

Dr Albino Mayom Kuel – the gift God sent to Italy

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On Sunday 21 January 2018, Dr Albino Mayom Kuel, passed away after nearly 60 years of continuous living in Abio in the northern region of Torino, Italy.

The life story of Dr Kuel is a source of pride to all South Sudanese, and indeed the entire African continent. Dr Kuel escaped the repressive regime of the former President of the Sudan, General Ibrahim Abboud, in the early 1960s and chose to settle in Italy where the Comboni Fathers hosted and educated him until he became a medical doctor, graduating from the University of Padova. His penchant for education was insatiable; he thus went on to specialize in cardiology and became one of Italy's most celebrated heart surgeons. Dr Kuel's giant achievements in Italy were not widely known outside the towns and villages on the slopes of the Alps where he served.

Back in the 1960s, the sight of a black person in a town was a rarity. Dr Kuel thankfully put all phobias to rest, not with African magic, but by sheer indiscriminate kindness. The love Italians have for other races became clear in a church service held in his remembrance. About ten South Sudanese attended the service, but the number of Italians present spoke of something more than medical care alone could explain. A sense of deep love for a lost loved one permeated the audience. The priest giving the sermon said to the gathering that Dr Kuel was nothing short of a God-sent gift to the surrounding towns and villages. With his five clinics and a heart that had only grown bigger with the challenges thrown at it, Dr Kuel was not only in the community, but of the community.

Nothing tells the story more vividly than seeing the older people fighting to have the honour of comforting Dr Kuel's daughter, Miriam, and his son, Augustino. Their maternal aunt was in the church to support her sister's children, but not even she could compete with the Italian families trying to pay back the many gems of love Dr Kuel had bestowed on them in his life among them.

He has joined in God's eternal Glory, and is with his wife, Akur Mithiang Miyan – one of the pioneering South Sudanese women in the field of education – who died in 2008. Rest in peace Dr Albino Mayom Kuel.



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