



The Martyrs of Sudan
painting by Awer Bul

ST. MARY'S
SERVICE OF HOLY EUCHARIST

Including a reflection on the

MARTYRS OF SUDAN

Wednesday, May 15, 2024

<https://zoom.us/j/584949088>

Meeting ID (recurring): 584 949 088

COLLECT OF THE DAY

Celebrant: God be with you

People: **And also with you.**

Celebrant: Let us pray.

O God, steadfast in the midst of persecution, by your providence the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church: As the martyrs of the Sudan refused to abandon Christ even in the face of torture and death, and so by their sacrifice brought forth a plentiful harvest, may we, too, be steadfast in our faith in Jesus Christ; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

PSALM 116: 10-17

The St. Helena Psalter

How shall I repay God
for all the good things done for me?

I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call upon the Name of God.

I will fulfill my vows to God
in the presence of all people.

Precious in your sight, O God,
is the death of your servants.

O God, I am your servant;
I am your servant and the child of your handmaid; you have freed me from my bonds.

I will offer you the sacrifice of thanksgiving
and call upon your holy Name.

I will fulfill my vows to you
in the presence of all your people,
In the courts of God's house,
in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Alleluia!

THE HOLY GOSPEL

Matthew 24:9-14

Then they will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name. Then many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. But anyone who endures to the end will be saved. And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come.

The Word of the Lord

People: Thanks be to God.

REMEMBERING THE MARTYRS OF SUDAN

"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church," the third-century North African teacher, Tertullian, once wrote. And in no place is that observation more apt than in Sudan, Africa's largest country, and a land long torn by violence.

British policy in the late nineteenth century was to arbitrarily divide the vast country between a Muslim North and a multiethnic South, limiting Christian missionary activity largely to the latter, an artificial division that has created enduring problems. Since independence, on January 1, 1956, three civilian governments and three military dictatorships have ruled a country that has experienced forty-one years of civil war. During the 1980s Sudan's internal armed conflict assumed an increasingly religious character, fueled by a northern-dominated Islamic government imposing authoritarian political control, Islam as the state religion, a penal code based on Sharia law, and restrictions on free speech and free assembly.

On May 16, 1983, a small number of Episcopal and Roman Catholic clerical and lay leaders declared they "would not abandon God as they knew him." Possibly over two million persons, most of them Christians, were then killed in a two-decade civil war, until a Comprehensive Peace Treaty was signed in January 2005. During those years, four million southern Christians may have been internally displaced, and another million forced into exile in Africa and elsewhere. Yet despite the total destruction of churches, schools, and other institutions, Sudanese Christianity, which includes four million members of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan, has both solidified as a faith community, and gradually expanded at home and among refugees, providing steadfast hope in often-desperate setting.

This hymn, written by Sudanese children in exile in Ethiopia, reflects both the tragedy and depth of faith of Sudan's Christians:

Look upon us, O Creator who has made us.
God of all peoples, we are yearning for our land.
Hear the prayer of our souls in the wilderness.
Hear the prayer of our bones in the wilderness.
Hear our prayer as we call out to you.

PRAYERS

Prayers may be offered, silently or aloud.

HOLY EUCHARIST

Form A (*Enriching Our Worship*, p. 65)

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People ***And also with you.***

Celebrant Lift up your hearts.

People ***We lift them to the Lord.***

Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People ***It is right to give God thanks and praise.***

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth, for the wonderful grace and virtue declared in all your saints, who have been the chosen vessels of your grace, and the lights of the world in their generations. And so we join the saints and angels in proclaiming your glory, as we say,

Celebrant and People

***Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.***

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

And so, Loving God, we who have been redeemed by Christ, and made a new people by water and the Spirit, now bring before you these gifts. Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ our Lord.

At the following words concerning the bread, the Celebrant is to hold it, or lay a hand upon it; and at the words concerning the cup, to hold or place a hand upon the cup and any other vessel containing wine to be consecrated.

On the night before he died for us, our Savior Jesus Christ took bread, and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his friends, and said: "Take, eat: This is my Body which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

As supper was ending, Jesus took the cup of wine, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said: "Drink this, all of you: This is my blood of the new Covenant, which is poured

out for you and for all for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me.”

The Celebrant then continues

We now celebrate, O God, the memorial of Christ our Savior. By means of this holy bread and cup, we show forth the sacrifice of Christ’s death, and proclaim the resurrection, until Christ comes in glory. Gather us by this Holy Communion into one body in the Risen One, and make us a living sacrifice of praise. Through Christ and with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, to you be honor, glory, and praise, for ever and ever. **AMEN.**

And now, in the words Christ taught us, we are bold to pray, saying,

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name; your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil,
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray.

Eternal and Life-Giving God, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

BLESSING

THE PEACE