



Africa Rising

Two crucifixes in our home are useful in talking through Easter with our children. One is traditional. The other portrays the transformation from death to resurrection: the feet and one hand are nailed to the cross, but Christ's other hand is free and offers the dove of peace. As the children feel the nails, they have had different reactions. The girls expressed shock and sadness at the murder of an innocent. Our oldest cried for several days, "Why? Why did they kill Jesus?" Our youngest, a 2-year-old who is the exclamation point in our family, toddles and shouts, "They killed him!" stacks a few blocks and shouts louder, "With nails!" She is processing. Our 4-year-old son has questions about justice. "What happened to the bad guys who did this?" But he also seems taken with the optimism of the second crucifix. "Jesus was hurt, but he healed. When we are hurt, we heal. And then Jesus got alive again."

While we have been having these discussions at home, John Katunga, a colleague from the Catholic Peacebuilding Network, visited Catholic University to speak to our peace studies students. John was in the United States as a fellow at the University of Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies; he is Catholic Relief Services' senior advisor for peacebuilding in East Africa, which includes war-weary Sudan.

C.U.A. students instituted Jesuit Refugee Service's first college action

MARYANN CUSIMANO LOVE, a professor of international relations at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., is a member of the Catholic Peacebuilding Network.

team, with a focus on south Sudan. They asked Mr. Katunga why the referendum for the separation of Sudan into two separate countries, north and south, was largely peaceful. John's answer was that the power of prayer and pressure have so far kept a fragile peace in Sudan. C.R.S. sponsored "101 Days of Prayer for Peace in Sudan" in the countdown to the referendum. "Many Sudanese believe the power of these prayers brought peace," he said. The Sudanese churches and C.R.S. are working hard to build peace internally.

But John Katunga also believes that attention and pressure from the United States and the international community were key factors. "If I were writing the speech for the country's upcoming independence, I would call it 'From Blood to Sweat,' because now the hard work begins. We are not rebuilding a country after war; we are building it. According to the U.N., southern Sudan will be one of the world's poorest countries. Everything needs to be built: roads, schools, communities, relationships."

John Katunga is a Congolese native. The Democratic Republic of Congo is the site of the world's deadliest conflict and the rape capital of the world. The C.U.A. student government voted to make the university free of conflict minerals to ensure that its purchases of consumer electronics do not fund and fuel violence in the Congo. The aim is not to ban trade with the D.R.C. but to press for reform, to create modern mines and legal, transparent supply chains by which the Congolese people

benefit from their labor and land, not warlords and corrupt officials.

John delivers sober information with an upbeat smile, so the students asked how he keeps hope alive. "If you look at the Congo as a snapshot, the picture looks grim," John replied. "But if you look long-term at the Congo as a movie, the image improves." Beginning when he was 3, John and his family were forced to flee the violence three

times while John was young. He became an activist for peace and human rights. John stressed the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation in building social cohesion and peace. "How can you forgive?" the students asked. "How can I not?" John

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replied. "Reconciliation was Jesus' central mission. As his followers, it is ours." Demonstrating, John made the sign of the cross, vertically "reconciliation with God" and shoulder to shoulder "reconciliation with each other."

The snapshot of enduring conflict in the D.R.C. and in Sudan looks like the traditional crucifix, a shocking, sad portrait of innocents slain, making us cry out: "Why? Where is the justice?" John Katunga and his co-workers remind us of the second crucifix, of Christ's mission and ours to heal and reconcile, of the fluttering wings of peace rising from a bloody hand. The resurrection is not merely a historical fact; it is something we are called to participate in today in Sudan and Congo and in all the other "dead" zones of our lives. Like our children, I am trying to learn what it means to be Easter people.

