

# Gabe Hurrish — Mission to South Sudan

March 10, 2018

Greetings to all,

I hope this email finds you happy and healthy. I wish you all a Happy Easter. May God grant you peace and happiness. Attached is an update letter.

I just want to add one thing....The Government of South Sudan has just shut down one of the most popular radio stations in South Sudan - Radio Muria. It was funded by the United Nations and there are rumours that the government did not like the truth that the radio was reporting about the situation of war, rape, corruption, famine and nepotism in this country.

Also, the government is becoming more and more belligerent toward the international community that has imposed stricter enforcement of arms trading, illegal banking, corruption and even human rights violations.

Please pray for these very suffering people. With grateful appreciation for all your support.....Gabe



Children and outdoor blackboard, March 2018.



Gabe with little Sudanese girl. February 2018.

## South Sudan Update from Gabe March 2018

Greetings to all my family and friends. I hope this email finds you all happy and healthy. My prayer is that this time before Easter allows you to feel the presence of the Holy Spirit working in and through you.

My health is good and I still can't believe I am back in Africa. I sleep well and find each day filled with some new adventure or learning opportunity. My steep learning curve keeps me alert and active most days. I am now a licensed driver in South Sudan and have been using the Toyota vehicles to transport people to various places. I am also the driver for the weekly Saturday morning shopping in the market for our Solidarity staff. In this place I am not so much assigned tasks as the tasks just seem to attach themselves to me. I was curious how the generator worked and no sooner do I enquire and I am now in charge of making sure it is maintained and operating well. Okay, that is how the Holy Spirit works in my life.

Right now as I type this I have newly hatched termites flying all around my head. They drop their wings in less than an hour and begin crawling on the ground. I sweep them out the door and hundreds more hatch and come in. If I don't sweep the wings out the ants will invade and start feasting on the body parts of the termites. One day I returned to my room after classes to find I had been invaded by a horde of ants who are feasting on a dead lizard. It took me an hour to mop the entire mess up and clean my room. That is the reality in South Sudan. I deal with it and move on. A minor irritation in the general scheme of life.

Now would you believe that I, who has no real interest in technology and internet and all that, have sort of become the computer trainer here at the college? Sr. Peg became sick and was laid up for over 3 weeks. In addition to my usual Social Studies classes I covered her computer training classes. It looks like I will be taking over more or less permanently. That is how the Holy Spirit works. I love it. Many of these South Sudanese in their late 20's have never even seen a computer much less turned one on. To see how they progress and learn is wonderful. I show them mostly how to type and use the Excel files. That is all they will ever really use. When I give the students a task they are focusing so intensely. I have to order them to stand up and stretch every 20 minutes to get the blood flowing again.

My other duties are varied. I communicate with the international donors and have written a couple of grants so far. I also handle more and more of the record keeping for the college. That is how the Holy Spirit works.

Life in South Sudan continues with the many ups and downs of an unstable country. The political situation is still horrendous. The Catholic Bishops of South Sudan just put out a letter which I quote below:

*"...[We] ...have come to conclusion that South Sudanese leaders are not ready to bring peace because they are confused and they don't know what to do for the country. "We are dissatisfied that our leaders in both government and oppositions have so far been unable to put their own interest aside and make peace for the good of the people of South Sudan. We fear that our leaders do not know how to make peace. They are confused. They are military people who see the World through the lens of violence. They need help, not so much with the technical and political details but with the spiritual and moral courage to make peace"*

*Bishop Lukudu says their leaders are traumatized with which they need to be healed from it. He notes that for more than four years of senseless war the leaders have killed enough people and there are no more lives to be lost for political gain. "Tens of thousands of deaths, millions of people displaced. Looting, rape, hunger, economic collapse, break down of the rule of law, destruction of the nations' infrastructure, children denied education and families denied health care. This represents failure"*

*The Catholic bishops ask, "How many more failures, the leaders' need, before they will admit that they have*

*failed and that they do not know what to do? He says their leaders have preferred war over taking the risk of bringing peace to their own people whom they fought to liberate.*

We hear of killings on a daily basis. All over the country there is revenge and settling of scores. The government soldiers are the major antagonists in this back and forth, tit for tat, sort of violence. We have just had a week of prayer for South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo sponsored by Pope Francis who asked the entire world to pray for both countries on Friday, Feb. 23. Here in Yambio the Catholic Church arranged an outdoor Way of the Cross and walked from a central point to all the churches in the town. We at Solidarity then concluded with a one hour silent meditation in our college chapel. It was a good show of unity and concern by the various ethnic tribes from all over the country who are represented at the college. So please continue to pray the Holy Spirit to bring peace in these two countries.

Here are a few other ponderings: I was sitting in the pew at the open air Cathedral waiting for mass to start. I watched as two chickens wandered into the altar area. They must have been Catholic chickens because they left before mass was over. Seems they were looking for crumbs to fall from the Master's table. A man sat down in front of me and he was wearing a goose down winter jacket. It was 84 Degrees!

I walked along a dirt road and came to "Venom Beach Restaurant". It was abandoned. I wondered if the name had anything to do with that? Next door to this derelict Venom Beach was another establishment called the Green Beach Lodge and Restaurant. Don't let the name fool you; it was neither a lodge nor a restaurant. All they had were plastic chairs and served beer and soda. But they were right about the green beach as the water was covered in algae. At least it was quiet.

On another daily walk I saw a black board propped against a tree. Strange, I thought but suddenly a gaggle of children come running shouting "Kuaja". ( Arabic for foreigner ) Supposedly, this group of school children were on their way to school. They laughed and giggled as I used my limited Pazande to entertain them. For my pains they posed for a picture which I attach. I thanked the Holy Spirit for that little experience.

If you hear of anyone else who would like to receive my updates from South Sudan, by all means please let me know and I will add them to the mailing list. As always, I thank all of you for the support and prayers. If you would like to continue to support my mission please send any donations to: MARYKNOLL LAY MISSIONERS, P.O. Box 307, Maryknoll, NY 10545.....and mention my name. Love and prayers....Gabe