



DIOCESE OF RUMBEEK - SUDAN

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مطرانية رومبيك

الكسبة الكاثوليكية

Communiqué of the Priests, Religious and Faithful of the Catholic Diocese of Rumbek on the event of the death of Bishop Caesar Mazzolari



Rumbek, July 16, 2011

We the priests, religious and faithful of the Catholic Diocese of Rumbek are shocked and deeply saddened by the sudden passing on of our beloved Bishop Caesar Mazzolari during Eucharist on Saturday, July 16, 2011. Gathering at Holy Family Cathedral parish, Rumbek, we wish to express our deep and heartfelt appreciation of his dedicated service and lifelong faithful witness to the Gospel among the people of South Sudan.

On March 17, 1962, Fr. Mazzolari was ordained a Comboni priest in San Diego, USA. For nineteen years, he worked tirelessly among Afro-American and Mexican mine workers. In 1981, in response to the invitation of Bishop Joseph Gasi, he was appointed by his Comboni Congregation to the Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio, South Sudan. He was then aged 44. In that diocese, he worked in Nzara parish as curate and he was a sought-after Spiritual Director at St. Joseph's Minor Seminary at Rimenze, Yambio. From there, he went to Juba to serve as Comboni Provincial of Southern Sudan for six years.

In 1990, he was appointed Apostolic Administrator of the war-torn Diocese of Rumbek. He zealously set to work, re-opening missions and negotiating humanitarian assistance and the freedom of very young slaves.

Monsignor Mazzolari was consecrated bishop on January 6, 1999. He took to heart the mandate given to him on that day by the Holy Father, John Paul II, namely, to relieve “a people who have suffered too much for too long” from “the anguish of an unjust war” and “to help them to restore the dignity of their human rights.” And indeed, his years as Bishop of Rumbek reflect his faithfulness to this extraordinary and challenging mission.

Bishop Mazzolari promoted formal and informal education through the establishment of learning institutions. He coordinated the provision of health services. He passionately responded to human need at every level. And to answer the educational, health, pastoral and humanitarian needs of the geographically vast diocese, he went beyond the borders of Sudan to seek help from religious congregations worldwide. Today, thanks to his charismatic approach, every continent is represented in the Diocesan personnel of Rumbek Diocese. He also worked tirelessly to promote reconciliation among our people, always optimistic and courageous in the face of often apparently insurmountable obstacles.

Evangelization was at the heart of his ministry which was nourished by his commitment to a deep life of prayer. Like St Paul, Bishop Mazzolari spent his life at the service of the Gospel, always assuring us that God was journeying with the people of South Sudan. His fatherly care and compassion, generosity and selflessness were sources of hope and comfort to all those he encountered.

Over the years, we have been inspired by his dreams for the people of South Sudan, his pastoral initiatives, his extraordinary administrative ability, his competence in leadership, his energy for fundraising and development, his simple lifestyle and humility, his tenacity and patience and his unwavering dedication to and confidence in God.

On Saturday, July 9, 2011, Bishop Mazzolari joyfully witnessed the birth of the Republic of South Sudan when he presided over the official opening prayer during the Independence Day celebration at Freedom Square in Rumbek. This event was also a culmination of his unique pastoral initiative, *Ten Steps to Unity in South Sudan*. A week later, God called home his faithful servant during Eucharist, at the moment of consecration. Surely, it was a privilege from God for Bishop Caesar Mazzolari to die in the presence of Jesus during the Eucharist, in his own cathedral and among his priests, religious and faithful.

We are indeed privileged to have known him.

May Bishop Caesar Mazzolari rejoice forever in God's loving embrace!

Amen.

Done in Rumbek, South Sudan on Saturday, July 16, 2011