



AFRICA/SOUTH SUDAN - "The South Sudanese people will come out of this crisis stronger than"; fifty years from the expulsion of the missionaries

Juba (Agenzia Fides) - On 27 February 1964 the Council of Ministers of Sudan issued the decree of expulsion of all foreign missionaries in the three provinces of South Sudan: Juba, Wau and Malakal. 154 Comboni Sisters, 104 Comboni Missionaries, 13 Mill Hill Missionaries from Malakal were all expelled. Several missionaries had already been expelled in various stages starting from 1961. On May 17, four Comboni from Mading/Abyei and Mgr. Edward Mason, Apostolic Vicar of El Obeid were also expelled. The Comboni Family and the local church commemorate this sad event, as recalled in the Message written for the occasion by the two Comboni Provincial Superiors of South Sudan: Fr. Daniele Moschetti (MCCJ) and Sister Giovanna Sguazza (SMC) .

"We would like to make memory of this 'sacred history' and celebrate the wonders God has worked out: in the most painful situation, God was able to make something good for the salvation of his people", says the Message. The expulsion of the missionaries "was a real trauma for those who had been expelled and for the Christian communities that remained behind. The missions abandoned were 58". The early Church in South Sudan and the young local religious congregations remained without support, considered essential for their growth. Today, after fifty years, it can be said that out of that experience, "the Sudanese Church emerged as a local church with its own hierarchy, the priests, the religious".

The letter highlights how "by re-reading events of the past and finding in them clear signs that they became history of salvation, helps us to look with hope and love also to the present history of South Sudan".

The tragic events that are marking the life of the young independent state of South Sudan in recent weeks, are bringing suffering, death, destruction and division" but "within so much evil, there were acts of genuine love inspired by the Gospel". "So today, we believe and pray that the South Sudanese people will come out of this crisis stronger than ever, ready to face the challenges that history and life imply - concludes the letter - God has not abandoned his people!. God has never abandoned South Sudan during the long years of war. Ours too will be history of salvation for the people of South Sudan. We are called to be part of it, and write this section of history with his people, as our ancestors in faith did. Without fear and with great courage"! (SL) (Agenzia Fides 07/03/2014)

> LINKS

The full text of the letter, in Italian and English: <http://www.comboni.org//contenuto/view/id/106846>: