

# Darfur the focus of new Bible study guide

WASHINGTON - Many perspectives have been used over the years as the basis for Scripture study, but a new Bible study using ongoing genocide as its basis may be a first.

“The Not on Our Watch Christian Companion” uses the atrocities in Darfur, a region in Sudan, for its biblical reflections.

The book expands on The New York Times best-seller “Not on Our Watch: The Mission to End Genocide in Darfur and Beyond” by actor Don Cheadle, who starred in the Rwandan genocide-themed film “Hotel Rwanda,” and Africa expert John Prendergast, co-founder of the Enough Project, a Darfur activist group.

To keep the series of Scripture reflections from having only a Protestant perspective, “Christian Companion” authors Gregory Leffel and Bill Mefford have recruited Jesuits to produce a supplement for the book on how Catholic social teaching applies to Darfur, according Cory Smith, advocacy director for the Enough Project.

Information about the book is available online at: [www.darfurchristianaction.org](http://www.darfurchristianaction.org).

Mr. Prendergast, in an Aug. 7 conference call with reporters, said that he and Leffel, in their travels throughout Africa, frequently encountered Catholic missionaries, especially representatives of the Divine Word and Maryknoll orders.

“We’re fairly aware of the perspectives and we include those perspectives in the book,” he said. “That way, it’s not rooted in one particular faith tradition but across all Christians - a very united Christian voice.”

Genocide, Mr. Prendergast said, is “a crime with no equal. It is the ultimate crime against humanity, and it requires a response. ... We see crimes. The crimes must be responded to. Despite the enormity of this crime of genocide and despite the continuing growth of this mass movement, despite the intense interest of the president of the United States and of the Congress, this genocide rages on.”

Human rights abuses and other atrocities have been rampant in Sudan’s Darfur region since February 2003 when fighting escalated between rebel groups and government troops and the Janjaweed, or Arab militias.

The conflict has forced more than 2 million people to flee their homes and left more than 200,000 people dead, causing a humanitarian crisis that the United States has described as genocide.

“We need to grow this movement” against what is happening in Darfur “and reach out to new audiences all over this country,” Mr. Prendergast added. “I don’t think there is any audience more politically motivated than the diverse Christian communities across the United States.

“For the first time in human history, there was developing a mass movement of people against the genocide while it was still happening,” he said.

“The movement against genocide and the movement committed to Darfur is a very, very broad-based humanitarian movement. But it’s kind of on a separate track from traditional secular movements,” Leffel said. “We want to bridge that gap. We want to be sure we are clear about what the issues are.”

Mr. Leffel, who called “Christian Companion” a great “mobilizing tool,” added that biblical reflection is needed “to help us from a faith perspective” understand “why we should care, why we should connect with people who more broadly want to do something about it.”