

□ Reading time: 3 min.

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Friends, readers of the Salesian Bulletin: as you do every month, please accept my warmest greetings, greetings that I prepare by letting my heart speak, a heart that seeks to continue looking at the Salesian world with the hope and certainty that Don Bosco himself had, and that together we can do much good and that the good that is done must be made known.

I see in many Salesians Don Bosco's "passion" for the happiness of young people. A formula that has become famous attempts to condense Don Bosco's educational system into three words: reason, religion, loving-kindness. School, church, playground. A Salesian house is all this realised in stone. But Don Bosco's oratory is much more. It is an arsenal of encouragement and creativity: music, theatre, sport and walks that are true immersions in nature. All seasoned with real, fatherly, patient, enthusiastic affection.

### **Mother courage**

Well then, as I read the chronicle of Sudan with pain and concern, where everyone's situation is very difficult, including the Salesian situation, today I would like to offer another beautiful testimony, although this time I was not an eyewitness, but I recount what was shared with me.

The scene takes place in Palabek (Uganda), where, when the first refugees arrived five years ago, we Salesians of Don Bosco wanted to be with the first refugees that went there. The accommodation was a tent and the chapel for prayer and the celebration of the first Eucharist was the shade of a tree.

Every day many hundreds of refugees from Sudan arrived at Palabek. First because of the conflict in South Sudan. Years later, they continue to arrive, now because of the conflict in Sudan (North Sudan, that is).

It was the General Councillor for Missions who told me what I am telling you. He had gone to Palabek a few days earlier to continue to accompany this presence in a refugee camp where tens of thousands have already been received.

Ten days ago, a woman arrived with eleven children. Alone, without any help, she had crossed several regions full of danger for herself and the children; she had walked more than 700 kilometres in the last month and the group of children was growing. And this is what I want to talk about, because this is HUMANITY and this is

LOVE. This woman arrived in Palabek with eleven children in her care, and she presented them all as her children. But in reality six were her children from her womb. Three others were the children of her brother who had recently died and whom she had taken in charge, and two others were little orphans she had found on the street, alone, with no one and, of course, without papers (who can think of papers and documentation when the most essential things for life are missing?), and they had become this woman's foster children.

On some occasions, a mother who gave her life to defend her child has been called a "courageous mother". In this case, I would like to give this mother of eleven children the title of Mother Courage. She is above all a woman who knows very well - in the "bowels of her heart" - what it is to love, even to the point of suffering, because she lives and has lived in absolute poverty with her eleven children. Welcome to Palabek, brave Mother. Welcome to the Salesian presence. No doubt everything possible will be done so that these children do not lack food, and then a place to play and laugh and smile - in the Salesian oratory - and a place in our school.

This is the simple and silent good that Don Bosco did. This is the good that we continue to do together because, believe me, to feel that we are not alone, to have the certainty that many of you see with pleasure and sympathy, the effort we make every day for the benefit of others, also gives us a lot of human strength, and no doubt the Good Lord makes it grow.

I wish you a wonderful summer. No doubt ours, mine too, will be more serene and comfortable than is the case for this mother in Palabek, but I think I can say that having thought of her and her children, we have, in some way, built a bridge. Be very happy.