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LENT PASTORAL LETTER FROM THE PRIMATE OF ECSS TO SOUTH
SUDANESE CHRISTIANS -16TH MARCH 2020

Even now, declares the Lord, "turn to me now while there is time, give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping and mourning. Don't tear your clothing in your grief, but tear your hearts instead. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate. (Joel 2-12-13)

Dear fellow Christians,

Lent greetings to you all in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

As you know, Lent is an intensely penitential time to examine our sinful natures and return to our God from our own rebelliousness. It is a season that begins with Ash Wednesday and ends on Maundy Thursday or Holy Saturday depending on which tradition we follow.

In this season of lent, we are expected to open the doors of our hearts a little wider to the Lord and understand our Lord a little deeper. Lent is also an opportunity to contemplate what our Lord did for us on the Cross. It does not stop at sadness and despair, but it points us to the hope of the Resurrection and the day when every tear will be dried (Rev. 21:4).

Although the format of observing lent has varied throughout the centuries, and in different Christian cultures, the basic concept remains the same: to open our hearts to God's refining grace through prayer, confession and fasting.

Lent traditionally lasts for forty days, modelled after Christ's forty day fast in the desert (Matthew 4:2). Fasting is a way of denying ourselves the excesses of life so that we might be more attuned to the Lord's voice. It is also a way of disciplining ourselves, strengthening our spiritual muscles so that when temptations arise in life, we are already used to saying "no" to

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations... and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.
Mt 28:19-20

our human desires. And fasting is also a way of participating, in a small way in the sufferings of Christ and can be particularly powerful when accompanied by prayer, fasting and confession.

The goal of confession is to honestly examine our lives in light of God's Word and to make a commitment to change in any areas we have not submitted to the Lord. A good way to start an examination of our lives is by praying Psalm 139, verse 23-24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life."

We thank God for our political leaders who have shown that they can work together for the good of their citizens of South Sudan. It is our prayer that they will continue with the same spirit until all the matrix in the R-ARCSS are fully implemented.

I strongly request all of us to pray and confess like Nehemiah (Neh. 1: 6-7) on behalf of our people who continue to engage in intercommunal violence, cattle raiding, revenge killings and road ambushes that the lord may change their hearts to embrace love, peace and respect for human life.

In the name of God, I encourage all citizens of South Sudan to support peace by demonstrating the spirit of true forgiveness, reconciliation, kindness and sincere love towards one another. Not looking for the former things that divide us, but building on the things that unite us for a peaceful coexistence, and laying a strong economic foundation for the future of our children and the generations to come.

I request prayers for the administration and all activities of the Church. Pray for bishop elect for Lainya, Rev Roufas Lemi Joel whose consecration is planned for the 26th of April, the third Sunday of Easter in the Diocese of Lainya.

Pray for God's guidance and discernment for selecting a suitable candidate for the vacant Diocese of Bentiu.

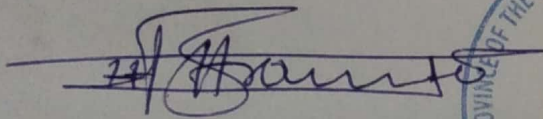
Pray for the Canonical and constitutional crisis in the Diocese of Bor that God may provide inner understanding for His children to know and follow the truth.

Lastly let us pray for the world and the challenges of the year such as; corona virus, the invasion of locusts, floods, tribalism, poverty, repatriation and resettlement of refugees and displaced

people, that by God's divine intervention, we may be able to manage and overcome these challenges.

Once again as I conclude, I urge all South Sudanese to relentlessly give themselves to prayer at this critical moment that our nation is struggling to move in the direction of peace. It is only prayer that will put us in touch with infinite intelligence that will dispel the fogs of human ignorance and the darkness of self-destructive errors. In this lent season, let us all humble ourselves in prayers to God for help that is beyond our own strength. It is only when we set aside our own strength that God will become our strength and wisdom. O Lord, be thou our strength. Forgive and reconcile us to live harmoniously together in peace to your glory.

Now all glory to God, who is able, through His mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to Him in the Church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen. (Ephesians 3:20,21)



Most Revd Dr. Justin Badi Arama

**Primate of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan
and the Bishop of Juba Diocese**

