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*Out of the complete darkness rang the familiar Sudanese voice: 'The Lord said, "Let there be light," and there was light!' As Archbishop Marona declared these opening words of the Book of Genesis, the bonfire leapt into paschal flame, disregarding of the pre-dawn Wiltshire drizzle.*

Dear Friends in Christ,

Easter in Salisbury Cathedral with the Archbishop of Sudan was to be like no other. Following the Bishop of Salisbury's invitation, I had long anticipated the liturgical riches of the present-day heirs to the Sarum Rite. And I was to be in no way disappointed, with the commemoration of the Last Supper celebrated in the round under the Cathedral Crossing, and highly evocative music ranging from the traditional service of Tenebrae to Messaien's stunning Quartet for the End of Time. But the profound journey of Holy Week through suffering and death to the new life of the resurrection was most keenly felt in accompanying the Archbishop in this royal road.

Struggling with weak health, he nevertheless greeted and stood before the entire assembled clergy and people of Salisbury Diocese at the Maundy Thursday Chrism Mass to unabating applause, leaving his chaplain wondering how or whether liturgical order was to be restored! On Good Friday, venerating the cross together brought home the frail physical reality of Christ's broken body – broken and spent for the sake of the world. There was nothing humanly left which could be done. But then God's miracle of the resurrection – and the paschal flame leaping into life at 5am on Easter morning. The Easter Vigil was a wonderful celebration of this new life with adults and young people baptized and the Archbishop joining with the Bishop of Salisbury to confirm them. The energy and joy of the resurrection had the Archbishop processing around the cloister at the end of the service, ready for an extra lap had it not been for the champagne breakfast served in the Chapter House (although his and his wife Mama Eunice's preference was for the porridge rather than for the champagne itself!)

Back in Sudan, the Easter season has continued with the celebration of baptisms. With an expanding British Embassy staff, I had the privilege to baptize four British children in Khartoum, appropriately on the Feast of St Augustine of Canterbury – a festive celebration all round. And Easter has also been a season of great weddings. Not only my brother's wedding in London which I happily was able to take part in before my return, but also the wedding of my house-mate, Gloria, in Khartoum. The



*The arrival of the bride*

various assembled family and friends of Gloria were helping move her belongings out of the house. Late that evening I was entrusted with driving the bride and 6 bridesmaids in my small Suzuki over the bridge to Omdurman to where they were to stay the night. It was well past the little ones' bed-time yet they still managed to look bright and be impeccably behaved for the

The only blow in the lead-up to the wedding was to receive notice from our landlord that his family needed the house back. Thankfully he was persuaded to wait until after the wedding. And so it was that on the night before the wedding,



*The smallest of Gloria's bridesmaids*



*All Saints Cathedral packed for the wedding*

wedding the next day. For the wedding not only was the church packed out, but also the entire cathedral compound. There's no question of deciding to invite 100 or 200 people to a Sudanese marriage. A wedding is a whole community affair. And in this case it was the whole of at least 3 communities: - their respective tribes, Moru and Kuku, but also the whole church community. For this occasion I counted as Moru and sat proudly in the bride's family's pew. Bride and groom both looked radiant throughout, not least when with the marriage completed, they performed together a song of thanksgiving.



*The newly-weds perform their song*

I will miss Gloria and her sisters, Mona and Elizabeth, who for the last 3 years have given great companionship as well as caring for my dog, Rascal, when I've been travelling. Mona has just completed her university studies while Elizabeth's studies are on hold while Juba University awaits relocation back to the South. Rascal and I were the last finally to vacate the house at the weekend. I am



...whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

especially sad to leave my neighbourhood where so much of life has been shared over the last 5 years – marriage celebrations, bereavements, new births, Eid festivities, and the day to day calling in to each other's homes, not to mention the daily greetings and handshakes which never wane in their enthusiasm. The call of the muezzin will continue from the small *zowiya* or mosque next to my house, but no longer will I be there to sing *Magnificat* at the sun's hour of rest. For my part, I can only pray and continue to trust in "God's promise of mercy...to Abraham and his children forever."



*My household on the move*

In between these events and upheavals, the challenges of responding to the many pressing and competing needs daily occupy our energies. As the Church, we're trying to build on the positive outcomes of the Provincial Synod in January – already the new commissions on Relief and Development, Finance and Property, and Theological Education are pushing ahead. And we're trying to make the most of the excellent good-will fostered by the Archbishop of Canterbury's visit in March, in particular with a closer partnership with the World Food Programme. A follow-up visit by the Revd David Peck from Lambeth Palace gave an excellent opportunity for new discussions with WFP in Rumbek and Juba on the form and priorities for this partnership, and especially on



*Visiting a WFP sponsored church literacy programme in Rumbek with Revd David Peck*

how to provide the basic facilities necessary for ECS church schools to be eligible for much needed school-feeding programmes. The latter are well attested to be one of the best ways of addressing child malnutrition and low school enrolment. With the magnitude of the task in hand, we're particularly fortunate to have a newly seconded colleague from the UK, Charlie, who is now off surveying the church schools and class-room building plans in various dioceses. He was last seen setting off for Juba complete with cricket bat!

Please continue to pray for the Church in responding to these many challenges, and for Archbishop Marona - for health and strength for him in the heavy responsibilities he bears. And for the next steps for me as I try to find a new place to live after the temporary stay of summer house-sitting, giving thanks for the friendship and community of neighbourhood and housemates over the past few years.

With thanks for all your prayers and support,  
And best wishes,

*Joanna*