



## Jos Jottings, May 2024

*“For I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me; I was naked and you gave me clothing; I was sick, and you took care of me.” (Matt. 25:35-36)*

First of all, thank you for your prayers for a safe and productive visit to the Diocese of Jos 8-16 May, wonderfully answered on both scores! Actually, our Lord has a great sense of humour in how he answers prayer sometimes. On 15 May on my way back from Jos to the Nigerian capital of Abuja, while driving through one area affected by violence over the last 6 months, we were flagged off the road by a security detachment with sirens and flashing lights. As two police utes, two black SUVs with fully-kitted Army soldiers, one SUV with black-suited officials, and one ambulance (!! ) went flying past, my diocesan colleague Ven. Mark Mukan saw his opportunity, pulling out and attaching ourselves to the tail of this security convoy. And so it was that we had the full security escort of the Governor of Plateau State in front of us, clearing the road of trucks, cars, goats, cattle, security road-block hold-ups, and certainly any evil-workers, for the next 30kms. Even if the price – maintaining the security escort’s steady 80-110kmh over some pretty ordinary Nigerian 2-lane roads – was more prayer by us (!! ), our prayers for safety had been answered in spades!

The visit underlined just how vital the three “legs” of our Diocesan mission partnership are in meeting needs of our sisters and brothers in Jos Diocese there in northeast Nigeria. This, and the next two “Jos Jottings”, will report on each of these three assistance “strands”, starting this month with our emergency relief project.

### ***The Security Situation and Internally-Displaced Persons (IDP’s)***

I have reported previously on a series of coordinated attacks by Fulani Islamic tribesmen in May 2023, Christmas 2023, and mid-April 2024, targeting predominantly Christian villages in three Local Government Areas (LGA’s) in southern Plateau State (Barakin Ladi, Bokkos and Mangu). So one of my visit priorities was to meet with villagers from those communities, hear their stories and get a feel for how our assistance was meeting and could meet their needs. Thus on 14 May I visited an IDP camp in a government girls’ school in Mangu township, and was confronted with the realities of life for traumatised, shattered, displaced and destitute rural communities.

During my visit to Nigeria, on 9 May Amnesty International Nigeria released its own report on the killings from December 2023 to February 2024. Working from field visits and interviews, they calculated that 1,336 people were killed just in these three Plateau State LGA’s between December 2023 and February 2024 (533 women, 263 children and 540 men), way higher than the 300-600 estimated at the time. Apparently working on the basis of those initially sheltering in formal and informal IDP camps, Amnesty said that in just these three LGA’s the December/February violence alone had displaced 29,554 women and children from their homes (watch the Amnesty International announcement yourself on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/q3bl8vwGjQ?si=dGGCSYwzMGNh7YEF> ).



### ***Mangu IDP camp***

It was a privilege to meet with Martha, the elected IDP camp leader, and widowed mother of 4 daughters, from Chagal village (about 20kms due south of Mangu town). She spoke of the Mangu camp (one of two in the town) having originally housed 8,000 IDP’s, now down to 200. This resulting from the Federal Government lack of relief support, part of its policy of encouraging/forcing IDP’s to find accommodation with local residents/friends/faith communities, or to return to their villages. Those remaining in the camp were essentially those unable to find local accommodation and totally unable to return to their villages. They live 50 per room in 4 former school classrooms, divided male/female (an arrangement possible only because none had any significant personal

belongings saved from the attacks, see picture of one of the two women-and-girls bedrooms). Martha and Ayuba Nbaya, the camp security coordinator, said there were originally 60,000 IDP's in the Mangu/Bokkos/Barakin Ladi LGA's after the Christmas attacks (broadly consistent with Amnesty's figure of 29,000 displaced women and children). Most of those are now living with extended families locally or elsewhere in Plateau State. None of those still in the camp are able to return to their villages (Changal, Kombili, Kantoma, San-Jak and Baura village heads were present). Like other attacked villages, Fulani tribesmen from more remote northern areas reportedly moved in after the attacks and had occupied the villages and remaining structures. Indeed, these non-local Fulani occupiers were now reportedly seeking land title to the occupied properties on the basis of their "abandonment". And any resettlement would require a large-scale Nigerian Army operation to clear the invading squatters and protect the indigenous land-owning villagers in returning and re-establishing their homes and their farms. Although the Plateau State Governor – himself from Mangu town – is pressing for this, there is no sign of the required political will or resources yet at Federal level.



In the meantime, for thousands of IDP's living in the community or in designated camps, basic supplies (food, basic pharmaceuticals, mosquito netting, bedding) are critically short, and hygienic toilet, washing and cooking and basic improvised primary school facilities for IDP children (run by volunteers) are woefully inadequate (see pictures). Men and women are exposed to exploitation, as they are forced to seek day labour close to Mangu. And economic hardship exposes specially women and girls to sexual exploitation to survive. Many IDP's living locally are still recovering from deep trauma as well as significant bullet and machete wounds and burns which need medical treatment at costs they cannot afford to meet. Your tax-deductible donations are, and will be used, to meet these immediate needs for basic supplies, medical treatment, trauma counselling, and improved facilities at IDP camps, as well as re-building village communities where possible.

As we separately press the Nigerian Government for resolute action, long-term justice and re-settlement, may our hearts respond generously to the Lord Jesus's call to provide for the needs of these desperately-affected displaced Christian communities. That includes those in camps still or those camping out locally with relatives or friends, and trying to rebuild their lives and communities. As the end of the financial year approaches, let's remember their hunger, thirst, sicknesses, lack of clothing and possessions, and reach out under our partnership's emergency relief program, so that the Lord says to us one day "you took care of me!"

#### **For prayer:**

- Pray for Martha and all those driven out of their villages, notably those displaced in December 2023 – February 2024 in Barakin Ladi, Bokkos and Mangu LGA's, and especially those still in IDP camps.
- Please pray also for increasingly effective government protection of rural communities in Plateau State by the Nigerian Army and police, and an effective government resettlement and community justice program.
- Please keep praying for extraordinary energy and protection for individual Christian churches and Jos Diocese relief workers meeting the needs of thousands of IDP's scattered through Plateau State.
- Please pray for a generous Australian response to our sisters and brothers in such dire need.

**To make a tax-deductible donation to Diocesan partnership projects for training at the Christian Institute, or to support our persecuted fellow-Christians in Plateau State in Nigeria, or ministry to "at risk" children", go to <https://anglicanaid.org.au/locations/Nigeria> , and select the project of your preference. To book a presentation on the situation in Nigeria and our partnership with Jos Diocese for your church, school or fellowship group, contact Rev Canon Patrick Cole on [pandncole@bigpond.com](mailto:pandncole@bigpond.com) .**