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Families fleeing violence find safe refuge at Ave Maria Parish

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In South Sudan, millions are fleeing for their lives. Because of brutal tribal warfare, bullets are whizzing through villages as they burn to the ground. Horrific violence has driven men, women, and children from their homes and food sources. But now, 800 of these vulnerable refugees are finding safe refuge in the arms of the Church—at Ave Maria Parish in Source Yubu.

Father Avelino Bassols, the parish priest of Ave Maria, knows that these desperate people have nowhere else to turn, and he does not hesitate to welcome them. It's only through your support of Sudan Relief Fund that he is able to do so. With SRF's help, Ave Maria has already built a health care clinic, two schools, and a vocational training center. With so many more coming to the parish, these resources are more important than ever.



Many of these refugees fled their homes with only the clothes on their backs. Now, they have access to clean water, food, and, most importantly, safety. Plots of land are being allotted to each of these families so they can build homes and plant crops. They are eager to become self-sufficient, through the resources available at Ave Maria.

A vital element of that self-sufficiency is educating the next generation. Every child deserves to learn, and education is an investment in the future of South Sudan. As refugee children enter the schools, class sizes are expected to double. Your support funds new classrooms and learning materials for them.

Building the Kingdom of God is also at the heart of Ave Maria Mission's purpose. It is the main Marian shrine in Western Equatoria, and thousands of pilgrims visit each year—a number that will only increase as Ave Maria celebrates its centenary year beginning this October.

These pilgrims need a place to stay while they are visiting the shrine. Through the construction of a pilgrims' center, Fr. Avelino is answering that need—and providing an opportunity for those finding refuge at Ave Maria.

These refugees don't want to sit by idly. They want to work and to help. Building bungalows, large rooms, and toilet and shower facilities for the center will provide a small livelihood for 100 families.

Your generosity here serves two purposes. It builds a pilgrims' center that will protect thousands coming to venerate the Blessed Virgin, and it rewards refugees' labor with money to start a new life.



Safe mothers, safe babies



In South Sudan, motherhood can be deadly. In a country with the highest pregnancy mortality rate in the world, bringing life into the world can be the most dangerous thing a woman can do. The risk to babies and toddlers is also among the highest in the world—one in ten children don't live to see their fifth birthday.

Sudan Relief Fund has joined with Catholic Medical Mission Board to respond to this crisis. Through your support of their Safe Motherhood Project, you have helped reduce maternal, newborn, and child mortality rates in Nzara, Ezo, and Yambio counties. Women living in these rural areas often have no access to medical care, which is why pregnancy complications and childhood illnesses so frequently result in death.

The Safe Motherhood Project provides critical medical services to at-risk women and children. In 2020 alone, 2,668 women were provided with ante-natal care and safe deliveries, thanks to the training and resources SRF brought to over 60 health providers throughout the region.

SRF and the CMMB goals go beyond care for pregnant women and newborns: The program is instituting and promoting policies that enable healthy habits at home and wellness as children grow. This includes providing access to clean water for 22,500 people by rehabilitating 50 hand pumps, and a privately-funded effort to supply 3,200 families with water purification sachets.

SRF and CMMB know that it shouldn't be dangerous to be a mother or a child. Your support of the Safe Motherhood Project is changing that reality by bringing high-quality medical care to those in dire need.



A future for the HIV-Positive

HIV shouldn't be a death sentence—but for far too many in South Sudan, it is. Only one in five infected people receives treatment to prevent HIV from developing into AIDS. In addition to lacking medical resources, those infected face discrimination, stigmatization, violence, and poverty. The Congregation of Christian Brothers have been integral in welcoming these vulnerable individuals, meeting their needs, and helping them live long, happy lives.

The Christian Brothers recognizes the incredible difficulties that come with an HIV diagnosis and helps their almost 2,000 members overcome them. First, they help infected individuals access the medications needed to suppress the virus—the most vital step in protecting health and wellbeing. Thanks to the support of SRF donors like you, many of those

afflicted with HIV can adhere to treatment and receive antibiotics to combat opportunistic infections.

The majority of those served are women, orphans, and vulnerable children, so much of their outreach is tailored to these populations. Classes in baking and tailoring are offered to mothers, who then use these skills to support themselves and their children. HIV-positive individuals are encouraged to take charge of their own futures by starting their own small businesses, which are founded using the microfinance loans that SRF donors help to fund.

The most vulnerable individuals served are the growing number of HIV-positive orphans. Your generosity saves them from the immediate threats of acute malnutrition,



untreated infection, and waterborne diseases. In the long term, you are providing a future of economic independence and social success by funding scholarships that allow them to attend primary and secondary school.

Your support of SRF is helping the Christian Brothers provide medical, spiritual, and psychological care to vulnerable South Sudanese—and giving them hope for a healthy, happy future.

LIVES SAVED SPOTLIGHT:

A baby name Jesus

The Lord sometimes feels very distant to Nurse Noeleen as she ministers to the residents of the Malo leper colony in Rumbek. Sometimes she struggles to hear His voice—then finds it in the most unexpected places.

Last year around Christmastime, Nurse Noeleen heard a baby's cry through the darkness one night. It seemed especially loud to her, but she thought there wasn't anything she could do. It continued night after night, piercing her head. It felt to her like God was making her hear it especially loudly, and that it was urgent she respond.

One night, just after midnight, she went in search of the wailing baby. She trusted in God to protect her from snakebites as she searched—and He brought her to the tiny tearful baby, wrapped in her frail mother's arms. An elderly lady lay beside them. Noeleen ran for formula for the baby

and food for her mother, to keep both from starving.

Nurse Noeleen also brought a doctor to help the old woman, who had been driven mad by trauma. The doctor wept to see the pain in her eyes, but then brought out the medicine your generosity to Sudan Relief Fund has provided. This simple pill brought the elderly woman out of her mental agony, and she now smiles and plays freely with her granddaughter.

The baby's cry no longer wakes Nurse Noeleen up at night. Thanks to your generosity, baby, mother, and grandmother are all healthy and happy. The baby's cry was the voice of Our Lord, calling to Nurse Noeleen, and this tiny Christmas joy was named after Him: Iosa, the Irish name for Jesus.



A MESSAGE FROM NEIL CORKERY

PRESIDENT OF SUDAN RELIEF FUND



DEAR FRIEND IN CHRIST,

I hope this message finds you well amidst the upheaval of these strange times. In this newsletter, we want to give you an in-depth look at the incredible, inspiring impact our partners are having on the ground in South Sudan.

Remember: that impact is only possible because of you.

Violence has driven hundreds of thousands from their homes, and almost 1,000 of these displaced individuals have found safe refuge at Ave Maria Mission. Your support of Sudan Relief Fund has given Father Avelino the resources to welcome them: a health care clinic, clean water, food, and schools.

Education is vital for the children of refugees—it will help them build a stable future for themselves and their families. It is also crucial for HIV-positive orphans in need of both immediate lifesaving care and long-term stability. Through your support of Sudan Relief Fund, the Congregation of Christian Brothers are helping these orphans build a future free from stigma and suffering.

You're growing and shining a light on the sources of hope in this society: new homes for displaced families, education for orphans, lifesaving aid for pregnant women and their babies. You're touching the lives of countless families, bringing light to them in their darkest hour. From the bottom of my heart, thank you!

Nurse Noeleen heard the voice of Our Lord coming from the mouth of a newborn baby—and you are answering His call to help the most vulnerable of His people. You hear the cries of your brothers and sisters suffering in South Sudan, and are responding by pouring out all the generosity and compassion of Christ. Our amazing partners are taking that generosity and compassion and multiplying it with great, life-saving effects.

I'm humbled to share in this mission with them and with you.

Yours in Christ,

NEIL CORKERY, *President*



PLANNED GIVING, LEGACY GIFTS, BEQUESTS, WILLS & ESTATE DONATIONS

What will your legacy be?

Planned giving or legacy gifts are one of the most generous ways you can help the desperately poor people of South Sudan. At Sudan Relief Fund, we are blessed to have the most generous donors in the world. Please consult your investment advisor, accountant, or lawyer for details on remembering Sudan Relief Fund in your estate plans. Please consider remembering Sudan Relief Fund in your estate planning. **For questions contact Matt Smith, V.P. of Development, at 617-604-3042.**

LEGACY SOCIETY
SUDAN RELIEF FUND



P.O. Box 7084
Merrifield, VA 22116
1-888-488-0348
www.sdhrf.com

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