

Pope makes final appeal for peace at end of South Sudan trip



Women attend a mass by Pope Francis at the John Garang Mausoleum [Jok Solomun/Reuters] Catholic church head joined other Christian leaders in calling for a recommitment to the 2018 peace deal during the Africa trip.

Juba, February 5 (RHC)-- Pope Francis has ended a trip to South Sudan with an impassioned plea for peace and forgiveness in the war-torn country. The Pope made the appeal on Sunday as he presided over an open-air Mass attended by 100,000 people on the grounds of a mausoleum for South Sudan's liberation hero John Garang in the capital Juba.

He urged worshippers – including the country’s president and his opponents – to reject the “blind fury of violence.” Pope Francis also called for an end to tribalism, financial wrongdoing and the alleged corruption at the root of many of the country’s problems, while advising attendees to build “good human relationships as a way of curbing the corruption of evil, the disease of division, the filth of fraudulent business dealings and the plague of injustice.” Many in the crowd sang, drummed and ululated as Francis entered the grounds. His homily was repeatedly interrupted by loud cheers.

“Dear brothers and sisters, I return to Rome with you even closer to my heart,” he said. “Never lose hope. And lose no opportunity to build peace. May hope and peace dwell among you. May hope and peace dwell in South Sudan.”

The visit marked the first time in Christian history that leaders of the Catholic, Anglican and Reformed traditions conducted a joint foreign trip, with the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, leader of the global Anglican Communion, and Iain Greenshields, moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, joining Francis for the “pilgrimage of peace”.

The tour of the continent also included a stop in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, home to Africa’s largest Roman Catholic community, where Francis condemned what he called the foreign plundering of Africa.

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