienced violence. This is possible through the support of parishes in the north and south of Ireland – your prayers, actions and donations enable us here to respond. My message to you is thank you for thinking of your sisters and brothers in South Sudan, and please be assured of my prayers and gratitude.’

Fr James Oyet Latansio, General Secretary, South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC). Photo credit: SSCC



PRAYER FOR PEACE

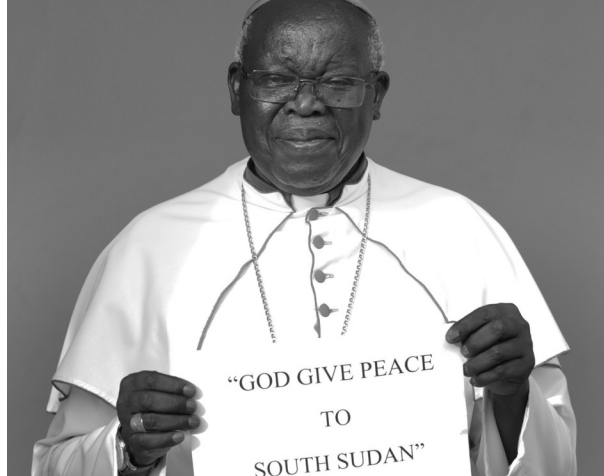
Peace is a biblical word that means much more than the absence of violence. The Hebrew word *shalom* means all that leads to health and well-being.

The New Testament Greek word *eirene* involves breaking down barriers that separate people from each other. We hear echoes of this message in *Fratelli Tutti* and in the stories of Awut and Ajak as they stand beside each other in hopes of a brighter future.

Uganda, a neighbouring country of South Sudan has taken in hundreds of thousands of South Sudanese refugees as a consequence of the conflict. Many Ugandan church leaders, such as Archbishop Odama are also praying fervently for peace in South Sudan.

Father James wrote the following prayer for peace and his request to the people of Ireland is that they say it during Lent 2021.

As you are praying, reflect on the reasons why conflict has happened around the world throughout history and the impact that the lack of peace has had on people's lives. Take some time to reflect on the injustices faced



Archbishop John Baptist Odama of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Gulu, in Uganda. Photo credit: Mark Stedman

by Awut, Ajak and all people displaced by conflict. Reflect on how they have responded to this injustice. What can we do to show solidarity and support to all our brothers and sisters who fight injustice daily with dignity and strength?

Prayer for Peace

As we move through the Lenten time,
the time when we contemplate Jesus in the desert,
pray for us the people of South Sudan and pray for peace here.
Accompany us, hold our hands,
hold the hands of the Church in South Sudan.

Hold the hands of our brothers and sisters in South Sudan,
walk with us during this Lenten time.

Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Father James Oyet Latansio

More prayers are available on pages [20](#) and [21](#).



South Sudanese refugees attend a Sunday church service in Bidi Bidi refugee camp, Uganda. Photo credit: Mark Stedman

PARISH WORKSHOP LECTIO DIVINA

Trócaire now invites you to participate in a workshop/discussion time.

This can be done alone or preferably with a group in your home, parish or community, in a way that is safe and in line with guidelines on Covid-19 in your region. As you see from the photo above, South Sudanese refugees in Uganda often gather under a tree to pray and reflect.

For the purposes of this booklet, we read the gospel from the second Sunday of the Lent. This workshop method can be used for any of the Sundays or daily gospels during Lent.

This workshop is commonly known as Lectio Divina. There are eight steps outlined below to be followed and depending on your group set up, please feel free to use all these steps or some of them as your guide for this spiritual exercise.

If you would like to invite a Trócaire staff member to lead you in this spiritual exercise, either face to face or online, please contact colm.hogan@trocaire.org

Step One

Leader: We start in prayer:

In the name of the Father and the Son
and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Opening Prayer: Lord, we ask you to
guide our hearts and minds,
Teach us to know and love you through
word and action,
Guide us in our search for justice for all,
Amen.

Step Two

Leader: On the second Sunday of Lent
we will hear these gospel words:
'This is my Son the Beloved with whom
I am well pleased. Listen to him.'
Ask yourself: who do we listen to in
our daily lives?
I invite you now to hear and listen to
these words clearly.

Extracts from the Gospel of Mark 9:2–10

With the disciples, Peter, James and
John, Jesus climbed a mountain to
pray. Jesus' appearance was changed
before them: his face shone like the
sun and his clothes became bright as
light.

Just then, Moses and Elijah appeared
to them, talking with Jesus.

Peter spoke and said to Jesus, 'Master,
it is good that we are here, if you so
wish, I will build three tents: one for
you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.'

Then a cloud formed, covering them
in a shadow and from the cloud came

this word, 'This is my Son the Beloved
with whom I am well pleased. Listen
to him.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Allow for some silence, letting this
gospel speak to you.

Step Three

Leader: Invite someone else in the
group to read the gospel again. After
the reading, take two to three minutes
for reflection. This reflection is in the
silence of your hearts, again letting the
gospel speak to you.

Step Four

Leader: Invite the individuals in the
group to answer the following by
having a group discussion.

- Pick one word or phrase that stood out to you in this gospel and note it down.
- What is this word or phrase saying to you now in this moment? If possible, note this down also.

Leader: Take some time in silence,
thinking of what message the Father is
sending you through this gospel.

- Is God asking you to let go of something, or to take up something?
- Is God asking you to do something or be something?
- Continue to listen for God's invitation and then respond silently or aloud with an honest heart.



**Children in
Malek fetching
water. Photo
credit:
Achuoth Deng**

Step Five

Leader: Read the gospel above a third time prayerfully, in the knowledge of what the Father is saying to you. Allow the words of the gospel to wash over you. Feel the love the Father is giving. After two to three minutes, invite someone or all in the group to pray the following reflection together.

Reflection: God of All Peoples,
You have given us one common origin,
and your will is to gather all
humanity as one family in yourself.
Fill our hearts with the fire of your
love and the desire to ensure
justice for all our brothers and
sisters.
By sharing the good things you
give us, may we secure justice and
equality for every human being,

an end to all division and a human
society built on love and peace.
We ask this through our Lord
Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives
and reigns with you and the Holy
Spirit, one God for ever and ever,
Amen.

Adapted from the Mass 'For the
Progress of Peoples',
[https://adelaide.catholic.org.au/links/
australian-catholic-social-justice-council-](https://adelaide.catholic.org.au/links/australian-catholic-social-justice-council-)

Step Six

See – Judge – Act

a) **See**

In light of the gospel, the phrase
that stood out most to you, and the
reflection you have heard, please
read again the section above on
Trócaire's partnership model.

b) Judge

Ask yourself the following questions, or discuss them in a group. Feel free to write down your answers.

- i) What is your initial reaction to Trócaire's partnership model?
- ii) The Church in South Sudan is playing an important role in the quest for peace and an end to conflict. How do you see the Church in Ireland working for justice and equality in your community?

c) Act

Leader: Take a moment to pause and think. Think about what you have heard from the gospel and Trócaire's partnership model and then think about actions you can take in your own life, whilst reading the following quote:

'Lift up and stretch out your hands, not to heaven but to the poor, for if you stretch out your hands to the poor, you have reached the summit of heaven.'

St John Chrysostom

Step Seven

Leader: In your own situation, what steps could you take in your parish/ community to work for a more just world for all our brothers and sisters?

Father James from our partner organisation, the South Sudan Council of Churches, says that he believes that all of us are for the Glory of God and His service.

Actions you can take:

- Encourage fellow parishioners and parish groups to participate in this workshop.
- Become a [volunteer](#) with Trócaire, working for a more just and sustainable world.
- Visit Trócaire's [website](#) to find out how you can support our campaigns and to find more resources exploring issues of justice and rights

Step Eight

Leader: We close this workshop/ reflection in prayer:

In the name of the Father and the son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Is not this, the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

If you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the
afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the
darkness

and your gloom be like the noonday.

Isaiah 58:6, 10

Together we ask Mary our mother for help:

Hail Mary ...

Amen.

PRAYERS FOR USE IN COMMUNITIES AND PARISHES

For use during Communion reflections, at the start of pastoral council meetings or for personal prayers.

Prayer for People Living with Conflict

God of peace,
Show us how to put away the weapons
of war
and help us destroy the tools of
destruction.

**God of peace, may your kingdom
come.**

God of peace,
Teach us to follow the ways of justice
and walk with us the paths of truth.

**God of peace, may your kingdom
come.**

God of peace,
Challenge the weapons of war,
and banish hatred and division,
so that all your children may sleep
secure.

**God of peace, may your kingdom
come.**

Amen.

Linda Jones/CAFOD

Prayer to End Hunger and Covid-19

Urgent Prayer Appeal from Pope Francis

*This prayer is to ask the Lord to stop
the Covid-19 pandemic, and also makes
us think of the other pandemics in the
world. There are many! The pandemics
of war, hunger and many others. As we
have read above in the stories of Awut
and Ajak's families, they are suffering
from the conflict and poverty and now
Covid-19 in South Sudan.*

God stop this tragedy.
Stop this Covid-19 pandemic.
May God have mercy on us
and also stop other bad pandemics:
that of hunger, that of war,
that of children without education.
Amen.

Pope Francis, May 2020

Prayer of Gratitude

You are enough

If you can still weep at injustice, you are enough.

If your eyes are dry but you are moved to act, you are enough.

If you can extend a hand to the hopeless, you are enough.

If all you have to give is a tender thought, you are enough.

If you will not abide by the exploitation of others, you are enough.

If your soul feels the suffering of our sisters and brothers in poverty, you are enough.

And if you can imagine a world made better one life at a time because you cared,

You – remarkable, kind, compassionate, you – are so much more than enough.

Trócaire

Prayers of the Faithful

We pray for the people of South Sudan. May our prayers be lifted up to you Lord, for change to come to the most vulnerable in our world. *Lord, hear us.*

We pray for the families of Awut and Ajak whose stories we hear about this Lent, may their lives of sharing in the face of great adversity, inspire us all here in Ireland to pray and act generously on their behalf. *Lord, hear us.*

We pray for an end to conflict and we pray for peace, that we would all grow in love and respect of our common home. *Lord, hear us.*

We pray for the work of Trócaire, and for all people around the world who are living in fear or danger. *Lord, hear us.*

Prayer for Peace in South Sudan

God the Father of love and mercy, you created our people from every clan, tribe and nationality.

It is your will that all our people should live in harmony, peace and unity, because we are all brothers and sisters.

We ask forgiveness for the times we failed to live together in peace.

Heal our offences and help us to reconcile with one another.

Grant to our leaders your divine wisdom

and help us all to promote respect,

justice and true reconciliation,

so that the people of South Sudan may live in unity and peace.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

This prayer is said in the South Sudan CAFOD/Trócaire office during their weekly meetings throughout the year. Credit: Catholic Archdiocese of Juba

More resources, including homily notes, *Exploring the Sunday Gospels with Children*, Stations of the Cross, reflections, photos and videos are available [here](#)

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Vimeo: vimeo.com/trocaire – watch our videos

Instagram: instagram.com/trocaireonline – see our photos and videos

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Some of the above photos were taken before the Covid-19 pandemic, before any social distancing guidelines were put in place.

Trócaire takes seriously its obligations in respect of your personal data and is committed to adherence to national and international data protection law, namely the Data Protections Acts 1988–2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR – enacted automatically across EU Member States in May 2018). For more information about how we process and protect your data, please go to trocaire.org/privacy-security or contact us for a copy of our privacy statement.

Trócaire

REF: CH1