



**Celebrating a Servant of God  
for 50 Years of Service in South Sudan**

**Bishop Emeritus Paride Taban**

**Opari 12. October 2014**



## **Celebration of Bishop Emeritus Paride Taban for his 50 years of service as Father and Bishop in the Catholic Church in South Sudan**

Many were invited, and many came to honour Bishop Paride Taban, to show their gratitude and to enjoy the feast and the atmosphere of peace and unity of the celebration in Opari, - people who in various ways have been influenced or assisted by his work or his words.

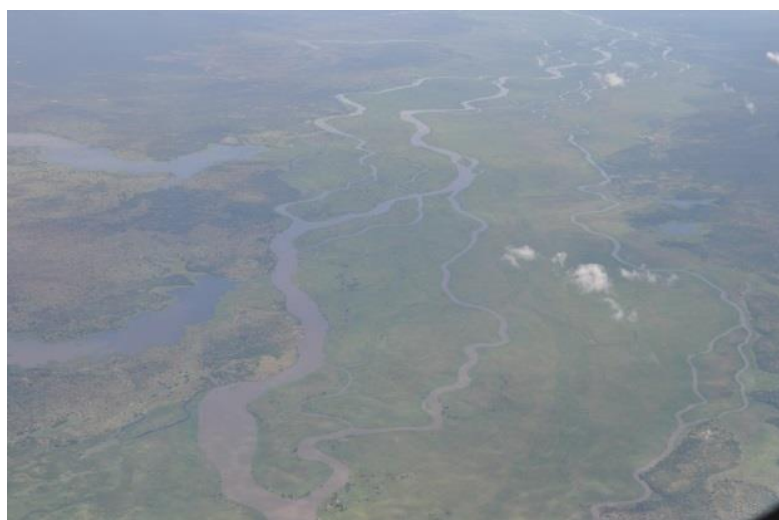
Visitors from Norway and USA came on Friday and Saturday to Juba and accommodated at Friendship Guesthouse. Saturday all went to Opari and attended a procession, followed by Mass lasting into the late evening. Sunday the main celebration took place with many distinguished guests. Celebration started with Mass, then lunch and finally speeches, performances and handing over of gifts.

After the celebration most of the foreign guests spent a day in Nimule/Loa, then went to Torit, and finally ended up in Juba. This report focuses in particular the experiences of the Norwegian group.

*By Per Nordmark, Norwegian Friends of Peace Village, Kuron*

### **Friday 10. October**

As the Norwegian visitors arrived in Juba by planes from Addis Ababa and Nairobi, the threat of ebola was the first experience. Leaving the tarmac on the airport all had to wash hands in a disinfectant water solution, and then wash off with fresh water. Next all had to fill a form with personal information, declare healthy status, and each one had the body temperature measured to check for fever.



*The Nile north of Juba*



*The first meeting with Africa:  
Ethiopian Coffee at Addis  
Ababa airport*

Luggage arrived for all, and immigration and custom procedures went relatively smoothly. In addition to normal immigration procedures at the airport a relatively new procedure was established: All visitors staying for more than three days have to register and pay a fee at Immigration Office.

Mark, the driver met the arriving guests at the airport and transported all to Friendship Guesthouse, where accommodation was prepared by Edith and staff. Bishop Paride Taban met his visitors here, and scenes of joy and happiness of reunions were strong.

Some challenges, however occurred also this day. The flight chartered with MAF, which should bring people out from Kuron for the celebration was cancelled due to technical problems. - On the other hand a landcruiser from Narus arrived in the evening by road, bringing a group from Kuron, coming for the celebration.



*From left: Ingrid Fløystad, Bishop Paride Taban, Tor Steinar Rafoss, Aanond Saaghus, Hilde Gåsholt, Else Saaahus and Olav Nvstad*

For the visitors Juba appeared normal: Lots of people in the streets, busy traffic – including traffic jam. However it was noticed less people than before, less international staff and less activity in the markets. Also in the airport seems less busy.

President Salva Kiir came back from an official visit to Uganda today. At his arrival the main road from the airport was totally closed for traffic until a convoy of some 25 vehicles at high speed, including an escort of some 100 soldiers had passed.



*Bishop Paride Taban is preparing his speech for Opari*

Even if the situation in Juba seems calm and normal, the evening news at SSTV announced some unrest in the country; rebels had made an attack north of Malakal.

Friendship Guesthouse served good lunch and dinner for all its guest. At the end of the dinner Bishop Paride Taban greeted all the arrived guests, and gave all a special T-shirt and a cap, made for the 50 years celebration.

In his welcoming words Bishop Paride Taban illustrated the value and importance of the visit by the friends in this way: "If each one of the visitors took seedlings of the olive tree back to each one's home and region, it will sprout and grow also there."

In this difficult time he focused the importance of bringing the concern for the people of South Sudan out. He also expressed his concern for withdrawal of the support to South Sudan, stating: "Those who will stop the development work and support now, actually want and promote war!"

The following foreign guests arrived this Friday: Ingrid Fløystad, Erling Fløystad, Per Nordmark, Else Saaghus, Aanund Saaghus, Erling Gitmark, Siri Chathrine Skuggevik, Olav Nystad, Ellinor Kvåse Rafoss, Tor Steinar Rafoss, Hilde Gåsholt Deng.

*The Toposa group from Kuron checking meat-prices in Konyokonya market, Juba*





## Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> October

In the morning Ed and Elisabeth Resor arrived from USA via Kenya. In the morning some of the visitors went for registration, when those who did registration on Friday went to the Konyokonya



market for tourism and some minor shopping. Lunch was served in Friendship Guesthouse. Then all check out, 5 cars were loaded, and all departed for Opari, - just after 2 pm. Two of the cars got problems on the way, however all arrived in Opari!

*There are frequent accidents on the Juba – Nimule road. This lorry turned over this morning, luckily without serious injuries.*

*Under: At Pageri*

As the cars stopped at Pageri, when branching off the Nimule - Juba road, there were scenes of joy as old friends happen to meet here.

In Opari a welcoming arrangement was prepared, and a procession led up to a newly erected shed, a shed made for the occasion, however with the intention of future multipurpose use, including for prayers.

Present were police and army guards, South Sudan TV, newspaper journalists, a music band with drums, and a crowd of people singing and dancing as they all moved.



As the sun gradually set, the shed filled up. An estimate is that more than 1000 people were present. A Mass was conducted, with choirs, music and liturgical dances. The Bishop of Diocese of Torit and several other Fathers were present, together with nuns who had arrived from Uganda. Bishop Paride Taban greeted all and welcomed all, saying this was a great gathering of unity and of peace. "White and black and brown, people from Europe, America and Africa, we are all one!" - he stated. The atmosphere in which the service was held really underlined this statement.



When foreign visitors were back in Nimule for overnight stay, a good dinner was served in the home of Grace Koliba, located in the slopes at Nimule, a location overlooking the Nile with a view into Uganda. This dark evening the view

*17 children were baptized during the Service at Opari*



however was limited to the stars, - and the fireflies moving around.

Accommodation for visitors was arranged in Grace's house, and in a nearby new, fine hotel.

Bishop Paride Taban himself spent the night in Opari, sleeping in his tent at the location of the celebration.

### Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> October

Breakfast was served at Grace Kolia's home.



*Grace Kolia's house with the view of the Nile*

All departed by car around 8 a.m, arriving just before 10 am at Opari, the village where Paride Taban was born. A lot of cars were then already parked, and more were coming. However most of the people came on foot. Police and army were present, instructing in the parking, and monitoring the situation. All were invited in, and the large shed was filled. An altar on a platform was located in front, chairs filling up the rest. The chairs however could take far from all attending, and many were standing on the outskirts of the shed. An estimated number of participants was 3000.

*All the religious leaders around the Altar*





Choirs and a group of musicians started at 10. The Mass itself started a bit later with procession, followed by liturgical dance.

*Bishop Paride Taban seated with Deputy Governor Jerome Surur, waiting for the Mass to start.*

*Under: The choir sing*



*Bishop Paride Taban in the procession, entering for the Mass*

President Salva Kiir was represented by deputy of Governor David Yaoyao. 30 Bishops, Fathers etc. were present, as well as 6 nuns. Also the Norwegian ambassador was present together with representatives for the Dutch and the German Embassies. The Governor of Eastern Equatoria Louis Lobong Lojore with deputy commissioner Jerom Surur attended.







At the beginning of the Mass Bishop Paride Taban greeted all. He stated that this was a day of peace and unity. The readings was from the Book of Kings; King Salomon building a house for God, and the parable of how a man invites guest for his party, - and they all excused themselves. Making the man to send his servants out onto the streets to invite people, to fill up with guest for the party.

In his preaching Bishop Paride Taban focused the importance of listening to, and follow ones conscience. He illustrated this with a story telling of a King who came to heaven because he listened to his religious leaders, - and of Bishops who came to Hell, because they made compromises with their King.



*Scenes from The Mass*



He also told the audience he had experiences as a hunter before the war, - but that he, - at the outbreak of war, had destroyed his guns!

As The Mass ended, a break was announced, and a delicious lunch was served.

Dark clouds were then building up in the east, and rain was seen coming close, however it passed by – another blessing of the day.





*The Norwegian Ambassador Tone Tinnes in conversation with Bishop Paride Taban*

Speeches and greetings were given by:

- Administrator of the local area,
- The Deputy of Governor Yaoyao,
- Deputy Governor of Eastern Equatoria
- Governor of Eastern Equatoria,
- Norwegian Friends of Peace Village Kuron,
- Administrator of Diocese of Torit,
- And others.

All were saluting Bishop Paride Taban for his great work, his good example as a hard working person, his commitment, his development work, his love for his people – all people, – and his behaviour as a man of, - and for - peace and love.



In the various speeches the young people were challenged to take Bishop Paride Taban's example; to work hard, show concern and love for others, develop the area and the nations, and actively join the church.

In a time of great challenges for South Sudan it was also focused the need and importance of support and participation by the international community and friends.



A ceremony of Cutting the Cake was performed, and after this various groups were entertaining and presenting gifts to the Bishop. Last on the program was a performance by a group of Toposa from Kuron, a joyful happening for the group and for the audience. The program was officially ended when dark fell, however still the dance went on!



*Erling Gitmark attend in cutting the cake, Bishop Paride Taban and Per Nordmark joined the Toposa group in their dance*

*A local group bring their gift; a ram for the Bishop*



The group of international guests returned together with the Bishop Paride Taban to Nimule, and some directly to Juba.

**Monday 13<sup>th</sup> October**



*Monday South Sudan TV reported from the Golden Jubilee in Opari, and The Citizen presented the celebration on page 1!*

After a good night's rest, with some rain during the night, all met for breakfast at Grace's place. Then a tour was made to Fulla Falls to see the area where the planned hydro-power station will be constructed. It was an enjoyable experience to come close to this mighty river, where it is revealing its power.



A hippo was seen in the water as we drove. The Game scout informed that an elephant with a young baby had just passed in the area where the car was parked. Hippos and Crocodiles are many in the Nile in this area, and a herd of some 350 elephants was said to be living here.

*Fulla Falls in The Nile north of Nimule.*



*Under: The Hippo*





On the return from the Nile a brief visit was made up to the border of Uganda, through a growing Nimule town.

After another good lunch at Grace's home the group divided and departed, some to Juba for return home, the rest to Loa Mission and Arapi Teacher Training Centre: It was a wish to be back to see the location where Aanond, Else and Erling had lived and worked around 1980.

At Loa it was informed that the church was filled at Mass on Sundays, and that Arapi TTC had 94 students, - divided into two, as it was a two years study. The centre had 9 teachers. Activity was going on well, salaries covered by South Sudan Government, food for students supported by NCA, and activity supported by Strømme Foundation. The buildings were in active use, renovated and in a functional state, some maintenance however was needed.



*The Catholic Church in Loa*

*Else met an old friend*



All the former staff houses at Arapi were visited, now in use by the Teachers Training Institute.

As the group was at Arapi, Kornelius Gustad and Mila from Kuron came by taxi from Juba, - Kornelius to joined the group, Mila to visit his family.

In the evening the group returned to Nimule for dinner and overnight stay.





Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> October

*Farewell to Grace Koliba*



*Children at Opari*



*Left: Termite warriors defending their hill as it was touched  
Right under: The chain saw from Norway is handed over in Opari for cutting timbers for the bridge in Kuron*



The group had breakfast at Grace's place. Then Bishop Paride Taban had a short Service, and thanked for the stay, and blessed the home with water from Jordan river. Then two cars took off for Torit. On the way good roadwork was observed on the road from Pageri to Opari (government of SS), and near Magwi (East Africa contractor).

In Opari a chain saw for cutting timbers for Kuron Bridge was offloaded and handed over. In Magwi the group had lunch at local restaurants.



Accommodation was at Torit Hotel. Deputy Governor Jerome Surur, who came with his wife Jane had invited the group, NCA staff in Torit, and some of his own staff for dinner on behalf of the governor. It was a nice dinner at the restaurant at Galaxy Hotel in Torit main street.

*Dinner at Galaxy Hotel, and accommodation at Torit Hotel*





### Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> October

Governor Louis Lobong and his wife Natalina invited the group for breakfast at their home at 7.30. The residence was next to Torit Hotel. During night it was heavy rain and thunder, and still drizzling in the morning. The breakfast was served under a shed built on a big tree. It was a nice sitting in a homely atmosphere on a cool morning.

The governor pointed at the importance of the contact with Norway, Norwegian organizations and us as friends. He also focused on the need for support in education, and in the struggle for internal peace in South Sudan. He wished us all welcome back!



*Governor of Eastern Equatoria, H.E. Louis Lobong with his wife Natalia received the group for breakfast.*

After check out at Torit Hotel the group visited the State administration building, and the offices of Deputy Governor and the Governor. The Deputy Governor pointed out the great importance of the Norwegian contribution in developing of South Sudan. He expressed his and the State's appreciation of the visit, and asked the delegation



to contribute to a strong and continuous support and participation in developing South Sudan, and in particular Eastern Equatoria State. As close friends, like family, we were invited to come back, as groups or as individuals, and then visit the governor's offices.

*The group received by Deputy Governor Jerome Surur in his office in Torit.*

It was continuing raining in Torit as a visit was made to NCA-office and to Diocese of Torit. In both offices the group was informed of basic activities and challenges. Also the development of Peace Village Kuron, and cooperation in this project was discussed. Again the importance of keeping close contact, and a Norwegian involvement was focused and urged.



At 0.30 pm the group left Torit for Juba via Liria. The road was in a very poor condition, and along some areas; hundreds of meters the road was totally flooded – like it was part of a riverbed. The two cars arrived in Juba just after 8 pm, well satisfied of humping and bumping in the cars, 136 km in just less than 8 hours!

*Torit at the time of  
departure*

*Under: From the travel  
Torit – Juba; ca 8 hours*



Friendship Guesthouse welcomed the travellers back, more friends met, a good dinner was served and accommodation was provided.





## Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> October

The Norwegians visited NCA office in Juba and greeted some of the staff, - and recalled memories from experiences some 30 years back.

Mathias, who was employed by NCA in 1982 was our guide, and followed the group for a visit to Buluk Eye Clinic, near NCA Office. Here the main building was renovated by Aanund, and also 4 staff houses constructed under his leadership in early 1980s.

The clinic was in very good condition, well equipped and well organized, now supported from Germany. Eye operations were to start up in 1-2 months,- the only facility with this capacity in all of South Sudan, it was informed.



*In the NCA compound, Juba*



*Aanund at Buluk Eye Clinic, Juba*

The group headed by Bishop Paride Taban was invited to the residence of the Norwegian Ambassador. The Special Envoies to South Sudan from UK, USA and Norway were at present in

Juba for meetings, and the Norwegian Ambassador came directly from a meeting with these 3, and was accompanied by Norwegian Special Envoi Jens Petter Kjemperud, who greeted the group briefly.

The Special Envies and the Ambassador had all been to Bor, to get first-hand information on the situation, observing the suffering of the people. The Envies will continue meetings for some days in Juba.



*Meeting with Norwegian Ambassador Tone Tinnes at the residence of the Ambassador.*

Due to the security situation there are strong restrictions on moving in South Sudan. Embassy staffs are not able to move in the way the visitors

had moved. As an example Embassy staffs were not allowed to cross the Nile.

*Special Envoy to South Sudan Jens Petter Kjemperud talking to Aanund, Else and Erling*





The Ambassador informed the visitors that 98 % of the government budgets come from oil. And that 80 % of this budget is currently used in Juba.

The Ambassador pointed out that the Norwegian priority is first of all to come to a solution in the conflict between the two leaders. Meanwhile the Norwegian support was reduced, or set at hold, and was more directed to non-governmental support.

Bishop Paride Taban focused the ability the people of South Sudan traditionally have to deal with challenges like hunger: People share – he says. They move if there is no harvest, and are supported by relatives or others, even by other tribes. Resent changed in community, and mainly due to conflicts, this ability is reduced. Also relief provided to the people have contributed to making people more vulnerable.

For the Ambassador Bishop Paride Taban stressed the importance of continuing development work during times of crisis, and he gave some examples from his own experiences during the war.

### Friday 17<sup>th</sup> October

- ✓ Erling Fløystad, Ingrid Fløystad and Hilde Gåsholdt Deng left (on Tuesday).
- ✓ Else and Aanund Saaghus, Siri and Erling Gitmark left for Nairobi and Norway in the morning.
- ✓ Jonas started with the group from Kuron in a landcruiser to go by road via Torit, Kapoeta and Narus back to Kuron. Unfortunately, when starting off and going to fill fuel on the way, no fuel was available in Juba. He and the group had to return and remain.
- ✓ Kornelius Gustad, Ellinor Kvåse Rafoss og Tor Steinar Rafoss plan to go by plane to Kuron on Monday.
- ✓ Per Nordmark left Juba for Addis Ababa and Norway in the afternoon.
- ✓ Bishop Paride Taban went for lunch at the residence of the Norwegian Embassy, to meet with the ambassador and the Special Envois for South Sudan from Norway, UK and USA. He had a ticket for Addis Ababa, going for peace talks, which on short notice was transferred to Nairobi for Saturday, - he should go on Saturday morning to Nairobi.
- ✓ Ed and Elisabeth Resor remain in South Sudan still some time for various tasks.

Bishop Paride Taban (78) in his closing speech in Opari:

**Have peace and love in the families! Young children should grow up where they are experiencing love! How can we build a peaceful nation if children grow up in the absence of love?**





