

MIRROR



Aid to the Church in Need



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Photo: L'Observatore Romano

Evangelising – always and everywhere: Pope Benedict XVI blesses rosaries for ACN benefactors around the world.

“The work women do within the family unit ... should be acknowledged and deeply appreciated. The “toil” of a woman who, having given birth to a child, nourishes and cares for that child and devotes herself to its upbringing, particularly in the early years, is so great as to be comparable to any professional work.”

John Paul II, Letter to Families, 2.2.1994, No. 17

Dear Friends,

The network of ancient pilgrim routes that stretch from Eastern Europe to Santiago de Compostela come together like a knot at the Austrian shrine of Mariazell. At the basilica one is impressed by the striking image of the Mother of God, who points emphatically, with her long index finger, at God who became a human child for us. This shrine is so deeply rooted in the heart of the people that Cardinal Schönborn was able to say quite recently, “No one, not even those most critical of the Church, would want to abolish Mariazell.” He was speaking in particular of those Catholics who have left the Church because of the abuse scandals involving some of her priests. The Archbishop of Vienna wanted to remind people that the Church is a divine institution and our faith in it does not depend on the credibility of her representatives. And he observed, “If the existence of the Church in Austria depended on my credibility, that would be very strange indeed. I do not believe in a Church representative,

however good he might be, but rather I believe in Jesus Christ, in the Holy Trinity, in the Resurrection from the dead.”

Cardinal Schönborn, who is close to the Holy Father, also reminded us that we need people that we can look up to as examples and role models. Some of these are bishops,



“Rooted in Christ, we know that the truth will set us free. It will smooth out the path to Life.”

he said, “but very often they are ordinary laypeople. For example, my housekeeper Adria, a simple Rwandan woman of 75, a refugee, stranded in Vienna after the genocide in Rwanda. She can’t speak a word of German, but I can still look up to her!”

Dear friends, our ‘disillusionment,’ caused by the acts of a handful of priests, has also helped to rid us of the illusion that all priests are like angels. The plain truth is that each of us is free, right up to the last breath we draw, to reach out for holiness – which is our calling – but we are also free

to sin and so thwart the loving plan of the living God for us. But rooted in Christ, we know that the truth will set us free. It will smooth out the path to Life, even though it can often be so very painful. It opens us to a blessing that no one can take from us.

In Mariazell Mary’s finger points to the Heart of God, who assumed our human nature. The Mother of all priests points us to the horizon of a steadfast faith, purified by trials. Through this the Holy Spirit can bestow on us the grace of an unshakable trust and hope, rooted in the promise “I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world”. In the light of this promise ACN will journey with you through the coming year – and let us live the future of the Church, in communion with the Holy Father.

My priestly blessing on you all.

Father Joaquín Alliende, President



Yardstick of the love of God

“The Love of God must be the yardstick of all our actions,” said Pope Benedict in his Angelus message on 26 September 2010. Where should this benchmark be applied, if not in marriage and the family?

First of all, we must study what it means for love to be the yardstick of our actions. There are many answers. In Africa alone, thanks to your help, thousands of couples are learning how it can be applied within the sacrament of matrimony and so lead people – even in the most distressing of circumstances – to a life of fulfilment. In the archdiocese of Bulawayo in **Zimbabwe**, Sister Alphonsa regularly visits the parishes and – with help from five married couples she has specially trained for the task – explains to the people in the villages about natural family planning.

In this country,



“We need to talk” – motto of a family programme in Mexico.



‘Yes’ for always, freely given. Wedding in Burundi, following a course for couples.

where terror and hunger still rule, this genuinely helps people in their lives. We have promised them help to fund this important work.

In Muranga in **Kenya** AIDS is devastating so many lives. So now Bishop James Wainaina Kungu has introduced a programme entitled Faithful House. It aims to show married couples how to remain faithful to their marriage vows, and help engaged couples to remain faithful, in continence, even before their marriage. Faithfulness is the best guarantee against AIDS, and also of a happy married life. But it is not simply a matter of wagging an admonitory finger – that would be wrong. No, here too, biological and psychological factors must be understood and couples trained, so that they can take this good news of human nature out into the villages. This level of training means the Faithful House initiative is not cheap to run. Similarly, in the diocese



Marriage and family come before every form of social order. A course in Burma.



The family – hope of the Church in Africa. Like this family in Kenya.

of Pala, in **Chad**, where you are supporting similar programmes, Father Lukasz has gathered various testimonies, showing how it has helped couples in their married lives. For example, a man does not apologise to his wife because “we do not have this custom here. But the Christian couples now do so.” This then is the yardstick by which the love of God is measured.

Foundations for a stable future in Haiti

Amid the misery, the Church is a real source of strength in Haiti. It was just a year ago, on 12 January 2010, that the earth shook here.

Over 300,000 people died in the quake. More recently, tropical storms have swept the country, inundating the survivors’ tented shantytowns. Following hot weather cholera broke out. Once again there are hundreds, even thousands of deaths. Everywhere the Church is helping, bringing the consolation of the sacraments. 31 seminarians also died in the quake. The seminary became their

grave. You helped to build and maintain this seminary. So was it all in vain? No! As now we are laying solid foundations that will not be shaken so easily. We are helping the Church to buy the land – a 246 hectare plot, not far outside the capital Port-au-Prince – for a new seminary and pastoral centre. The buildings will be quake-proof, providing a calm and stable centre of salvation in Haiti. No earthquake or hurricane should be able to destroy it... God willing it will last to the end of time. The bishops have managed to beg and bring together over three quarters of the sum they need. We have promised the



The remains of the former seminary. Now they are looking to a new future.

remaining sum. Then the Church in Haiti can train up a new generation of priests, who will bring new hope to their people, new life to their nation – thanks to your help.



“Here I am, Lord”



Malawi. Moses, Brian and the rest – reinforcements for the Kingdom of God.



India. The first Claretians beginning their lives on top of the world.



El Salvador. Now they can say their yes to God – thanks to your help.

Saint Augustine once described his daily life as a bishop as follows: “The turbulent have to be corrected, the faint-hearted cheered up, the weak supported; the Gospel’s opponents need to be refuted, its insidious enemies guarded against; the unlearned need to be taught, the indolent stirred up, the argumentative checked; the proud must be put in their place, the desperate set on their feet, those engaged in quarrels reconciled; the needy have to be helped, the oppressed to be liberated, the good to be encouraged, the bad to be tolerated; all must be loved”.

Such is the everyday life of a priest, whether in El Salvador, India or Malawi. In the town of Santa Ana, in **El Salvador**, 53 seminarians are preparing for just this. Their country is still suffering the consequences of the long civil war, and the world recession has made things still worse. The offerings of the faithful have fallen by 60%. Yet Bishop Romeo Tovar Astorga is determined to turn no one away from the seminary simply for lack of money. The official stamp of the seminary has the motto *Ecce venio Domine* – “Here I am Lord”, I come to do your will. They too are coming, and knocking on our door. Dare we refuse the call of God, simply for material reasons?

This is also the question Bishop Thomas Msusa of the diocese of Zomba in **Malawi** is asking himself. How often already he has thought to himself about not taking in “the boys”, simply “because we cannot afford the cost”. He suffers to think he cannot say yes to God’s call, simply because of the

poverty of his diocese. It is a real dilemma. “We need these students for the priesthood”, he writes. In all his 15 parishes there are so many outstations without a priest. And given the creeping secularisation in this region too, he simply cannot afford to do without more priests in the future. Bishop Msusa is quite right.

We have sent him financial help for the training of 40 new seminarians. And for El Salvador we have likewise agreed to a subsidy to help with the formation of the 53 seminarians there. These are surely only small investments for the daily life that awaits these future priests.

It would be good if we could send more. But there are so many requests. One problem that Saint Augustine could scarcely have imagined is that facing the Claretian Fathers in Northeast **India**. Here, high above the town of Sonada, in the foothills of the Himalayas, they have established a formation

centre for young priests and missionaries. Vocations are rare in this region. And drinking water is in short supply also. It is not possible to drill wells, and there is no public water supply. The only solution is rain-water. In order to collect this and store it for the dry season, they need large tanks, and

these cost money. But that is where we can help to irrigate the field of mission.

“We need these students for the priesthood.”

There are 25 novices and seminarians in this simple house at present. There could be as many as 50 – if the water tanks could be obtained. We have promised the Claretian Fathers the money for two large storage tanks. This will enable them to take in new novices very soon. Here too they are urgently needed, in a region of 120,000 square miles (300,000 km²) – almost the size of Germany – where over 300 different languages or dialects are spoken. Water for mission on the roof of the world – truly there are no limits to the everyday life of a priest. ●



Co-workers in the truth, once their studies are completed. Seminarians in Lithuania.



Iraq. Whatever we have, we will give...

... even our lives. "I am not afraid of being killed", says Archbishop Louis Sako of the Chaldean Catholic diocese of Kirkuk. He said this at the end of October 2010, shortly after terrorists had murdered over 50 Christians in a church in Baghdad. The Christians of Iraq are living in constant danger of death – and yet they thank you for your help. This help reassures them that they are not alone. And they need our solidarity. "Without your constant support, we would have nothing to give those who come knocking at our door", the archbishop continues. They themselves have barely enough to live on, but whatever they do have they will give, especially "the prayers of all the Catholic parishes in Iraq, for all the benefactors of ACN".

Saint Gianna Beretta Molla

(4.10.1922 - 28.4.1962)



She dreamt of working in the missions, and sensed the call of God. She prayed to Our Lady for help to discern her vocation. The answer was Pietro Molla, an engineer. They were married in 1955, when Gianna Beretta was almost 33 years old and working as a paediatrician near Milan. Both regarded the sacrament of marriage as the foundation and source of happiness in their family. In the next four years, three children were born to them. But when she was pregnant with her fourth child, she was diagnosed with a tumour in the womb. An operation was essential to save her life. But Gianna prayed, and then told her husband, "Pietro, please, if you have to decide between me and the child, then decide for the child. I beg you this." On Good Friday 1962 her labour pains began. As the Easter bells rang out, little Gianna Emanuela was born into this world, perfectly healthy. In the next few days her mother's final agony began. Gianna died on 28 April. At her canonisation on 16 May 2004, Pope John Paul II stated, "Through the example of Gianna Beretta Molla, may our age be capable of discovering the pure, chaste and fruitful beauty of married love, lived as a response to the call of God!"

Need, love and thanks – Your letters

New Year greetings

A happy Christmas to you all, and a fruitful New Year. May God be with you, so that you can help Christians all over the world.

A benefactor in Belgium

A true missionary apostolate

I would like you to make it known to all your benefactors that they are not merely giving financial help, but truly exercise a missionary apostolate, building up the Church in Bengal. Thanks to their generous subsidy we shall be able to help the Basic communities in the formation of their members.

From a missionary in India

Wedding gifts for persecuted Christians

We got married almost 4 months ago. We did not have a wedding list, so family and friends showered us with cheques. Since we already have everything, and since we

have both been friends of ACN for years, we are sending you this money so that you can help persecuted Christians, especially priests, seminarians and religious sisters in China and the Islamic countries.

A young married couple in France

In thanksgiving

I thank God for you, for the wonderful work you do around the world. I would like to donate three hundred dollars (cheque enclosed), two hundred dollars for your most pressing needs and the other hundred to fellow priests (in need) to say Holy Mass for my parents and brothers who have died. God has blessed me in so many ways yet I have not always done my best for Him and his Church. I am happy that sometimes I am able to help Aid to the Church in Need. With fervent thanks to Jesus who always gives us the motivation and purpose to continue to work for Him.

A priest in Canada

Where to send your contribution for the Church in Need:

Please use the **Freepost** envelope.

Aid to the Church in Need, 151 St Mobhi Road, Glasnevin, Dublin 9.
Tel. (01) 8377516. (Registered Charity No. 9492).



If you give by standing order, or have sent a donation recently, please accept our sincere thanks. This Mirror is for your interest and information.

Editor: Jürgen Liminski

Publisher: Kirche in Not /

Ostpriesterhilfe, Postfach 1209, 61452 Königstein, Germany.

De licentia competentis auctoritatis ecclesiasticae

Printed in Ireland - ISSN 0252-2535
www.acn-intl.org