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Prayer Celebration for Peace in South Sudan and in the Democratic Republic of Congo

At 17.30 this afternoon, at the Altar of the Cathedra of the Vatican Basilica, the Holy Father Francis will preside at a Prayer Celebration for Peace in South Sudan and in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The following is the homily pronounced by the Pope during the celebration:

Homily of the Holy Father

This evening, in prayer, we want to sow seeds of peace in the lands of South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and in all lands devastated by war. I had already decided to visit South Sudan, but it did not prove possible. Yet we know that prayer is more important, because it is more powerful: prayer works by the power of God, for Whom nothing is impossible.

For this reason, I offer heartfelt thanks to all those who planned this vigil and worked so hard to make it happen.

“The risen Christ invites us, alleluia!” These words of the song in Swahili accompanied the entrance procession, together with some images from the two countries for which we especially pray. As Christians, we believe and know that peace is possible, because Jesus is risen. He gives us the Holy Spirit, Whom we have invoked.

As Saint Paul reminded us shortly ago, Jesus Christ “*is our peace*” (*Eph 2:14*). On the cross, He took upon himself all the evil of the world, including the sins that spawn and fuel wars: pride, greed, lust for power, lies... Jesus conquered all this by His resurrection. Appearing in the midst of His friends, He says: “Peace be with you (*Jn 20:19.21.26*). He repeats those same words to us this evening: “Peace be with you!”

Without you, Lord, our prayer would be in vain, and our hope for peace an illusion. But you are alive. You are at work for us and with us. You are our peace!

May the risen Lord break down the walls of hostility that today divide brothers and sisters, especially in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

May He comfort those women who are the victims of violence in war zones and throughout the world.

May he protect children who suffer from conflicts in which they have no part, but which rob them of their childhood and at times of life itself. How hypocritical it is to deny the mass murder of women and children! Here war shows its most horrid face.

May the Lord help all the little ones and the poor of our world to continue to believe and trust that the kingdom of God is at hand, in our midst, and is "justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (*Rom 14:17*). May he sustain all those who day by day strive to combat evil with good, and with words and deeds of fraternity, respect, encounter and solidarity.

May the Lord strengthen in government officials and all leaders a spirit which is noble, upright, steadfast and courageous in seeking peace through dialogue and negotiation.

May the Lord enable all of us to be peacemakers wherever we find ourselves, in our families, in school, at work, in the community, in every setting. "Let us wash the feet" of one another, in imitation of our Master and Lord. To Him be glory and praise, now and forever. Amen.
