Pope Francis completed a week-long visit to Africa in Juba on Sunday, celebrating Mass with a call to peace and praise for the courage of the South Sudanese people. “When our strength seems paltry before the magnitude of our problems and the blind fury of violence, we Christians are able to make a decisive contribution to changing history,” the pontiff said. “Let us lay down the weapons of hatred and revenge, in order to take up those of prayer and charity. Let us overcome the dislikes and aversions that over time have become chronic and risk pitting tribes and ethnic groups against one another.”

The pope’s tour included meetings with President Salva Kiir, and other government and civil society leaders, as well as a visit Saturday with displaced persons and refugees. He called for humanitarian and development aid to assist those affected by South Sudan’s years of conflict.

Pope Francis first visited Democratic Republic of Congo, speaking alongside Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi during a ceremony in Kinshasa last week. The pope, finally making a trip he was forced to cancel last June, said he was grateful to be making his visit as a pilgrim of reconciliation and of peace.

“I return to Rome with you even closer to my heart. You are in my heart; you are in the hearts of Christians worldwide!” the pope said as he departed South Sudan. “Never lose hope. And lose no opportunity to build peace in your country.”