

Holy Trinity Parish – Diocese of Malakal, Southern Deanery
Report for the Diocesan Assembly in Kit, November 2022
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Holy Trinity Parish covers the north-western corner of Jonglei State along the Nile and has about 40,000 Catholics in about 80 chapels. The parish was founded in 1998 by the Comboni Missionary Fr. Antonio Labraca and comprises originally 2 counties in Jonglei State: Fangak and Ayod County. In 2008, the work in the 2 counties was divided among 2 Comboni communities. Fr. Labraca took pastoral care of Ayod County while a group of missionaries under the leadership of Fr. Christian Carlssare took care of Fangak County. In this report, I explain the structure of the parish and the pastoral activities limited to Fangak County. There are 2 religious institutes present: Comboni-Missionaries (MCCJ) and School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND).

Structure:

The County is divided in 7 regions of which each region has 3 centers. Each center has several chapels (currently between 3 and 9 chapels). A center has an appointed head catechist and a center council with the financial committee. Usually, all the centers have as many catechists as there are chapels in order to offer Sunday prayer in each location. Due to movement of people in recent years, some centers may not have enough catechists for all chapels. The head catechists come together twice per year at the annual planning in January and again in September for personal sharing and spiritual growth. Youths elect their leaders in the 21 centers annually and organize themselves in choir groups to animate the liturgy.

A village may form a new chapel if there are at least 10 active Catholic families who come for Sunday prayer. The local Catholics propose a monogamous and literate person among themselves to be trained and appointed as their catechist. Most catechists are men, but we have also 2 women catechists.

The parish council consists of 21 representatives of the 7 regions: each region chooses one head catechist (of the 3 centers), one chairperson of the committees (of the 3 centers) and one women leader (of the 3 local Legio Maria groups). There are 3 parish council meetings per year where these 21 members meet with the parish priest. In coordination with the head catechists and under the guidance of the parish priest, the parish council takes decisions in matters of pastoral (e.g. organizing formation and prayer meetings, fix the annual contribution of the centers, etc.) and church discipline (e.g. dismissing a catechist for misbehavior). There are no parish offices for education, women, Caritas or JPIC to deal with specific groups (implement programs) as foreseen by the diocese. All issues are brought to the parish council or the head catechist meeting. The youth of the centers have asked to appoint a parish coordinator for them.

The 7 regions and 21 centers are:

1. Fangak Region (centers Old Fangak, Paguir, Wanglel)
2. Mareng Region (centers Dhoreak, Toch, Nyadin)
3. Pulita Region (centers Pulita, Leerpiny, Keew)
4. Manajang Region (centers Juaibor, Manajang and Kuemroany)
5. Bei Region (centers Mandeng, Manyajak, Tambuong)
6. Kuernyang Region (centers Kuernyang, Tithbel, Kuerdap)
7. Phom Region (centers New Fangak, Lele, Pakan)

The area of Haat/Minime in Ayod County, 100 km south of Old Fangak, is not included in the structure above. But the people asked in 2018 to participate in the pastoral activities that we offer in

Old Fangak because they are cut off geographically from Ayod Center. The people settle in the Sudd near Unity State between the Nile and Pow River.

Activities:

We have built up a family of believers in Fangak County who feel they belong together, who support each other and who work together fraternally in all our activities.

The members of our parish identify with the Catholic Church and collaborate well. Attendance at Sunday mass is high in most centers. In Old Fangak on a Sunday in ordinary time, about 1200 people are coming for mass, on feasts even more come. The church building can only contain about 800 people so that the children are taken aside for their own prayer in different rooms and many adults sit outside under the trees.

On weekdays, around 40 people attend mass every morning in Old Fangak. On Saturdays, we have adoration and bible sharing with the Sunday readings.

The youth organize themselves in the choir, the altar servant group and the alleluia dancers.

The women meet in the Legio Maria group (elders) and St. Bakhita group (younger mothers) in all centers.

The catechists lead Sunday prayers and teach the sacraments and the prayers of the church.

The work of the missionaries consists in various meetings in the parish center Old Fangak and in regular visits to the 7 regions and 21 centers. MCCJ and SSND collaborate together in pastoral and education.

Regular meetings in Old Fangak, the parish center:

1. January: annual planning with representatives of all 21 centers (head catechist, head of committee, head of women, head of youth)
2. February/March: 6-week formation course for new catechists (bible, liturgy, catechism, creed, homiletics, memorizing prayers of the church, practice to lead the liturgical prayer, JPIC issues, etc.) and 2-week refreshment course for active catechists
3. February/March: 8-week tailoring course
4. August: 1-week youth leader formation (Bible and church teaching, JPIC & reconciliation, leadership formation, planning of annual youth meeting at Comboni Feast)
5. September: 1-week meeting with all head catechists (exchange of challenges in the work and spiritual formation)
6. September: 1-week meeting with all heads of committees (formation in accounting, Bible and church teaching)
7. November: 1-week youth leader formation (Bible and church teaching, JPIC, leadership formation)
8. December: 1-week women leader formation (Bible and church teaching, Marian spirituality)

When there are no meetings in Old Fangak, the Comboni Missionaries divide themselves and visit the Regions. The parish has an area of 7,600 m². The furthest outstations are 4 days away from the parish center. With 2 priests available, there is at least one annual visit to each Region, but often two visits are possible. During their journeys on foot or by canoe (there are no roads, no vehicles), the missionaries celebrate the Eucharist, teach the bible/catechism, administer the sacraments of baptism and confirmation and strengthen the bond of the villages with the parish center. Sometimes, there are church weddings of monogamous couples who are ready to promise fidelity until the end of their lives. In 2022, 4 couples committed themselves.

There is one Feast that brings all Catholics of Fangak County together: Comboni Day on 10/10. This Fest is celebrated each year in a different center. Since the time of Fr. Christian, the youth compose new church songs on the same topic (the following year we chose a new topic) and present their

dances with great enthusiasm. More than 5000 people attend Comboni Feast and travel great distances to reach the location, although there are challenges to move and to meet because of the flooding of the area by the Nile.

The parish manages a primary and secondary school in Old Fangak and sustains 10 Catholic village schools. Altogether, we support the teaching of around 4000 students. Illiteracy is widespread (over 90%).

The parish used to organize some livelihood projects (ox-plough training, bio-digesters for cooking gas and cattle medicine). Due to the flooding during the past 3 years, we have reduced our project to one activity, the distribution of nylon roles to knit fishing nets. Besides the problem of the Nile which floods the flat land in average by one meter and covers about 80% of the County area, the main challenge is violence and revenge killings among local clans. But we a grateful for all what God has done among us and trust that he will lead his people on the path of salvation.