

What I Believe: ‘I have no regrets in being a Christian. In Christ there is unshakeable hope’

In conversation with the Reverend Bruce Pierce Bishop Levi Marandulu



Bishop Levi Marandulu
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Bishop Levi Marandulu is from the Anglican Diocese of Yei in South Sudan, a partner of the Connor Diocese, which he visited with his wife last year. The partnership between the dioceses began in 2007 and will end in June. The Yei Diocese is a global partner of CMS Ireland.

Q Tell me about your background.

A I am 48 and I was born to a Christian family. We lived in a very remote area of Angebi in South Sudan, and I am the second of eight siblings. Due to continued instability in South Sudan, I learned through many difficulties. However, by God’s grace after my ordinary education, I joined a theological college and graduated with a Bachelor’s Degree in 2019.

I am married to Agnes and we are blessed with six children — four girls and two boys.

Q How did you come to faith?

A I was born into a Christian family and baptized at three months old. My parents had a great influence on my Christian life, as witnessed by the experience of my father Yepete Marabu as a lay reader and my mother Kulita Utua in the Mothers' Union.

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My father taught me how to read the Bible and our prayer book in Bangala, a common language in the Democratic Republic of Congo. I was confirmed at 11 and joined the church choir. Two years later I became a church youth leader. Following my theological studies I was licensed as deacon in 2005 and ordained priest in 2006. I was elected, consecrated and enthroned as the third Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Yei on June 20, 2021.

Q Is your faith only for Sundays?

A Biblical morals form my world view. Practising what I was taught and believe is part of my day to day living. I always pray before going to bed and when I get up.

Q Have you ever had a crisis or a gnawing doubt about your faith?

A Yes, there are times I could feel weak in faith and prayers, especially when faced with many challenges, but receive no answer to my prayers. I have felt abandoned by God. However, whenever this happens, I would confess it to God and I become strong again.

Q Have you ever been angry with God?

A Yes, when my mother was bitten by a snake and died two days before my ordination into the priesthood. My mind was divided into two: should I attend the burial of my mother or go for ordination. I asked why God allowed this? However, the Holy Spirit reminded me of the Scripture which says: "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead." I had no option but to go for my ordination.

Q Do you ever get criticised for your faith?

A Yes, this happened when I went to the college. One of my friends challenged me seriously, saying I was too young to become a church leader because church leadership is for old people. I ignored his advice and continued with my training.

Q Are you ever ashamed of your own church or denomination?

A No, but I feel bad about what is happening in the Anglican Communion, with debates about marriage and the consecration of gay bishops. This is a clear deliberate deviation from biblical teaching and Anglican tradition. Such debates bring shame to the Anglican Communion.

Q Are you afraid to die, or can you look beyond death?

A Death is a natural phenomenon, but thank God it is not the end of life, which continues after the earthly death. What matters is having assurance of life after earthly death.

Q Are you afraid of 'hellfire'?

A A true believer would be afraid of hell, which is everlasting suffering. God does not intend His people to go to hell, that is why He sent Jesus to save those who would believe in Him.

Q Do you believe in a resurrection?

A Not believing in a resurrection is just like not believing that Jesus was born, lived, died, rose and ascended. He is now seated at God's right hand. The Scripture is explicitly clear that all will die and all will rise again. After resurrection there will be judgement. The wicked will be cast to hell while the righteous will enjoy life everlasting in heaven. This is the hard truth.

Q Would you be comfortable in stepping out from your own faith and trying to learn something from other people?

A No, I would not. But I can learn what other people believe for the sake of knowledge and to tell them the Absolute Truth of the Gospel.

Q Are the churches fulfilling their mission?

A Yes, I think so. Numerically, the church is doing well by reaching the unreached as commanded by Jesus. According to a PEW estimation in 2020, Christians made up to 2.4 billion of the worldwide population of about 7.7 billion people. However, a lot needs to be done about the spiritual maturity of the church.

Q Why are so many people turning their backs on organised religion?

A Secularism and individualism are the main factors. What is happening now suggests the fulfilment of prophecy of Jesus recorded in Matthew 24: 10-12. Therefore, we should encourage the faithful to stand firm in their faith, as the days are evil.

Q Has religion helped in South Sudan?

A Religion has a great impact on the people in South Sudan and has shaped their moral and social lives. In South Sudan, tampering with someone's religion is a cause of life or death. People are ready to die in defence of their faith.

Q Where do you feel closest to God?

A One time I went to a youth conference in nearby Uganda. I decided to come back through Kaya, a border area between South Sudan and Uganda. The Khartoum government was in control of the road from Morobo to Yei and it was very dangerous. I can still remember vividly praying for God's protection as I was walking. I felt the presence of someone walking with me until I arrived at Kaya, where God brought a man with his son who knew the path that circumvents the Khartoum army barracks.

They stopped at Ombasi village where I was left alone. After travelling for almost five miles, again I felt the presence of someone walking with me until I met three soldiers who accompanied me until I safely reached home. This was God's hand protecting me and bringing people to help.

Q The inscription on your gravestone, if any?

A "I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end He will stand upon the earth."

Q Finally, any major regrets?

A I have no regrets in being a Christian. In Christ there is unshakeable hope.