

MIRROR



Aid to the Church in Need



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Brothers in suffering: Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan with Pope John Paul II.

“Our persecuted brothers and sisters are the elite of the Church. To show solidarity with them is a matter of honour.”

**Fr Werenfried (1913-2003),
founder of Aid to the Church in Need**

Dear Friends,

Having travelled 22 miles on foot, he then had to walk back – another 22 miles – laden with the two plaster statues he had bought in Lyons. These were two angels that the saintly Curé of Ars planned to place beside the Tabernacle in his simple country church. Each year he further adorned this sacred space and enhanced the dignity and beauty of the liturgical vestments. Only the very best was just good enough for God.

This reminds me of the missionary who was asked this burning question: “How am I supposed to believe that your Christ is the true God, when you ask me to adore him in a garage? Come with me, I will show you what I mean by a true House of God on earth.” The missionary understood at once. As a young priest he had once visited some of the Aymara communities high in the Andes, where an earthquake had destroyed the churches in many of the villages. Some had managed to rebuild their church, with great effort, but in other villages they had let things slide and with the passing of time,

where the church of stone and wood had disappeared, the faith of the Church had also begun to die in men’s hearts. Very soon the sects showed up. In other villages all that was left was a vague sense of the religious.

On the last day of February 2010 Chile was struck by a powerful earthquake. The



“God deserves better than empty garages and empty hearts.”

devastation left millions homeless; schools were destroyed, hospitals collapsed and many churches also crumbled. The Catholic Church responded at once, and ACN’s national office in Chile also took the initiative and began to fund a new type of emergency church, designed by a noted architect. His solution has proved practical, economic and elegant. A metal framework supports a tent-like covering that echoes the protective mantle of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The interior is bright and gives a sense of shelter and security. In less than eight months, ACN’s office in Chile has

single-handedly managed to raise the funds for 42 such temporary churches in the worst hit areas. “This new church shows us that we are neither alone nor abandoned. I am fascinated, and grateful for this prompt and practical help,” writes the parish priest of Yáquil. “Up to now I have been celebrating Holy Mass in the street, and funerals in the homes of the deceased,” says the parish priest of El Olivar. “With this chapel, the dignity of our Liturgy has at last been restored”.

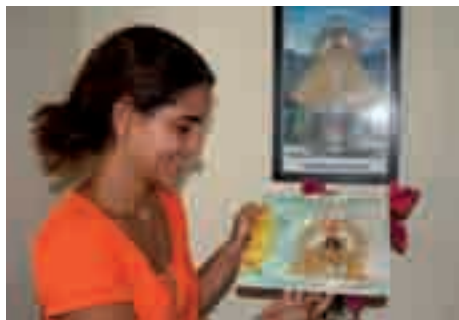
These temporary chapels are only a first step. It will take decades to rebuild all the churches and parish centres. And Chile is just one country among many. God deserves better than empty garages and empty hearts. We must not let this opportunity slip. Let us help to build up the Kingdom of God.

My grateful thanks and blessings,

Father Joaquín Alliende, President



“Not heroism, but fidelity”



Posters, calendars and prayer cards to honour Our Lady in Cuba.



Who else will help them? Catholic nuns with handicapped children in Vietnam.



Comforting the victims of natural disasters. Bishop Andrew Francis with flood victims in Pakistan.

20 years ago there were still 1.4 million Christians living in Iraq; today there are probably no more than 200,000. They are being persecuted and driven out. They are being murdered – for the sake of His Name. Christians are indeed “the religious group which suffers most from persecution on account of its faith”.

This observation by Pope Benedict in his message for World Day of Peace 2011 applies on a worldwide scale. Thankfully you are also there to help worldwide. But there are some countries we cannot report on openly, such as **China** for example. We can however say that your donations are supporting the formation of seminarians and novices there, the work of catechesis, the apostolate of both religious Sisters and contemplative nuns and, through Mass Stipends, the ministry of priests. They serve to purchase Bibles, repair church buildings and provide bicycles. Without your help the situation would undoubtedly be far worse. And without the prayers of the suffering Christians in China, the universal Church would be far poorer spiritually.

Much the same can be said of the Christians in **Iran**, where persecution is an everyday experience – especially since growing numbers of Muslims are converting to Christianity. And while it is true that the Syrian and Armenian Churches are officially recognised, they are nonetheless closely watched by the religious police. Your help must be given discreetly, but it is getting through and is an immense consolation for the Christians in Iran.

Your support helps them to remain faithful. For indeed, “the legacy of the martyrs is not

heroism, but fidelity”, as the former Archbishop of Saigon, François Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan wrote, who spent 13 years in prison under the communist regime in Vietnam – nine of them in strict solitary confinement. He died in 2002 in Rome and the cause for his beatification was officially opened last October. Prior to his time of trial (which lasted from 1976 to 1988) he was one of several Vietnamese bishops who had sought help from ACN for his flock. Today we are helping his successors, with



“I am Fr. Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan, Bishop of Nha-Trang in South Vietnam...” So began his first request to us, in 1971.

projects such as the construction of a convent for Sisters and various pastoral endeavours.

The situation in **Cuba** is now a little less tense. The regime has allowed large pilgrimages to be held to mark the 400th

anniversary of the shrine of Our Lady of Charity in the southern city of El Cobre (La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre). The Church in Cuba will commemorate this event in a variety of ways up to September 2012. We are supporting the printing of posters, flyers and prayer cards in the diocese of Camagüey. Cubans are thirsting for spiritual guidance; the pilgrimages to this national shrine of Our Lady can point them in the right direction.

The Christians of **Sudan** are likewise thirsting for Good News, religious freedom and of course peace. Catholics flock to Holy Mass, despite the many dangers. The chapel of St Bakhita, the ‘Saint of Hope’, in Malakal, has long since become too small, with half the Sunday congregation unable to

even get inside. Their hope needs room to grow – they need a bigger church. We have promised help for a new church in this former war zone. As always, peace and freedom can only come about through fervent and faithful prayer.



Foundations, walls and roof – all for God

Do people really need churches? Can they not simply pray outside among nature? “Of course they can”, says Benedict XVI, “but then the initiative in praying comes from us alone, and then God’s answer cannot be taken for granted. But the Eucharist means that God has already answered. Eucharist is God as answering Presence. Therefore, prayer in the context of the Eucharistic space reaches an entirely new level.”

Many parishes have been waiting for decades for just such a space. The church of the Eastern Catholic community of Halmajd in **Romania** was taken from them by the communists in 1948. For the past 15 years they have had a priest, but they still have no church. The Divine Liturgy has to be celebrated in a school classroom or private home – and both are too small. Now they have found a plot of land in the middle of the village, where they wish to build a small



Sisters in Moldova. You are helping them to build a pastoral centre.

church – a “space for Eucharistic adoration” – that will seat around 100 people. And the bells will also ring out once more for baptisms and weddings. The cost will be **€84,391**. They are saving and scraping together every penny. We have promised **€15,000**. But we can’t fund it all; otherwise

we could not come to the aid of the young Father Julian Ceobanu, who has just built a parish centre in his parish of St Maximilian Kolbe in Moara, Romania. Without our help it would remain an empty space, bare and unfurnished.

It is much the same in other countries in the former Eastern Bloc. In Haradok, **Belarus**, a tiny new parish was founded again, after an interval of 70 years. They rebuilt the church that the communists had allowed to fall into ruin, laying foundations, rebuilding walls, fashioning new doors. But by the time they got to the roof, their money had run out. What use is goodwill without the money to complete the job? Can you help them put the roof on? ●



Inside the chapel in Berhampur, India. Giving up is not an option.



Lithuania: The future looks good, thanks to you. The unfinished diocesan centre.

A place of peace and mercy

In many poor parishes everything depends on the priest. He is judge and mediator, doctor and carer, architect and farmer and very frequently, as the only person with a means of transport (whether a car, donkey cart or bicycle), also the parish chauffeur.

He ferries expectant mothers, sick children, old people, heart patients and the like to distant clinics, chases up official papers and documents from the town, organises coun-

try schools and, although poor like his people, is often the person of last resort when bills have to be paid. Even when he himself has nothing. Bishop Hernan Alvarado Solano, of the extremely poor vicariate of Guapi in **Colombia**, has priests like this. Yet he too has nothing when it comes to funding for the parish house in the new parish of San Antonio. But without this house, the parish will lack a place of peace, justice and mercy – and a place of silence and new strength for the priest himself. We have promised our financial support. San



First port of call for everyone and everything – the parish church in Guapi, Colombia.

Antonio must not be allowed to fall into the hands of the sects, or the drug cartels. ●



“Thank you, with all my heart,” says Sister Anna Maria, on behalf of all the religious Sisters and Brothers – no small number of them – and also of the priests in the Matri Centre in the diocese of Purwokerto in Indonesia. During the course of the year no fewer than 150 Sisters and Brothers and 45 novices from three different congregations were able to hold retreats here, while 80 priests were able to take part in seminars on such topics as “Perseverance in the spiritual life” and “Catholic Education”. During the workshops the Sisters have obviously enjoyed working with laptops and desktop computers! The centre has been a source of spiritual and practical inspiration for the pastoral work of the Church here, in a country where Christians comprise only a small minority, like grains of salt flavouring society with the truth of Christ. Thanks to your help, this salt will not lose its savour.



St Stephen, Protomartyr



Photo: Mariapia Del Friari

Stones were the final argument against the truth. The young deacon Stephen was falsely accused and brought before the high priests. His long speech of defence was a proclamation of the truth. They were the words of a scholar, for Stephen knew his Faith. But his hearers could not endure the truth and “cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him” (Acts 7:57-58). And so Stephen became the first Christian martyr – for his fidelity to his Faith.

The witness of Stephen was to bear fruit. First and foremost in Saul, who approved the killing and would not acknowledge the truth – until he became Paul. Through the persecution he unleashed, the Christians were scattered, and so the Good News found its way to other parts of the world. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christians. And the last words of Stephen likewise contain the essence of martyrdom: “Lord do not hold this sin against them” (Acts 7:60). They are words of forgiveness, even at the cost of one’s life – the purest form of imitation of Christ, the highest form of love.

Need, love and thanks – Your letters

Child’s Bible – a gift from children to children

In the last few days I was able to send you a donation of €189. It was raised by the children in our kindergarten, who sold lots of colourful pumpkins, squashes and corn cobs to pay for Child’s Bibles for poor children. We are delighted that 54 children will now be able to receive a Child’s Bible and so learn about Jesus.

The Sisters and children of a kindergarten in Grieskirchen, Austria

A testimony to ACN’s help

After travelling home to Ukraine, the land of my birth, I am sending you this donation so that you can continue your work in this land. The faith of the people there is still intact, even among the young, and their prayer is deep and genuine. I have been a friend of ACN’s since the 1950s and was privileged to meet

Fr Werenfried as a student in 1956. My father was a Ukrainian Byzantine Catholic priest and we had found exile in France. The Bacon Priest gave us moral and financial support, making it possible for my father to minister as a priest in the north of France. I wanted to give testimony to this, since it is a matter very close to my heart.

A benefactor in France

Moved by their suffering

Recently I read some of your newsletters and leaflets, and your appeal for the poorest of the poor went right to my heart. I was deeply moved by so much suffering in this world and felt a sense of Christian duty to help those who are suffering materially and morally. I too would like to support your work and help those who lack everything. Please use my donation however you see fit.

A benefactor in Portugal

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.

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