

Advent 2010

Awaiting the
Prince of Peace



During Advent, we hear Isaiah's prophecy of the day when nations "shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks" (Is. 2:4) and the "wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid" (Is. 11:6). The prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus, who will be called Emmanuel (Mt. 1:23), in whom "the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them" (Mt. 11:5).


As we prepare ourselves for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who is the Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6), we call to mind the places in our world where peace is not yet a reality, such as Sudan, the Holy Land, and even many communities across the United States. This Advent, we pray in solidarity with our brothers and sisters, who wait anxiously for peace.

In Sudan, Waiting for Peace

During Advent, we recall the Virgin Mary, pregnant, waiting, to give birth to Christ Jesus, who will be new hope for the world. Like Mary, our brothers and sisters in Sudan are also waiting. Their country is at a crossroads. Many believe that the January 9, 2011 referendum on Southern Sudan seceding or remaining in Sudan will either lead to the first prolonged period of peace and prosperity in a half-century, or a path back to violence: the kind that killed 2 million and displaced 4 million during several decades of their North-South civil war.

The Sudanese bishops have asked Catholics in the U.S. to join them to **Pray, Learn, Advocate, and Give** for peace between now and the January referendum. *The U.S. bishops and Catholic Relief Services have created the peaceinsudan.org web site to help U.S. Catholics stand in solidarity with our Sudanese brothers and sisters during Advent.*

Words from Sudan



"I lost my father and I became an orphan because of the civil war. I don't want others to be like me. Let them have a good life with their parents. At least let our parents die of something else but not of war, somebody pointing a gun right in the eyes of kids... I want to ask people of the United States to join us in prayers because we believe as Christians that prayer helps. They are far away from us, but their prayers can help us... to ask God to give us wisdom and to make a right decision so that we will have everlasting peace in our beloved country."

- Hannah, Juba, Southern Sudan

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In the Holy Land, Hoping for Peace

Jews, Christians and Muslims look to the Holy Land as a place of sacred history and profound hope. Yet the prevailing image of Israel and Palestine today is one of violence, injustice and deep suffering. In response, Catholics in the United States are joining their voices with those of people of other faiths who are calling for the United States to use its considerable influence to work for a just peace in the region, one that allows Israel and Palestine to exist as two secure, viable and independent states in which human dignity is protected, peoples are reconciled and peace prevails.

During Advent, as we wait in hopeful anticipation for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ, we remember the places in our world most in need of hope and peace. *Here are some ways that we can raise our voices for peace in the Holy Land during this hopeful season:*

- Download the *Voices for Peace in the Holy Land Parish Guide*
- Find out what the U.S. bishops have said about the Holy Land.
- Respond to Catholics Confront Global Poverty action alerts.

Do all three at:

www.usccb.org/holyland



A Catholic Relief Services program teaches Palestinian teens to convert tools of violence into art. Here, tacks, which are often used to puncture tires, are being used for art. *Photo by CRS Bethlehem.*



A priest whose parish is a member of Camden Churches Organized for People blesses the vehicles that will demolish abandoned properties linked to high rates of crime in Camden, NJ.

Working for Peace at Home

When people of faith in Camden, NJ, realized that the crime and violence that plagued their city was not decreasing despite increased law enforcement presence, they decided to do something about it.

Parishioners involved in Camden Churches Organized for People (CCOP) began by conducting interviews with their neighbors and found that crime might be connected with vacant buildings, which were hotbeds for drugs and crimes. They next confirmed this suspicion by working with a university to map crime and vacant properties.

As a result, the city created a Housing Task Force, on which the churches were invited to sit, leading to the eventual demolition or rehabilitation of 2800 houses and a 57 percent decrease in drug crime. Recently CCOP worked to make easier the process of acquiring and rehabilitating unsafe structures, leading to the demolition of 39 additional buildings.

*This Advent, learn about groups in your community which, like CCOP, receive funding from the **Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD)** to address poverty and bring Christ's peace to the world. Visit www.usccb.org/cchd to find out more!*

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