

Obituary: Sister Petronella Wawa – the visionary and mentor



When the Juba College of Nursing and Midwifery (JCONAM) was established in 2010, it was no surprise to many that Sister Petronella Wawa was the candidate of choice to be appointed as the first principal. She became the embodiment of great leadership, as she led the institution to become a shining light in the training of nurses and midwives in South Sudan.

Born in 1958 to Kamelina Muya Odopere and Remijo Habib Said, Petronella started her education in Pageri Primary School in South Sudan, and then went on to Kalogo and Mary Immaculate Primary Schools in Gulu, Uganda. In 1972, she joined the congregation of the Sacred Heart Sisters, Moyo, Uganda and took her first vow as a nun in 1975.

After completing her ‘O’ levels certificate in 1979, Petronella joined Lacor School of Nursing in Gulu, and became a certified nurse. She went on to obtain a diploma in nursing from Khartoum High Nursing College in Sudan in 1983 and then from Rubaga High Nursing and Midwifery College, Kampala, Uganda, in 1986. Petronella also held a bachelor’s degree in nursing and midwifery from the Taxile American University in Uganda.

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South”

Dr Ader Macar Aciek

Sister Petronella had an illustrious career in both healthcare and religious life. She helped establish the Orussi Health Centre III in Nebbi District, Arua Diocese, Uganda in 1986. From 1987 to 1988, she served as the in-charge of Moyo Baby’s Home (Orphanage) while serving in the role of the Vicar General of the Congregation of Sacred Heart Sisters, Uganda Province.

During the years of the liberation struggle in South Sudan, Petronella worked as the chief nurse and midwife for the Catholic Diocese of Torit in Nimule from 1996 to 2001. She later worked in the Diocese of Malakal from 2002 until 2005.

In 2008, she attended a tutorship training in Arusha, Tanzania, which prepared her to take up her role as the Principal of JCONAM in 2010 until the time of her death on 21 July 2023.

Sister Petronella will be remembered for her long years of dedicated service in her nursing and midwifery career.

“Her death is a loss to the nurses and midwives and the entire health fraternity. A great loss to our delivering mothers and newborns. South Sudan has lost a leader,” said Dr Ader Macar Aciek, Undersecretary, Ministry of Health, Republic of South Sudan.