

# Mission Report (March-April 2022)

Pakistan and South Sudan

The Rt. Rev. Patrick P. Augustine, D.Min. DD.



## Perspective on Missionary Task

It is a unique call that the church is in the world for the sake of the world. It is for this reason Church is sent out on mission to witness to all nations. Jesus sends forth his disciples and says, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you," and adds, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20: 21-22). Again, in Acts 1, Jesus said to his disciples, "you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth,"... "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." It is my witness that my mission journey during months of March and April to Pakistan and South Sudan I was anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit. In the following pages you shall journey with me and experience marvelous witness to the working of the Holy Spirit. "Properly speaking the mission is the mission of the Holy Spirit" (Lesslie Newbigin). I visited churches, preached the Word of God, supported the education of poor children, built and completed four class rooms, helped purchase medicine for a



large number of children suffering from malaria and stomach ulcers because of drinking polluted water and planned a project of digging a well to provide clean water for 3000 children at St. Andrews Primary and High School, opened a sewing center for young mothers to learn tailoring skills to earn a living for their families, and held a clergy

retreat to provide an opportunity of fellowship and continuing education to equip leadership in churches. South Sudan is a society that has been profoundly scarred by decades of war and insecurity. Eighty percent of the population has limited sources of employment. Children sit in overcrowded and underfunded classrooms. Access to safe water is limited. Problems abound across the young nation but so does the faith and power of the Holy Spirit. I am there with them to bring the good news of the Gospel, standing in solidarity amidst their suffering to provide hope through work of development. I thank you for your financial support and prayers. I do this missionary work voluntarily without receiving any salary. Your financial support goes directly to help educate 3000 children, while also aiding churches and the community of Bor, South Sudan.

In my call to serve as missionary Bishop I am learning about downward mobility. Prior to June 2019, I served as a rector of affluent communities in the United States. I served in historic churches with beautiful stained-glass windows, received a handsome salary, and served loving missional communities. But since June 2019, I have been called to serve as bishop among the poorest of the poor. In JESUS the CHRIST, in the incarnate God, we see an action of downward mobility. The Word of God “became flesh” and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). He emptied himself: “who, being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made in human likeness” (Philippines 2:6-7). I am learning about the downward mobility in my call to serve the poor, show compassion and walk humbly with them as their brother in Christ. What a privilege in being transformed in the image of the servant Christ to my people in these poor communities to bring hope and good news of the gospel.

+Bishop Patrick Augustine



## March 4 - March 10, 2022:

### *Arrival in Pakistan and Visit to Peshawar*

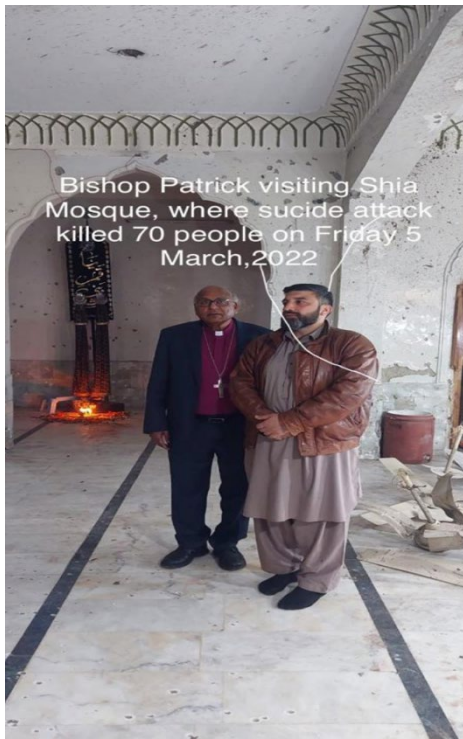
On March 2, I left Chicago and flew to Islamabad, Pakistan, arriving in Pakistan's capital on March 4<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 AM. After the long flight, I rested in Islamabad while preparing to travel the two and half hours to Peshawar on Friday. The Diocese of Peshawar had sent a rental car with a driver and their office employee to pick me up on Friday, the Islamic day of prayer. During the Friday prayers at the Koocha Risalder mosque, located near All Saints Church in the old city of Peshawar, there was a terrorist suicide bombing. Previously, in September 2013, All Saints Church had been attacked during Sunday services by two terrorists who detonated suicide vests, killing 127 Christian worshippers. The attackers this time targeted the minority Shia community and killed 70 people and injured nearly 200 more.

Because of bomb blast in Peshawar all routes were sealed, and I could not travel to the city on Friday. Instead, I had to wait until Saturday afternoon to travel to Peshawar. All the old city shops and businesses were closed for three days. On Sunday the government allowed Christians to go to All Saints Church. I was informed that local church leaders and armed police had covered 21 roads and streets through which people could come to the church. All Saints had members who volunteered to recognize the individual or families to be allowed to travel to All Saints Church. I arrived inside the church at 9:30 AM, with the service starting at 10:00. Despite the travel challenges and the previous bombing, the church sanctuary was full. I preached and celebrated Holy Communion with the people of All Saints. After the church service, I visited with Pastor Siraj William's family in their home. On January 30 Siraj William, after Sunday worship service, was shot in the head and killed by a terrorist. I presented a monetary gift to the widow of Pastor William.



On March 7, the Diocese of Peshawar's Director of Education led me on a visit to two diocesan schools. I had raised funds to cover the tuition for fifty poor children who attended school in the diocese. While visiting the schools, I met with the staff and thanked them for their faithful services under very difficult circumstances. I also prayed with them and asked God to protect them from terrorist attacks and other forms of violence and harassment. The threat of violence was ever-present, and the schools were under high alert with very restricted security, especially after the mosque bombing only a few days previously.

In the afternoon I visited the Koocha Risalder mosque, the Shia mosque that was the site of the horrific terrorist attack shortly after my arrival in Pakistan. Over 70 people had been killed, including the Imam, and nearly 200 were seriously injured. I offered my condolences to



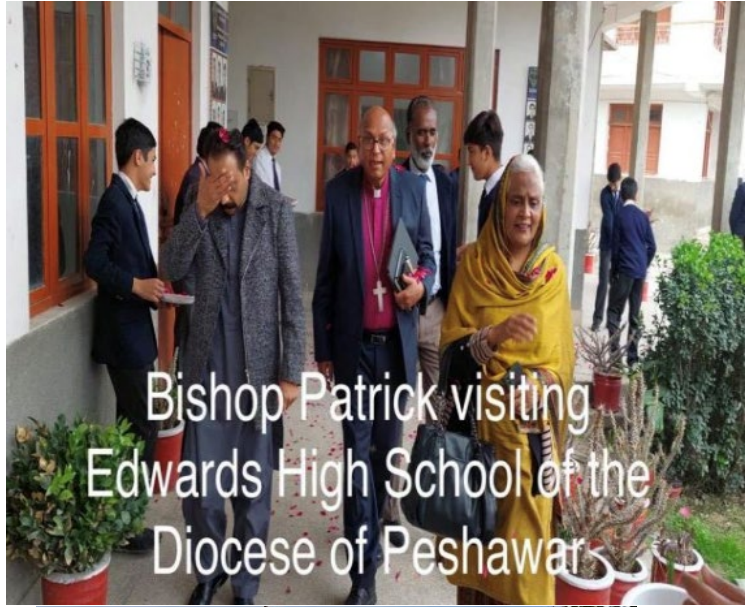
Shia community and with their permission prayed with them for peace. Their Imam had also died in bomb blast. After this visit I told Shia leaders, "I am also Imam Bishop of Christian community. Please convey my condolence, prayers and message that we Christians stand in solidarity with them as they mourn and suffer." I also gave a monetary gift to the slain Imam's family as a gesture of brotherhood and solidarity. One of the Shia leaders filmed my visit to the mosque and later sent it to me.

The next day, I had an opportunity to visit with Bishop Mano Rupal Shah and the diocesan staff at St. John's Cathedral in Peshawar and later returned to Islamabad for a short while before visiting Gulpur, in the region of Azad Kashmir





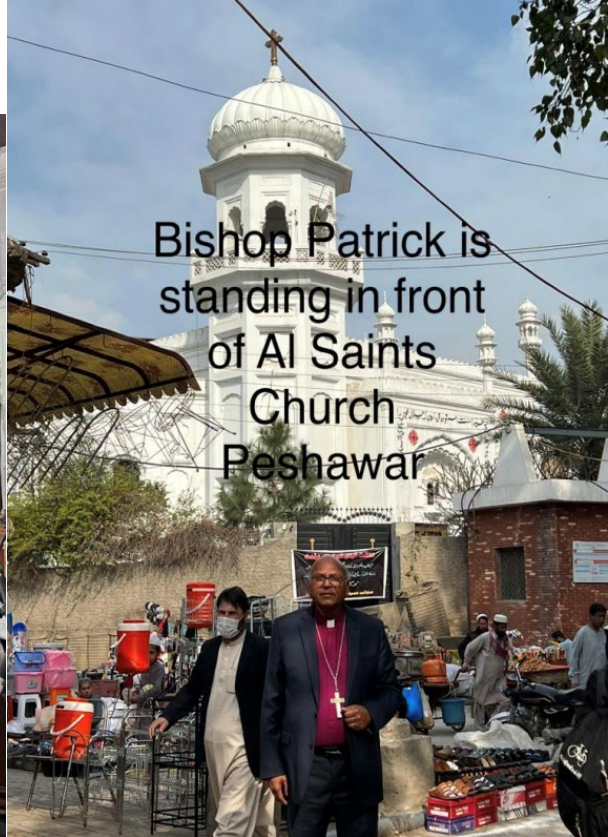
Bishop Patrick planting a lemon tree as a good will gesture at Edwards High School Peshawar



Bishop Patrick visiting Edwards High School of the Diocese of Peshawar



Congregation of All Saints Church Peshawar



Bishop Patrick is standing in front of All Saints Church Peshawar

## **March 10-11, 2022:**

### ***Visit to Gulpur, Azad Kashmir***

Background History: In 2002 I presented a paper titled, "Peace and Justice" on India and Pakistan's conflict over the disputed region of Kashmir. The Pakistan government arranged for me to present this paper with academics and students, along with many press reporters. For 77 years, Kashmiris have been seeking the right of self-determination. Pakistan and India both are nuclear-armed nations and Kashmir is a source of tension and potential flash point between the two nations. Politicians and religious leaders on both sides have sought to use the issue to further their own goals, with Pakistani Mullahs denouncing Indian Hindus as infidels and Hindu politicians stoking conflict with incendiary rhetoric. My stance on this issue that it is a human rights issue that has caused the Kashmiris to suffer for 77 years. It is an issue that should be resolved through peaceful mediation and not through Jihad or political violence. During my visit to Islamabad, Pakistan in 2002, I was invited by the Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir to visit refugee camps. While visiting the camps, I looked to meet Kashmiri Christians but I was told that there were no Kashmiri Christians in Azad Kashmir.

On 8 October, 2005 Azad Kashmir was devastated by an extremely powerful, 7.6 earthquake that took the lives of over 86,000 people, and injured thousands more and left millions displaced. It was considered the deadliest earthquake in South Asia. A small Christian mission "Potohar Mission" led by Rev. Ifrahim Matthew and his team in Rawalpindi, Pakistan organized a compassion mission to bring tents, food, clothing, and household items to help the displaced Kashmir community. They also found opportunities to pray and share the Christian message in refugee camps.

They kept me informed about their work and prayed with me and kept looking for members of the Christian community within the Kashmiri community. Finally, God led Rev. Ifrahim Matthew and his team to a Kashmiri Christian family living in Gulpur, Azad Kashmir who lived there since 1933. Located high in the mountains, Gulpur and its adjacent district are known as the city of mosques, with over 300 mosques dotting the area but not a single church. The Christian family, an island surrounded by Muslims, was comprised of seven brothers who owned several acres of land. Rev. Ifrahim and his team spoke with the family about using a portion of their land to construct a small church.

In 2015 Rev. Ifrahim and Rev. Arshad invited me to lay the foundation stone of the first church to be built in this area in 2000 years. In February 2016, we completed the building of the small church, using funds that I had helped raise. Not only did I lay the foundation stone but I also had the privilege to dedicate this newly built church as Gulpur Evangelical Church. Rev. Arshad John and his family have faithfully served this congregation and lived in the Gulpur area for 20 years. He started this ministry with a small number of Christians including his own family. He has faced persecution and challenges, including being imprisoned three separate times and suffering violence incited by hostile mullahs. Yet, he has persevered in his ministry and has worked towards healing and building relationships with the Muslim community.

Rev. Arshad John often travels to far-flung areas where Christian individuals or families have found jobs and are working in this area. He informed me that he has four small congregations/house churches in an area of sixty kilometers. We give thanks to God for the miracle of the planting of this new mission in this beautiful mountainous area which lies on the Poonch River.

On March 11, 2022, I led a worship service at Gulpur Evangelical Church for a congregation of 60 worshippers. Some of the parishioners had traveled as far as 50 kilometers. Food was served after the worship service, and we all enjoyed our time of fellowship. After lunch ended, people asked me to pray, anoint and lay hands on them, which I did for several hours. It



was rich ministry opportunity in the name of Jesus Christ. The next time I travel to Gulpur, I shall stay for a week to visit the small Christian community scattered in this mountainous area. I also hope to visit some prominent Muslim leaders as a good will gesture.

I invite you to join me to pray and financially support work of my brother in Christ Rev. Arshad John.

Impact: Gulpur is situated close to LOC border line between India and Pakistan. Rev. Arshad shared a beautiful story of God using him in this area and an example of the relationships he has built with local Muslims. A Muslim Pakistani non-commissioned army officer told Rev. Arshad that he has a farm on which he raises goats, cows and buffaloes for milk and meat. His animals were attacked by disease and several died. This soldier asked him to pray for his livestock. Rev. Arshad fasted and prayed and blessed water and oil. He told the soldier to anoint his animals with the sign of the cross and sprinkle the holy water over them. Several months later this Muslim soldier reported that the disease was gone and his animals are healed. Praise God.



Last year Rev. Arshad was invited to speak at the conference Seerat UL Nabi- Life of Prophet Muhammad. It was a unique opportunity for a Christian pastor to be given the opportunity to speak for 15 minutes at a Muslim conference. Courageously and inspired by the Word of God, he shared his experiences as a leader of the Christian community. In attendance were a large number of Islamic scholars and members of the government. After hearing Rev. Arshad speak, the county head asked how he can help the local Christian community. Rev. Arshad told him that for many years he has been unable to register their church with the government of Azad Kashmir. The county head told him to fill all the paperwork and bring it to his office. Within a month their church was registered with the government. This is the same church that I helped raise funds for and dedicated, the first church built in this area in 2000 years, now officially recognized in the State of Azad Kashmir. Rev. Arshad has developed four more small congregations spread in different parts of this mountainous area. We pray and look forward to the growth of this Christian mission.





*Bishop Augustine with members of Gulpur Evangelical Church, March 2022*

## Pictorial Journey of Azad Kashmir



## March 12-15, 2022

### *Visit to Faisalabad Diocese, Pakistan*

After visiting Gulpur Evangelical Church, I traveled through the mountains to Kotli and then to Rawalpindi. Rawalpindi and Pakistan's capital Islamabad are located adjacent to each other and form an important nexus for transportation across the country. As I was traveling south, I decided to stay in Rawalpindi for the night so that I could take public transport from nearby Islamabad to Faisalabad the following morning.

The trip from Islamabad to Gojra took me seven hours. Upon arriving at Gojra's bus stop, I was met by Nayyer Das and his sister Easter Das on behalf of Bishop Mano Rumalshah. Returning to Gojra was a bit of a homecoming because I was born in and had grown up in Gojra.

I was born on March 17, 1950. My father served in Gojra as parish priest, rural dean, and Archdeacon of the Lahore Diocese for four decades. Gojra has long been a center of Pakistan's Christian community, since the days of British rule. This continues today with Gojra being the location of the headquarters of the rural Diocese of Faisalabad.

March 13, 2022: On Sunday morning at 10:00, I accompanied 400 parishioners, along with a band, on a procession into St. John's Cathedral. It was a joyous occasion for me to be with the congregation of St. John's Cathedral. I led the worship service in Urdu but preached my sermon in Punjabi. After church dozens of people came forward to the altar for me to lay hands. After church three pastors accompanied me to visit several homes for prayer, tea, and lunch until 5:30 in the afternoon.

March 13, 8:00PM - 3:30AM:

We left Gojra at 7:00 PM to hold watch night prayer service at St. Augustine Church in the village of Satrah, located 10 miles from Gojra. My father had helped build this church in 1970. He used to hold a watch night prayer service from 9:00 PM to 4:00 AM twice a year. During this service there were three scripture readings, three hymns, and three intercessory prayers. At 2:00 AM, all people were brought forward for the laying of hands for healing. Every time I visit St. Augustine's church in Satrah, we continue the same practice of watch night prayer and healing service. It is always a powerful spiritual experience that leaves me feeling renewed. On this, my recent visit, I was engaged in ministry from 9:00PM to 3:00AM, tired but loving every minute of the 19 hours of active ministry.

March 14: 9-11AM:

The next day I visited Iver Hostel in Gorja. We used to say that Gojra is our Jerusalem where Spirit of the Lord dwells. There was revival of faith, harmony in spirit, and a thriving ministry. Sadly, now many of its institutions are in ruins. Iver Hostel was an institution where poor boys from rural communities were brought to receive an education. For over 100 years Iver Hostel had educated thousands of boys from poor rural areas. This institution has given seven



bishops, large numbers of priests and evangelists to the Church of Pakistan, along with doctors, nurses, and teachers who have served in Pakistan and overseas. It was sad to see this institution now is in ruins. There used to be 200 students supported by donations.

Mismanagement of funds has caused this institution to lose her donors. What it means in reality is that hundreds of students from poor families no longer have the opportunity to receive an education. Bishop Mono is the new commissary bishop and is trying to restore this institution. I prayed with clergy, laity and students to seek God's blessings for the restoration of this very important institution to serve the poor. The same problems that have plagued Iver Hostel also have affected the nearby girls' school, located at St. Faith's boarding school.

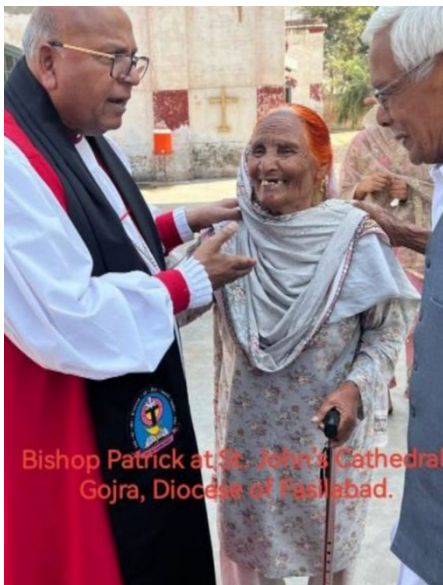


During this missionary journey I have been praying for "the Spirit help us in our weakness.... but the Spirit to intercede for us" that the clergy and lay leaders of this diocese, like Nehemiah, repair and build the broken walls of the Diocese of Faisalabad.

I stayed at the bishop's house, which was the same house that I lived in 52 years ago with my father and family. Staying here brought back many memories. One story stood out in my mind. Our father, Sewak B. M. Augustine, loved reading stories to us while we were growing in this house. He used to receive "Decision" magazine from Billy Graham, headquartered in the USA. My father would read in English and then translate into Urdu for us while we would sit next to him in our living room in the evenings. I remember very vividly one evening as our father told us a story of Dr. Graham's crusade. I said, "Papa Ji, I would like to be like Billy Graham. Can I go around the world to preach about Jesus Christ when I grow up?" My father looked at this 10-year-old boy and smiled. I have no idea what he thought about my curious, bold, and ambitious desire to be on the world stage. I was a boy living in a midsize town in the Punjab. I had never traveled outside my own area except to the big city of Lahore. Our world was beautiful and we were fully satisfied where we lived. Who could have imagined sixty-two years ago that his son would go around the globe to take the gospel to people of many different races, nations, and cultures? I have learned that our God is a God of great possibilities. We now have this light shining in our heart, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves (2 Corinthians 4:7).

I feel my call to serve around the globe as agent of the Gospel "as a prisoner of Christ Jesus, a prisoner in the Lord, an ambassador in chain, a captive of Christ scattering His fragrance" (Ephesians 6:20, 2 Corinthians 5:20).

## Pictorial Journey of Faisalabad



## March 19-22

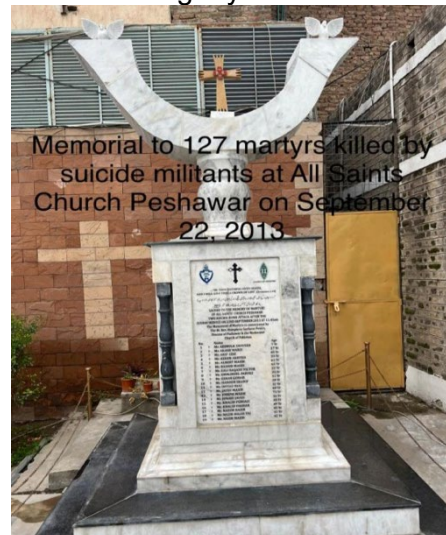
*To carry the Mission of Christ  
Lahore, Pakistan.*

Following Jesus in the early church meant making risky choices. Jesus made it clear that following him is not without cost:

*"If any want to become my followers. Let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34).*

Following Jesus is a costly and dangerous choice that inevitably leads to death of one kind or another. Did we suppose that taking up a cross would require only a few minor adjustments to our ordinary lives? To take up our cross is when we walk in Christ's steps and embrace his life, which means extending ourselves in difficult circumstances for the sake of the gospel. At other times, it may mean lifting high the cross of Christ in the public square.

During my visits to churches, I have witnessed the church in Pakistan lifting high the cross of Christ, even at great risk. Almost every church has security guards and many also have entrance barriers and steel grates to reduce the risk of bombing. The congregations are vigilant about strangers and visitors, with fear that they may be terrorists who have infiltrated churches.



Despite the risks, I also saw and experienced the great vibrancy of faith in the parishes I visited throughout Pakistan. I found churches filled with congregants, enthusiastically praising, and praying to God. Faith triumphing over fear.

On March 18, I traveled by bus to the historic city of Lahore. I had gone to school and studied at Lahore Divinity School at the Cathedral of the Resurrection. It was in this Cathedral that I was ordained as a deacon and a priest and where I served as the Secretary General of the Student

Christian Movement of Pakistan (SCM). I would be staying with the Very Rev. Emmanuel Kohkar, Dean of Raiwind Diocese, Church of Pakistan. However, before I arrived in Lahore, the bus stopped at a rest stop along the motorway and I purchased a packet of spicy chips as a snack. This turned out to be a grave mistake.

Upon my arrival in Lahore I was welcomed by Rev. Khokhar who had made arrangements for my stay at the Diocesan guest house on Warris Road, Lahore. At the guest house I was greeted by several dignitaries from the Church of Pakistan; the Moderator Bishop, Bishop Azad Marshall, Bishop Kaleem of Hyderabad and several other leaders of the Church of Pakistan. They were there for a meeting. Bishop Azad Marshall kindly introduced me and my ministry in South Sudan to all present in the guest house. However, shortly after arrival, I began to feel ill from the chips and water I had on my journey to Lahore. I had a case of food poisoning and I spent the rest of the day and most of the night awake with stomach trouble.

Despite my condition, the next day was a Sunday and I was to lead a worship service at St. John's church in Liaqatabad in Lahore. This meant that the next morning at 9:00 AM I led a worship service of over six hundred worshippers. Rev. Kohkar had asked me to preside, preach and be celebrant at the service of the Holy Eucharist. I was able to preach on the subject of "The Living Church" (1 Corinthians 4:5, Revelation 2: 8). This message was to exhort their faith under pressure and challenging circumstances in Pakistan. At the end of celebration of Holy Eucharist, I was in no shape to distribute holy elements. I was taken to Rev. Khokhar's home next to the church where I slept for several hours. When I woke up, I was taken to Service Hospital. I was severely dehydrated and was given antibiotics by intravenously to improve hydration in my body. After leaving the hospital, I spent another restless night in the guest house.

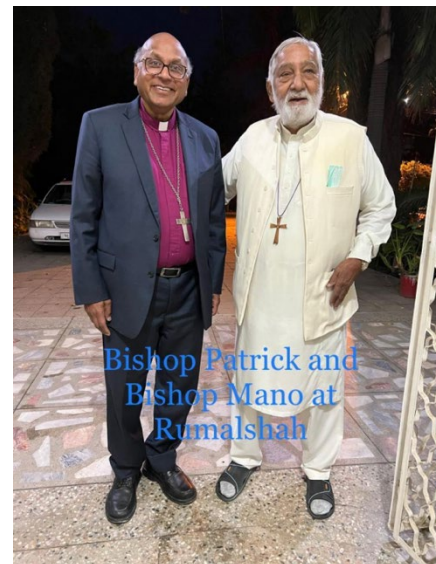
The next morning, I continued my visit to the Cathedral of the Resurrection where I worshipped for many years. The Cathedral of the Resurrection also was where I had been ordained as a deacon and Presbyter of the Church of Pakistan. For me it was a pilgrimage to visit this holy shrine. The Very Rev. Shahid Mehraj, Dean of the Cathedral welcomed Rev. Khokhar and me. He shared information about the Cathedral's ongoing ministry to the larger Lahore community and his efforts to renovate the historic cathedral building. The Cathedral itself is so large and so historic that the congregation alone cannot afford to renovate the building. The Dean is hopeful that he can work with the Punjab government to secure funding for the renovations. Our conversation encompassed his work with the local government and the good ecumenical relationships they have developed with other churches and the Muslim community.

That evening, still recovering from my food poisoning, I addressed a youth gathering from the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches at the Roman Catholic-run International Peace Center. The topic was human rights and their witness under persecution, threats, and to promote peace. I used an example of Jesus as a young messiah and man of compassion, peace, and justice. After speaking to the youth group, I joined Bishop Mano Rumalshah and traveled to visit Bishop Alexander Malik, the retired Bishop of Lahore, who had recently lost his older sister and a brother.

Lahore is very large city with a population of 13 million so driving for any distance can take several hours and it took us two hours to reach Bishop Alexander's residence. I offered my condolence and prayed with him and his wife. After meeting with Bishop Alexander, we returned late to the guest house. It was the first night I slept better as I recovered from my food poisoning.

The next morning, I met with Bishop Rumalshah at breakfast and later had a meeting with the Moderator Bishop in his office. He shared his thoughts about the church's triumphant faith amidst challenges and external pressures. In the afternoon the Moderator Bishop asked Rev. Kohkar to take me to visit the state of art buildings of Lahore Theological College and the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, situated on the same grounds. Recently, during Archbishop of Canterbury's visit to Pakistan, he had also visited these institutions and stayed on the beautiful campus. I met with a few members of their faculty and student body into the evening. I returned to the guest house literally physically exhausted but spiritually renewed. Bishop Mono Rumalshah was waiting for me to have dinner with him. After dinner we prayed together and said goodbye as I would be leaving for Africa. I came back to my room and packed my luggage. The Rev. Emmanuel Kohkar and his son, my excellent hosts, came at 11:00 PM to take me to the airport to depart by Emirate Airlines to fly to first to Dubai and then unto Nairobi, before traveling the last leg of the journey to South Sudan.

These were four memorable days full of opportunities to preach the Gospel, to pray with many people, and fellowship with new and old friends. I give thanks to God for the time I was able to spend in Lahore and in Pakistan. I would like to end my mission diary from my visit to the churches in Pakistan with what I read early in the morning, sitting in my hotel room in Nairobi from the appointed lesson in the Common lectionary: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'" (Isaiah 52:7)



Bishop Patrick and  
Bishop Mano at  
Rumalshah





## **March 24-27, 2022**

### ***Mission of Christ from Pakistan to South Sudan***

I woke up in my hotel room in Nairobi and felt rested and refreshed. However, before I could continue to South Sudan, I needed to take a PCR at a hospital. In the United States, this test is free but in Pakistan or Kenya, each test costs \$70.00 and is required for entry into South Sudan. I took a taxi to Coptic Hospital, which was very crowded and I had to wait in line for an hour before finding out that Coptic Hospital had discontinued performing the PCR test and that I would need to travel to Nairobi West hospital for the test. I had to take another cab to get to Nairobi West and finally was able to get my test. After receiving my results via email, I was cleared to travel to South Sudan.

On March 25, I flew from Nairobi's Jumbo Kenyatta Airport to Juba International Airport, South Sudan on Kenya Airways. It was a pleasant flight and at Juba airport I was received by several members of the Diocese of Bor. We traveled from Juba to Bor by Bishop Nathaniel Garang's car. Part of the 180 kilometer road is paved but the rest is still a dirt road. In the middle of the journey the rear back tire burst. It was pitch dark and no help was available but under cell phone lights, four of the men accompanying me were able to get the tire changed. We continued our journey and, on the way, a large crowd had gathered along the road, accompanied by their Bishop David of the Chuiker diocese, located along the Nile River. Even though it was pitch dark all around us we were offered a warm welcome and hospitality. Ladies had prepared a dinner of freshly caught fried fish from the Nile River. We continued for another 40 minutes and arrived at St. Andrews Cathedral Compound in Bor. It was close to 9:00 PM and an enthusiastic crowd of faithful members of the Bor diocese had prepared their own warm welcome. I am no stranger among my Bor family, and I am ever so grateful for their affection and warm welcome. For me it is a home coming. The Diocese had renovated and nicely decorated my accommodation. Now I have electricity from 7:00 AM - 12:00 PM and again from 7:00 PM to midnight. By that time the temperature cools down enough that it is bearable for me to be in my room without an electric fan. During the day though I must be careful not to get heatstroke when I am visiting people and places. I have to taper my enthusiasm for my mission work with taking care of myself because it is such a joy to be back among my people after two years.

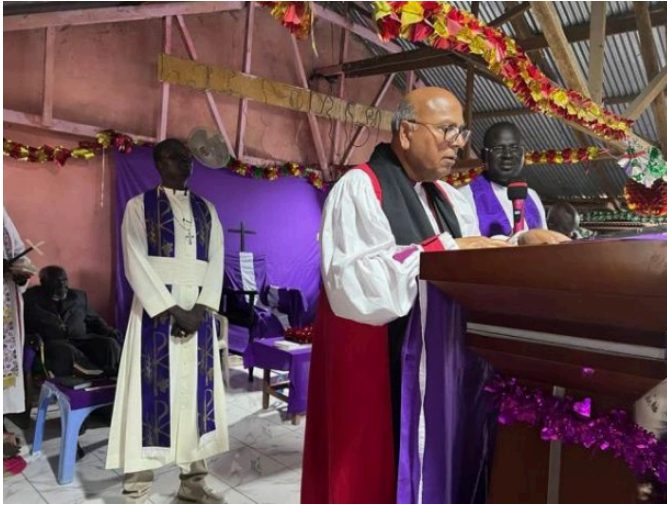
Saturday March 26: After a good night's rest I met with the Dean of the Cathedral and Archbishop's secretary to discuss details of my four weeks' stay in the Diocese of Bor. I keep my life pretty simple in Bor. When I arrived in Juba I bought two large boxes of cereal, a tin of dry Nido milk, several packets of digestive cookies, and some toiletries for my basic needs. Every evening I plan to eat two bananas and a bottle of water at 7:00 PM. This simple lifestyle keeps me healthy and fit.

Every evening, in front of my room, a small group of people gather for evening prayer using the common lectionary. For the next thirty days I will lead this prayer and provide a short reflection on the daily Gospel reading. I also deal with unplanned challenges, such as my encounter with a mentally disturbed woman who was frightened of me. She saw me on the grounds of St. Andrews Cathedral and she frantically and fearfully claimed that there was a white man eating black people. After the evening service she was calmed by several other members of the church and she knelt down before me and asked me to pray for her and for her small child. I laid hands on her for healing and God's peace in her troubled soul.

#### Sunday March 27:

The St. Andrews Cathedral compound has a group of about 50 young ladies called the "Youth Mama's." It is a community of faith whose ministry is of prayer and choristers who assist the male youth members while during worship services. This morning, at 4:30 AM, one of the members played drums that called us to awake and to prepare ourselves for Sunday worship. At 8:00 AM, a large procession gathered and we entered into St. Andrews Cathedral where over 2000 faithful members had gathered for praise and worship. Worship at St. Andrews Cathedral

is a memorable experience of three beautiful hours spent in praise, prayer, and proclaiming the good news of the Gospel. I was preacher of the day and the dean of the cathedral translated my sermon from English to Dinka. It was powerful experience to worship with such a vibrant and enthusiastic congregation. Alleluia!



## April 5, 2022

### *Learning to be in the image of Christ.*

Every morning at 7:00 AM, I gather with a small group for morning prayer and in the evening, we gather again for evening prayer. We sing hymns in Dinka and prayer is offered by Mary Magdalena, a lay member of our community. The daily lessons from the lectionary are read and I share lectionary reflections with our group. During my stay at St. Andrews Cathedral compound, Bor, I have realized that I live among a worshiping and praying community. The day starts early to the sound of drums calling everyone to prayer and preparation for morning worship. Prayer combines with academics as the senior class at St. Andrews prepares for their final high school graduation exams. 123 boys and girls are together on the St. Andrews' school compound. They meet as their own group for worship in the morning and evening. On my side of the compound there are six small huts where six individuals, including me, live. Mine is the largest room and it is beautifully decorated in the local Dinka style.

Twice a day I gather with others for worship. I have realized that it matters not that we are a tiny cluster of Dinka elders and mostly poor uneducated people, whose greatest resource



is our faith and dedication to Christ. We meet to praise, pray, hear the living Word of God and offer our intercessions before God. It is such a sacred moment of worship, as I truly feel and believe that Jesus the risen Christ joins us when two or three gather in God's name. This morning one of our readings was from Hebrews:

"Now Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for" (Hebrews 11: 1).

My community of faith in Bor has been tested for five decades with war, persecution, lack of medical services, housing, and food. Despite the challenges, they have kept their eyes on Jesus while lifting high the Cross as a strong and vibrant church. I experience their faith as I live with this community and find the words of Jesus ringing in my ears: "whoever finds his life will lose it and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." Faith in Jesus Christ is no crutch but a source of inspiration. During their time of suffering and pain they find in Jesus and in carrying their Dinka crosses to worship that Jesus is present in their suffering and in their everyday living. As Finnie Lou Hamer, an American Negro, used to sing in the cotton fields of Mississippi, "O Lord you know just how I feel."

The God of the Bible who stands on the side of the poor and suffering people reminds us that faith is not "opiate of the poor people" but that God is real, Jesus is living, and Holy Spirit gives them hope and courage to move forward in their lives. I see and experience this daily in Bor. As Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthews 5:3). Here in living with the poorest of the poor, I see that these people are blessed; I experience it but words cannot do justice.

I see courage, love and a willing dependence on God amongst the people of Bor. I feel their love as I cook with them, eat, and pray with them. Compared with us living in the west, these people have few possessions but I feel their love throughout the day as dozens of people offer their warmth to me during the day without fear. As Henri Nouwen said, "I see humanity as a sea of people starving for affection, tenderness, care, love and acceptance." Nouwen learned that we minister to the needy not only to take Jesus to them but also to find Jesus within them. As Philip Yancey writes in his book, *Soul Survivor*, "Jesus said blessed are the poor; not blessed are those who care for the poor."

I have served as the rector of large and affluent communities in the United States. I have donned expensive vestments and stood under stained-glass windows in historic and beautiful churches, with a handsome salary and loving missional communities. But now, since June 2019, I have been called to serve as a bishop among the poorest of the poor. In JESUS the CHRIST, in the incarnate God, we see an action of downward mobility. The Word of God “became flesh” and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). He emptied himself: “Who, being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Philippines 2: 6-7).

In my call to serve in the Diocese of Bor. South Sudan I am learning about the downward mobility, a term that Henri Nouwen first used in

Sojourner magazine in 1981. Jesus is calling me to follow his model of service to be a servant bishop, to show the same compassion to my people who walk into my room unannounced, shake hands, and sit down and talk with me. They do not take appointments or have any specific agenda. They simply visit me throughout the day to share their love as I have come to visit them from the USA. Jesus is calling me to reach out to the broken and the needy, to offer them a warm welcome and a cup of cold water on such hot days or cup of tea and a cookie in the morning and in the afternoon. What a privilege in being transformed in the image of the servant Christ to my people in Bor, South Sudan.



## Friday April 8, 2022

### *Finding the Way Through Adversity*

This morning I got up at 4:00 AM as I could not sleep for the last few hours as my room was uncomfortably warm. There was very little air circulation and laying under my mosquito net was hot and unpleasant. Laying awake, uncomfortable and frustrated, my thoughts turned to two issues that were troubling me. The first was that the hot climate was really bothering me, and I was struggling most nights to get a good nights' sleep. Secondly, my efforts to build additional classrooms and provide clean water to St. Andrews school had come to naught. I had been in Bor for two weeks and I had developed a plan to build two classrooms for the primary school at St. Andrews School. I also had hoped to locate a contractor who could bore a well that would supply clean water for St. Andrews School and the nearby compound where I was staying. Every day the lack of accessible clean water was apparent. For my own shower, the ladies in the compound had to carry water from the Nile River in jerry cans and buckets, balanced on their heads. This water needed to be treated with Dettol to be safe for washing because it potentially carried germs that could cause skin disease and was equally unfit for drinking. The problems I faced with my shower were magnified for the three thousand students at St. Andrews school who also had no water.

I sat quietly in my room staring in the dark, frustrated, and unsure if I would be able to achieve my goals. As I sat, a quote that I had read several months previously from Mother Teresa's came to me: "Spend an hour a day in contemplative prayer and commit no conscious sins." I realized that my emotions were leading me to commit the sin of contempt by getting angry towards clergy whom I had approached to help at St. Andrews Cathedral. Many years ago, while I studied at Virginia Theological seminary, I learned the spiritual discipline of contemplative prayer. The discipline helped remind me that "this is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it." I needed to be thankful that God has put me in Bor to love and serve people. In these challenges, God is inviting me to become like Jesus, to show compassion, patience and accept circumstances God has placed me in. I spent close to an hour being quiet in the presence of God, contemplating his goodness. I also asked the Lord to show me the way. As I focused on the presence of God and placed my worries and frustrations at the feet of Jesus, I became filled with peace to give all to God and trust in his hands.

That morning I called an Indian doctor and his wife who serve in this area and asked them to help me. At 11:00 AM Dr. Anil brought a contractor who will dig a well and build two classrooms. I explained to this Kenyan contractor that I do not have government money or NGO'S from Europe or the USA. Our source of money is from churches and people who have sacrificially given donations and asked that he give prices that we can afford. This is especially pertinent because construction in South Sudan is one of the most expensive in the world. My prayers were answered. Praise God.

Following my morning meeting, I was extremely busy for the rest of the day with a stream of visitors, with whom I shared cups of tea and water in my room. Among the visitors were two bishops from other dioceses, the headmaster of St. Andrews high school, and the wife of the lieutenant governor. Each meeting had its own focus and I talked about a wide array of topics. The Bishop of Makuach had come with monetary donations that could be used for food, while the headmaster's visit was about school finances. The wife of the lieutenant governor had come to ask that I pray for her and her daughter-in-law and gave me a beautiful set of hand embroidered bed sheets as a gift. Almost as soon as she left, a lady from the Cathedral's vestry came and brought me a small bag of mangoes. Right after she left, we had our community evening prayer. It was such a



busy day that I did not even have time to eat lunch or leave my room for seven hours. Yet, as busy is it was, it also was a blessing.

God, through the love of these people, was showing me the Way. I am continually learning the formation of my episcopal ministry while recognizing the Lord's voice and face in every person and every situation that I encounter in Bor. This is what it means is to give up my control and agenda. Even on a day where I met close to forty people, I began to see people not as an interruption of my space but as the reason God has called me to be a servant bishop . Peace, the peace of God, filled my heart as looked upon the people who came to speak with me. Thank you, Lord, for giving me this opportunity to love and embrace people in Bor. Alleluia!



## April 10, 2022. Palm Sunday

*Diocese of Makuach, Greater Bor Area, South Sudan: Palm Sunday in Nor, South Sudan*

7:30 am- 12:00 noon:

In January 2020, the Diocese of Bor was split to create the new Diocese of Makuach. Prior to the formation of the new diocese, Bishop James Deng of the diocese of Makuach served as the Secretary General of the Diocese of Bor. The bishop has been my brother in Christ since 1996, since he was a young man in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. I had helped open four schools in the refugee camp and Bishop James Deng was one of the young men who graduated from the camp schools with his high school diploma. This Palm Sunday, I had joy of celebrating with Bishop James and the congregation at the Diocese of Makuach's pro-Cathedral.

The diocese's pro-Cathedral is called St. Peter's Church. There were more than 800 people in attendance for the Palm Sunday service. To begin our Palm Sunday worship service we were led in a solemn procession, carrying palm branches in our hands and singing in Dinka language:

"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he, the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the Highest! Heaven and earth are full of your glory." (Matthew 21:10).

I preached on the texts: Isaiah 50:4-9a; psalm 31: 9-16; Philippine 2: 5-11; Mark 14: 1-15: 47. The theme of my sermon was: Observe the Cross of Jesus. The passion narrative from Matthew makes it clear the authorities got what they wanted...or so they thought. They couldn't have anticipated the aftereffects of Jesus' death. The crowd was disappointed because Rome wasn't overthrown under Jesus' leadership. No one seemed to "get it," although the prophet Isaiah had made it plain long before:

" Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we consider him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our inequities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed (Isaiah 53: 4-5).

I invite you to join us during this Holy Week to meditate on the sufferings on the Cross our Lord bore for redemption and salvation.

1:00 pm- 2:00 pm

I returned to St. Andrews Cathedral in Bor and met with 65 members of the Mother's Union, some of whom I also have known from the Kakuma refugee camp since 1996. These mothers are the strong arm of the church and they provide training and support for young women in the community. We discussed sewing training

that could help young women learn the art of tailoring, a profession that can provide young people with a self-sufficient skill. Already there have been four women who have graduated and now able to support themselves with their sewing skills. As a result of our discussions, we



agreed to provide \$2000.00 for sewing materials. After discussing business, we sang songs and prayed together.





## **April 11, 2022. Monday in Holy Week.**

### ***Walking in the way of the Cross***

We pray through the Collect appointed for today:

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified. Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, May find it none other than the way of life and peace....

Since March 2 I have been on a pilgrimage, traveling through Pakistan and now in South Sudan. On Sunday March 6<sup>th</sup>, I preached at All Saints Church Peshawar, Pakistan and afterwards, I visited the home of Rev. Siraj William who was murdered in January 2022 after Sunday service. In 2015, I laid hands on Siraj William and dedicated him as lay pastor to serve at All Saints Church. Now I prayed with his widow and his widowed daughter who had also lost her husband on the September 23, 2013 attack on All Saints Church. I learned during these pilgrimages and visits to churches in hard places that for many Christians the cross is an experience—it takes the form of daily life-threatening persecution. For every Christian, the beauty and brutality of the cross is the inescapable reality that confronts us during Holy Week, challenging us to consider what it means for us to follow Jesus in taking up our cross—whatever form that may take (Mark 8:34).

Jesus' life and death shows us that the cross is not optional. Taking up one's cross is required for all who follow Jesus Christ. Christ leads the procession carrying his cross; we, his followers, are to walk in his steps bearing our own crosses. We do so knowing that life with the cross ultimately ends not in death but in glory of resurrection.

Jesus' life and death challenge us to live crucified lives. The world is waiting for us to lift high the cross—to make costly choices for love of Christ. I hope and pray during this Holy Week that we will all find ourselves under the cross of Jesus, asking what it means to follow him in life and in death. As we walk in the way of the cross this week and ask Jesus to show us what it means for us, may we heed his plea.

## **April 12**

### ***The Cross of Thorns***

In 2015 I was presented the Cross of Thorns by Bishop Rumalshah of the Peshawar diocese after leading worship service at All Saints Church in Peshawar. Bishop Mano said, "The different symbols of the Cross are often expressed through varied experiences of the faithful down the centuries. The Cross of Thorns conveys the bitter challenges that people in minority Christian situations often live through yet remain faithful".

Today Christians face challenges across the globe. Recently, in Egypt, a Coptic priest was stabbed and killed. In Pakistan Christians live under the ever-present threat of violence, persecution, and fear. Christians are living in some of the most dangerous parts of the world and only message coming out of such experiences is that we have to endure it and faithfully work for human peace and reconciliation in each situation.



*The Cross of Thorns*

For Christians all over the world during Holy Week our focus is on the Cross of Jesus. The Anglican scholar, Bishop Stephen Neill, wrote in his meditation on the events of Holy Week, "in the Christian of history, the death of Christ is the central point of history; here all the roads of the past converge; hence all the roads of the future diverge." On the hill of Calvary, the Roman soldier while gazing at the Cross of Jesus came to faith with these words, "Truly this man was the Son of God." During Holy Week we hear passages from the Holy Gospel about the Passion of Christ. One comes to realize that all the wealth and glory of the Gospel centers on the Cross; the Cross is the pivot point and center of New Testament thought. A portion of hymnology of the earliest Latin, Greek, Coptic, Armenian, and Roman churches, and the churches of the Reformation, were all dedicated to the Passion of Christ: "When I survey survey the wondrous cross;" "there is a fountain filled with blood;" and what can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus." Jesus calls us to walk under the Cross. "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their Cross daily and follow me (Luke 9:23).

Collect: Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the Cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your name. Amen.

## **April 14, Maundy Thursday.**

***St. Andrews Cathedral, Bor South Sudan***

It was a full day of prayer, preaching, teaching, washing of feet and the celebration of Holy Eucharist.

6:30 AM: Morning Prayer with my community at St. Andrews Compound.

9:00: Meeting with Nick Greener who traveled from South Africa to Juba and to Bor, South Sudan. Nick heads THE WATER FOR LIFE organization that assists throughout Africa. He was only with us one day as he was returning to South Africa to spend time with his family for Easter. We discussed the clean water/well project with the contractor. Every day I am reminded of the need for the well and for clean water at the school. Student leaders told us that they have no water to drink or wash in school. They must collect water from a hand pump outside their school. Between the students and local people, long lines form as people wait to collect water.

In addition to the lack of clean water, the students at the school face other challenges. St. Andrews school opens on May 2<sup>nd</sup> and presently there are 130 senior high school students who board at the school. They shall sit for their national exam in two weeks to graduate from high school. Two student leaders shared that they eat one meal a day and for the last two months it is always rice and beans. Most of their parents have no income and more than half of the students are orphans. They need help in four areas:

1. Help to purchase food.
2. Several students need medical care. Some have the lingering effects of malaria and typhoid, which impact their ability to sit for the exam. They need medicine.
3. The students need computers for their study. There are only two laptop computers which I brought to them in June 2019.
4. The two additional classrooms need to be completed and desks and chairs need to be purchased. The classrooms construction project will be began on Monday. I have already helped with \$5000 to purchase furniture for three class rooms. \$1000 was provided this morning to purchase medicines, bags of rice, beans, and oil. I promised on April 17, on Easter Day, that we shall all eat together and cook a festive lunch to celebrate Easter. I find these students are very bright and have great hunger to learn and to be successful. Martha, a young high school student, delivered such passionate speech that we were moved by her words. I immediately responded to her plea, and

said, "Martha, you are such fine speaker. I see you as a future member of parliament in South Sudan."

At 12:00 noon Nick Greener, three priests, and myself ate a lunch of rice and red beans in my room.

At 1:00 PM we proceeded to begin Maundy Thursday liturgy inside St. Andrews Cathedral church. It was a hot day, with temperatures close to 40 Celsius or 110 degree F. There were more than three hundred faithful gathered inside the church. The Gospel reading was from John 13 about Jesus washing the feet of his disciples and the institution of Holy Eucharist. After the Gospel reading, the rector washed my feet and then I was asked as their bishop to wash the feet of the congregation. While I served in parishes in USA I washed the first two or three people's feet and then others joined me in the feet washing. This time was unique experience. I am told that I washed the feet of 120 people. I had tears in my eyes and thanked the Lord for such an honor and privilege. It reminded me that in February 1996, I came from USA to visit Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya where close to 100,000 South Sudanese, mostly from the Bor area, were living. We chartered a small 12-passenger plane. It dropped us in a field in Bor, South Sudan. For the next 18 days we walked on foot to visit the Christian community caught in active war zone area. One day we walked under the scorching sun for many hours to a place known as Wunigar (place of cattle camp). We arrived on the bank of the Nile River. We crossed the river in a dugout boat and Bishop Nathaniel Garang, Bishop of Bor and Rev. Marc Nikkel (American Episcopal Missionary) along with dozens of people took us to Wunigar. We were welcomed by the local community. Upon our arrival members of the Mother's Union washed our hands and feet. Thirty years ago, I wrote in my dairy, "Lord, make me an instrument to be service to our brothers and sisters in Bor area. Please give me an opportunity to wash their feet too. My prayer was answered to be engaged with this community for 30 years and now I was physically washing the feet of 120 people of the Bor community.

After the washing of feet, I preached on the Gospel text from John, Chapter 13.

This was a part of the full three-hour long service that included the celebration of Holy Eucharist. After the service concluded, I returned to my room and found my episcopal vestments and purple shirt were so wet from constant perspiration that it seemed as if somebody had poured buckets of water on me. I was so dehydrated that I almost drank a 1.5 liter of water. I washed myself and had a change of clothes.

3:30 PM: Dr. Anil Cherian picked me up to speak to 43 medical students. Dr. Anil and his wife, Dr. Shalini Cherian, are medical doctors from India. They have built a medical training center to that allows students to study for three years to earn a medical diploma. I was asked to speak about Holy Week and share readings from Bible with the students. The medical center is a Christian institution and the students are provided with their own Bibles to study, in addition to their other academic materials. After I spoke, I had many students remain, both male and female, to ask me questions. We had a wonderful time conversing for two hours.

By 5:30 PM I was simply so exhausted that I could barely walk or talk and needed to return back to my room. My room was almost unbearably hot, being without electricity, but I was so tired that I the moment I lied down on my bed I fell asleep until 7:00PM. After waking up, I had a shower and a change of clothes and went with Rev. Jacob Akout to the Park Palace hotel to say goodbye to Nick Greener.

It was a full day of ministry to serve Jesus our Lord and my faith community here in Bor. Praise God. Alleluia!

## April 15

### Good Friday

I woke up at 5:30AM to a nice cool breeze that was blowing from the Nile River. Every morning I spend half an hour walking and doing some physical exercise. Then I wash and sit down with my community for morning prayer. Nick Greener had brought whey protein bars and cookies for me from South Africa that I am extremely grateful for. This morning, I had a banana and a protein bar with a cup of Kenyan hot tea. After my breakfast I read the collect and appointed lessons for Good Friday. Let me share with you most powerful word to pray through this collect: Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family, whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross, who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The cool breeze this morning turned into strong winds and rain, leaving standing water everywhere. I wondered if we were going to be able to have a Good Friday service as the weather intensified. Originally we had planned on having a service from 9:00AM to noon –it helps to have services earlier in the day when the weather is cooler. The rain stopped for half an hour, and we quickly organized a small procession to start the service in St. Andrews Cathedral. It was very slippery and the area was full of flooding and standing water. Two priests had to hold me on both sides to prevent me from slipping on the mud and members of the Mother's Union picked up my robes so that they did not drag in the mud and dirty water. Despite the terrible weather and travel challenges, over 400 people walked in the rain and mud to attend the Good Friday service. Such is living faith of this community. I preached a short, 15 minute, sermon and a portion of the Jesus of Nazareth movie was shown to the congregation.

Now let me share with you my reflection of Good Friday:

Good Friday reminds us of the cross of Jesus Christ. All four gospels tell of the hours Jesus

spent hanging on the cross and his death. What's remarkable about these accounts is the multitude of Old Testament quotations and prophecies which are fulfilled in the death of Jesus Christ.

Crucifixion was probably the cruelest method of execution ever practiced. Early Christians were ridiculed for believing Christ the crucified savior. And indeed, it is quite surprising that a cross became the Christian symbol. Yet in spite of the fierce opposition often exhibited through satire, contempt, abuse and scorn — and physical persecution— the Church grew. It grew from the Cross. The Cross became its proud symbol. Candidates for baptism (then and now) are marked with the sign of the Cross. The Cross was a symbol in the early Church and even now is erected over the graves of Christians. The church is reminded that Cross is the heart of the Christian faith. Just as Jesus lived under the shadow of the Cross, so we must his disciples live and proclaim the radical message of 'Cross-tianity' that Christ... died for all (2 Corinthians 5: 14) and



through Christ all may find salvation. The message of the early church is very clear as St. Peter addresses the Jewish leaders quite fearlessly on the nature of salvation offered through Christ: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved ". ( Acts: 4:12).

The last Word from the blessed lips of our savior on the cross are uttered: "It is finished" (John 19:30). "Father, I commend my spirit into your hands". (Luke 23:46). Jesus has accomplished His Father's plan of salvation. So in the final Word, the great mystery of the Cross shines forth. The synoptic Gospels portray Jesus' death in the Cross as a cosmic and liturgical event: the sun is darkened, the veil of the Temple is torn in two, the earth quakes and the dead rise again. Even more important than the cosmic sign is an act of faith: The Roman centurion—the commander of the execution squad—in his consternation over all that he sees taking place, acknowledges Jesus as God's son: "Truly, this man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39). At the foot of the Cross, the Church of the Gentiles comes into being (George Carey, the Gate of Glory, Pp. 208-208). Through the Cross, Jesus gathers friends and foes to be a new community of love to form worldwide fellowship. The blood of Christ becomes healing ointment for the nations and the bonds of death of death are broken and humanity is reconciled to God.

This is good news regarding what God in Christ has done for us. That he came to save us from our sins, and not just us, but the whole world (1 John 2). That he was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them (2Corinthian 5). "That in Adam all have died, but in Christ all are made alive" (Romans 5). We look forward to joyous Easter. The work of salvation is complete.

## Easter Sunday:



On Easter Sunday morning I was the celebrant and preacher at St. Andrews cathedral. There were 3500 people who attended the Easter Day worship service. After Easter service I joined the high school students at St. Andrews High School for lunch.



## April 19-20

### *Important Meetings*

April 19: We had two meetings on Tuesday morning.

The Rev. Canon Samuel Majok is a senior clergyman and commissary of Archbishop Ruben Akurdid in the Diocese of Bor. I first met in February 1996 when he was a priest at the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. He was assisting Bishop Nathaniel Garang, the Bishop of Bor who had walked 900 miles along with his displaced community to find a place of refuge in the desert of Kakuma in Kenya. There were close to 100,000 refugees in the camp when I visited in 1996. Canon Samuel has been a valiant soldier of Jesus Christ by preaching the Gospel across Bor, Equatoria, and Bahar-el-Ghazal counties, throughout South Sudan. He has brought thousands of animists to Christ. I call him Baba Samuel. We talked about his life and his over sixty years of ministry in the Diocese of Bor. We also prayed together. He over 80 years old but still going strong.

After this meeting, six leaders from the altar guild of the Diocese of Bor came to see me in my room. Soon after their arrival, it began to storm, with heavy rains and strong winds. The storm continued for four hours and the altar guild members were trapped in my room. We had rich time of fellowship, learning about their work all over the diocese, singing songs, and praying with each other. It turned into a very refreshing and enjoyable time spent together of rich fellowship. After the rains stopped, the altar guild left but I did not leave my room as mud and water was everywhere. I decided to go to bed early, at 7:00 PM, as there was no electricity, and the mosquitoes were bothering me. I crawled inside my mosquito net and spent a long night waiting for morning.

Wednesday April 20: It is a cool morning because of rain yesterday. At 8:30 a.m. I went with Rev. Jacob Akout and visited St. Andrews High School. It is a big and exciting day for the students because 127 seniors are spending the next two weeks taking their national exams to graduate from high school. In the 12 years of schooling that these students have had, they have faced many challenges beyond their studies. They've faced war, constant insecurity, food shortages, malaria and other diseases, some are orphans, and all have witnessed the birth of South Sudan as an independent nation. I really wonder how these young people coped under such stressful conditions. I saw the students and they look dignified and prepared in their uniforms. Praise God that now they are beginning the culmination of all their perseverance and hard work. They will be taking a series of tests over the next two weeks, beginning with final exams on commerce and chemistry today, followed by history and physics tomorrow. There are state officials and security guards sent here to supervise the final exams.

I gave them words of encouragement and said, "Horse is prepared for war but victory belongs to the Lord." They all have worked hard and I pray for wisdom and that the light of Christ may shine upon them. I wished them good luck and God's blessings by holding my Dinka Cross in my right hand and blessing all the students as they prepared for their exams.

Last year the St. Andrews primary and middle school achieved the highest score in the entire nation of South Sudan in their national exam. All this with hardly any proper classrooms, no electricity, and not enough books for every student to study. They share the books available on the campus with each other. Facing all these challenges they are determined to be successful. Several of them are orphans and do not have \$15000 (\$20.00) Sudanese pounds to cover the cost of two weeks worth of twice-daily meals. I have paid for them to buy beans, rice, cooking fuel, and cooking oil to cover those who are not able to pay for food. It is important that at the time of their final exams that they do not have the stress of not having funds or food.

Some students also need medicine. I spoke to Dr. Anil who came to visit me this morning and he shall provide malarial and other medicine for the high school students tomorrow. Dr. Anil and his wife run the three-year medical diploma training program in Bor community hospital. I have encouraged some students to apply for Dr. Anil's medical training

program. I am committed to supporting the education of students. I want to thank individuals and churches that have supported me in my ministry here in Bor, South Sudan.

Tomorrow is another exciting day. At 9:00 AM we have the groundbreaking liturgy for the construction of the two classrooms for St. Andrews primary school. After the groundbreaking, at 9:30 AM, 50 priests have been invited for a day's retreat at St. Andrews Cathedral. I shall lead the retreat with two other bishops and close at 3:00 PM with service of Holy Eucharist.

## **April 21- 22, 2022**

### ***Ground Breaking Ceremony for the Two New Classrooms***

Bishop Nathaniel Garang, the first Bishop of Bor, is now 92 years old. Despite his age, he is still active and attends most of the activities of the Diocese of Bor and St. Andrews Cathedral. He is considered the spiritual father of the church in South Sudan. We invited him to join us for the groundbreaking ceremony for the two classrooms for St. Andrews Primary School. There also were 40 priests and laity who joined us for this exciting occasion.



There are 2000 children who study in the nursery and primary school and the current building was too small. The two additional classrooms will give the school the space they need for the students. Bishop Nathaniel arrived at 9:10 am and offered the prayer of thanksgiving for our St. Andrews primary school, teachers, students, and the donors who have offered help to build these two classrooms. Then I offered following prayer:

O Almighty God, bless our St. Andrews primary and high school that they may be lively centers for sound learning, new discovery, and the pursuit of wisdom; and grant that those who teach and those who

learn may find you to be source of all truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Psalm 127 was read by Bishop James Deng:

“Unless the Lord builds the house,  
their labor is in vain who build it.”

I offered prayer to bless the ground:

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, bless these grounds for the education of our children.

Bless the work of the hands of those who build these classrooms.

Now, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

Sanctify this place that young scholars' minds be lit with knowledge and light of Christ. Amen.

## **April 23, 2022**

### ***Mission of Christ in Bor, South Sudan***

I woke up early this morning at 4:30 AM. I am full of excitement as it is the 8th birthday of my best friend that I love so much--my grandson Haroon Gibran Augustine. I wanted to call him and wish him a happy birthday while praying with him and giving thanks to God that he is a part of Myra's and my life. He is handsome, loves the Lord, inquisitive, and asks intelligent questions. I cannot call him from my room as I do not have WiFi service at St. Andrews Cathedral Compound. In the evening I look forward to going with Rev. Jacob Akout on his motorcycle to the Park Palace Hotel to buy WiFi services to congratulate Haroon and wish him happy birthday. His sister Mariyam shall turn eleven on April 29. On that day I will be heading to the airport in Nairobi, Kenya to wish my lovely granddaughter happy birthday. I shall love to sing with them: "This the day the Lord has made. We shall rejoice and be glad in it."

Saturday morning at St. Andrews Cathedral starts with mostly young people who come at 7:30 AM to fast and pray. This morning there were 480 of them inside the cathedral. I have joined them the last four Saturday mornings. They have asked me to pray for them several times. Some of the prayers that I offered this morning were:

1. Thanksgiving to the Lord for gift of life.
2. Prayer for asking God's blessings on his people.
3. Prayer for those who are sick especially suffering from malaria. Close to hundred came forward at the Altar and knelt for me to pray.
4. Prayer for peace in South Sudan. Years of war have left a lingering sense of insecurity around this community.
5. A lady brought forward a bag of grain to plant in her field to grow food. I was asked to bless the seed. There is a great food shortage because of flooding year and many crops have been ruined.
6. I was asked to teach. I used same text I used to meditate with diocesan clergy last Thursday; "Be holy, because I am holy." ( 1 Peter 1: 13-16).

This assembly gathers for prayer, praise, teaching and intercessory prayers for a three hour worship service.

### ***Meeting with Mother's Union leaders***

At 11:30AM I had a meeting to meet with the Mother's Union Diocesan President, Monica Akeer, who is also a teacher at the sewing center. The sewing center provides vocational training for young women who wish to learn how to sew. Sewing provides the women with the means to support themselves. The sewing center has fourteen working sewing machines but has been closed for the past year due to flooding. The flooding was so bad that close to 70% of Bor's population was displaced. Recently the Mothers Union members have cleaned the room and are ready to resume teaching sewing skills to young ladies. They do need assistance to buy sewing materials.

I will help the Mother's Union with a grant to reopen the sewing center. We prayed together and asked God to bless the work of the sewing center that many shall benefit from this ministry.

I am here two more days. I am overwhelmed with the feelings that I love all my people in the Diocese of Bor. They are mine and I am their servant bishop. We are no longer strangers to each other but instead are brothers and sisters in Christ.



## April 24, 2022

### *Second Sunday of Easter*

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

The Lord is risen indeed.

“On this day the Lord has acted; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalm 118: 24).

I woke up early at 4:00 AM as it was very hot and I was sweating all over. I sat near my window for an hour until there was daylight. During the night I do not leave my room as it is pitch dark and I sleep in the vicinity of the Nile River, with tall reeds and thick brush not far from my room. I avoid going out because I am worried about snakes that may be in the reeds or brush. It is for this reason that every night at 7:00 PM I eat two bananas and a drink a glass of water. Then I go to bed in my mosquito net around 7:30 PM.

This is a Sunday morning and people started arriving in St. Andrews Cathedral compound around 6:00AM. There are multiple services and the first one is a service in English at 6:30AM. There are 250-300 people who attend this hour-long service. The next service is in Dinka and starts at 7:45AM. This service is usually for two to three hours with the Dinka Book of Common Prayer being used for liturgy.

Three hymns were sung. Appointed lessons from Holy Bible were read. Notices by the secretary of cathedral church were given. I led part of the liturgy. I also thanked the people of the Diocese of Bor for their warm welcome and hospitality for the past five weeks.

A female priest, Mama Abuna Druka, preached this morning. Following her preaching, the service of Holy Communion started for the 1,792 people in attendance.

After the service, the following activities happened:

1. There was a youth meeting of St. Andrews Cathedral under a tree. The day had become very hot and my clerical shirt and undershirt were soaked through to my vestments with perspiration.
2. The Mothers Union leaders met under a tree next to my room. They had lunch, their monthly meeting and time of fellowship.
3. Four weeks ago, Dr. Anil took me to downtown Bor, which was congested with animals, dust, standing water, and garbage. He showed me several young boys who have no families and just sleep on the dirty streets. They are homeless and have no source of income. We were told there are 300 homeless boys like the ones I saw on the streets of downtown Bor. Dr. Anil asked me if St. Andrews Cathedral would welcome these boys and, if so, once a month he will provide money to buy food for them. We both talked with the church leaders and invited the street boys to come to St. Andrews Cathedral to attend church, telling them that we would provide a hot meal of rice, potatoes, and beef. Today, fifty of these boys came to church this morning. After church, I had an opportunity to welcome them to St. Andrews Cathedral compound. We requested that the Mothers Union leaders cook and serve them. This new ministry has begun, and I shared with them that Jesus loves them and we love them too. The street boys' leader requested that they need a place to shower and that they need clean clothes. We are working to bring clean water to St. Andrews primary, high school, and church compound. Next week we shall find some clothes for these boys.
4. I returned to my room and spent two hours meeting with Dr. Anil, his wife, Rev. Thomas Agou, Dean of the Cathedral and Rev. Jacob Akout, the secretary of the Diocese of Bor to discuss issues related ministry here. Our meeting lasted until 2:00.
5. Finally, at 2:30 I took an hour-long rest. My room was so hot that it felt like a sauna. I quickly was covered in sweat. I count it a healthy act of suffering.

6. The Altar Guild, along with members of the Mother's Union, came to my room with altar linen and holy vessels, that they washed, pressed and carefully put in a wooden box in my room.
7. I took a shower and had evening prayed with ten people in front of my room.
8. After evening prayer, a young mother came to see me as she had no food or shelter for her and her children. She knelt down on the floor and asked me to pray for her. Let me share with you what she told me: "Baba Bishop, I trust Jesus and he is my faithful savior. Today I have nothing, but I believe God will provide me with food and shelter. The rainy season is here. You pray for God to listen to my prayer." Her tears were falling on the ground while I was praying for her. I am blessed by the depth of faith of my people.

I had full day with various opportunities to minister and give thanks to God for my loving and faithful community here in Bor South Sudan.

Your donations are welcomed to support

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# Photographs from Bor

