

MIRROR



Aid to the Church in Need



www.acnirl.org



Kindred spirits in our time. Pope John Paul II and his successor, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger.

“The Church needs to make known the great gospel values of which she is the bearer. No one witnesses more effectively to these values than those who profess the consecrated life in chastity, poverty and obedience, in a total gift of self to God and in complete readiness to serve humanity and society after the example of Christ.”

Pope John Paul II

Redemptoris missio, 7 December 1990, No. 69

Dear Friends,

The season of Lent is here – a time to accompany Jesus, who suffers today and who still acts through the Church for the salvation of all mankind.

After the Second World War streams of refugees poured, both day and night, from the communist dictatorships of Eastern Europe into Germany. Pope Pius XII followed these dramatic events with a watchful and worried eye. He prayed for these people, who had lost everything, and called on the Catholic faithful to help them. But this was not enough for him; he wanted a more effective way of helping. The name of a Norbertine priest and religious was suggested to him: Werenfried van Straaten. From his abbey in Tongerlo, Belgium, Fr Werenfried launched an extensive aid campaign: of prayer, faith and conversion; of money, clothing and food. Soon his various initiatives became the organisation “Iron Curtain Church Relief”, later renamed “Aid to the Church in Need”.

Every organisation is defined by its origins. ACN has an unequivocally papal origin.

Our native soil is the paternal heart of the successor of Peter. Fr Werenfried was its inspired instrument, called by God to this task. With tireless energy and creativity, he transformed the appeals of the Vicar of Christ into tangible deeds of love. And so it has continued, ever since 1947. Soon the events of the 20th century had accelerated at a dizzying



“Our native soil is the paternal heart of the successor of Peter.”

speed. Prophetically, Blessed John XXIII pointed to Latin America, warning that the continent would fall prey either to sects or Marxism if the work of evangelisation was not renewed and deepened. ACN immediately responded to his words, later extending its activities to Asia and Africa, bringing help and support to hundreds of bishops and legions of missionaries. During the difficult post-conciliar era, Pope Paul VI was concerned with strengthening and deepening the faith in the traditionally Catholic regions. In a variety of ways ACN worked with the Holy Father.

Pope John Paul II drew attention to new needs and called on our help, after he himself had played a part in the collapse of the communist dictatorships. He also urged us to help defend unborn life. And he expressed a heartfelt desire that we should promote unity – above all with the Russian Orthodox Church. This is a familiar story to many of benefactors, but it is good to return from time to time to the heart of things.

I recall one morning in Rome when we had a private audience with the Holy Father, near the great Synod hall. Pope John Paul

II came towards us, arms outstretched in welcome. I pushed Father Werenfried forward, a little closer, in his wheelchair. A short silence; an exchange of greetings. “For ACN, the Holy Father’s wish is a command,” said Father Werenfried in a firm voice. During this Lenten season, and as we draw closer to the beatification of Pope John Paul II by Benedict XVI, his words stand as a testament to our mission. I bless you all, in Jesus and Mary,

Father Joaquín Alliende, President



Living in order to pray

“Man desires to know – he wants truth”, writes Pope Benedict XVI. But those who merely know and apprehend what happens in the world end up being saddened. For “truth means more than knowledge: the purpose of knowing the truth is to know the good.”

One can pray for this kind of knowledge. This is what Contemplative Orders do. They take seriously the words of St Paul: “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17). Within the solitude of the convent cell, within the cloister, God grants knowledge of “the good”. You are helping these enclosed religious throughout the world. In Vilnius, **Lithuania**, seven Dominican nuns struggle to survive on the meagre pensions of the eldest Sisters which date from communist times. Sister Janina is 90 years old, Sister Teresa Stanislava is 82. Your aid helps them and their five fellow Sisters to survive. Then there are the seven “Servants of the Lord and of the Virgin of Matara” in the Ukrainian diocese of Ivano-Frankivsk, who need your help. Their convent is not quite two years old. Four of them live in the enclosure and follow the Rule of St Benedict. The Rule allows them to support themselves by making hand-crafted goods and also earn a little extra by translation work. But it is nowhere near enough, and food prices are rising alarmingly in Ukraine.

No money, no security, no income...



There for all the people – with your help. Sisters in Itanagar, India.



A gift of Providence – Sister Angela is like a mother to these children in Peru.



The Trappist nuns outside their convent in Bukavu. How can they continue?



You are supporting the training of these three novices in Belarus.

Staying alive, so that they can pray – this is the simple truth that the Trappist nuns in Bukavu, **DR Congo**, have returned to since Sister Denise was murdered in December 2009. She served at the reception desk of the little guest house and retreat house that provides the income on which all these contemplative nuns depend. The guest house and reception area need to be made more secure, because there are many marauding para-military bands in Bukavu, who spread fear and terror with their murderous activi-

ties. For the moment, the house is closed meaning no income for the Sisters – meanwhile, requests for retreat days and seminars are continuing to flood in. After consulting with the archbishop, they have decided that the entrance and the house should be linked by a walled-in corridor, and that the enclosure and the guest house should be separated. But this will cost money, which is something the Trappist nuns do not have. They are trapped in a circle. No money means no security, no security means no income... How can they continue living and following their contemplative vocation? To help them break out of this vicious circle we have promised help. The new walls will keep out the fear; and evil will be absorbed by “the good”. Knowledge of “the good” and the riches of prayer do not have a price, but your generosity can help build a wall to protect “the good” in Bukavu.



What is left of the nursery – after another attack in Pakistan.



The bare walls have been built, but these Carmelites cannot live here yet.

A wall is also needed for the four Carmelite Sisters of St Joseph, near Bertoua, in **Cameroon**. Their convent is almost finished, but they have run out of money and don’t know who to turn to for help. Your financial aid will enable them to finish this house of prayer, and to continue to support the poor in the villages round about. ●



Salt of the Arab earth



An apostolate of peace and unity – Sisters in Alexandria.



The future in his arms – Christian pilgrim, near Assiut, Egypt.



They take care of everything – Sister Mara lays out the Mass vestments.

The “Servants of the Lord and of the Virgin of Matara” believe that “Dialogue between the faiths is the most important thing, since it leads to love and mutual respect, overcomes prejudice and fosters unity and friendship between nations.”

Not only do they take these words of Pope John Paul II so seriously that they spend two years learning the language and culture of the Arab world, but they also make incarnate this dialogue through their work among the poor. In Alexandria, **Egypt**, they care for children from broken homes. In the Sisters’ care street children learn the meaning of love and mutual respect, and how to wash and eat. In their unofficial school the Sisters teach these children so well that they pass public examinations with flying colours. The Sisters, most of them from Latin America, have been work-

ing in Egypt since 1995. Their convents are places of Christian unity, and of friendship. They also have other houses in Syria, Jordan, Tunisia, Palestine and Iraq. They are truly the salt of the earth, in this case the Arab earth. Two years of intensive training do not seem too much given the valuable work they are doing. We are covering the cost for one year (€10,000 for five Sisters). With your help, we could make it two...

Similar work is being done by the Syrian Catholic Sisters in Hassake, in **Syria**. Their spirituality goes back to Saint Ephraem, a fourth-century Doctor of the Church. Your help is, as Archbishop Behnan Hindo writes, “of fundamental importance for the daily life of the Sisters”. They help refugee families from Iraq, care for the handicapped in two separate centres, run retreat days, train catechists, organise summer camps for the

Their convents are places of Christian unity.



Summer camp in Syria – Sister Antoinette, with Iraqi refugee children.

children, and care for the elderly and the sick. They are of fundamental importance for the daily life of the Christians in Syria – as is your help for them. ●

Haiti: Empty-handed once again



50 to a room – makeshift accommodation in the earthquake-damaged mother house.

Sister Jeanne was buried alive. Through a gap in the concrete blocks, she saw the school where she had been teaching the little children collapse like a house of cards.

She saw her little ones buried, she heard their screams, the whimpers, and then an oppressive silence that hung over the rubble. The silence of death. Three hours later she was freed. Her superior, Sister Bernadette, wrote to us: “We always work where things are at their worst, where there is no infrastructure – and so many of our Sisters are soon exhausted and physically at an end. That is also how we now have 50 Sisters in the mother

house; they are sick and can only perform limited duties.” They had managed to build up a little basic infrastructure, with a school, a soup kitchen for the poor, a medical aid post. Now everything is gone, everything in ruins. The Little Sisters of St Teresa of the Child Jesus are having to start again from scratch in Haiti. They are empty-handed, including Sister Jeanne. Help us to give her new hope! ●



Sustaining the Light

At an ecumenical conference held in Dundalk on 16th March, ACN (UK) Dr **John Newton**, editor of 'Persecuted and Forgotten?' - A report on Christians oppressed for their Faith' described Christianity as the world's most persecuted religion.

Reflecting upon the widespread and blood-stained persecution of Christians in Iraq, **Archbishop Bashar Warda of Erbil** in northern Iraq told the conference of the decimation of Iraqi Christians within their own homeland, the hardships they endure and the consequential future for Iraq and the whole Middle East if Christianity is extirpated. In the Archbishop's words, '**Christianity makes a difference**', a big difference, its removal in consequence would by every yardstick prove to be a big loss.

Reflecting upon the Archbishop's address, **Cardinal Brady** contrasted the position of the Church in Iraq and in Ireland and agreed that Christianity makes a critical difference to the life of the person and of society from the smallest social entity to the largest collective grouping. Referring to the great European experiment, the Cardinal asserts that Europe is failing largely because of its failure to embrace its Christian heritage, its Christian values, its Christian culture.



Cardinal Seán Brady and Archbishop Bashar Warda

Read the Cardinal, the Archbishop's and John's presentation on ACN (Irl) website www.acnirl.org



Susanne Zeidler,
International
Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Since the beginning of this year I have been entrusted with the day-to-day leadership of this wonderful charity – Aid to the Church in Need. Back in 2003, after the death of Fr Werenfried, we received letters from many of you, expressing your concern for the future of ACN. Today we can certainly say that our charity is as active as ever, thanks to your loyal support – for which I thank you with all my heart. May God reward you for it.

Recently, the Holy Father observed that "at present, Christians are the religious group which suffers most from persecution on account of its faith." And this is true. More than ever today, the oppressed and persecuted are in need of our prayers. More than ever they need our practical deeds of charity. And so I ask you with all my heart to continue your loyal support for ACN. I for my part hope to do everything in my power to help this charity of ours to continue to help the Church in her need.

In his last interview, Fr Werenfried remarked, "God has blessed my work; that is what matters most." And so I too hope and pray that God will bless my work on behalf of ACN – so that together we may succeed in drying the tears of God, wherever He weeps.

Need, love and thanks – Your letters

A source of joy and gratitude

We thank you with all our hearts for your help with our project for the ongoing formation of our Sisters. It is a source of joy and gratitude to God for us to be able to count on the support of ACN in our efforts to fulfil the loving plan of God for our congregation. Without your help we would not have the funds we need to continue our work with the poor and expand it. We promise to continue praying for your intentions, and for the fruits your work produces.

The Servants of the Plan of God, in Latin America and the Philippines

Just one small stone in a great edifice

Last autumn, at the suggestion of our parish priest, we decided to organise a bring-and-buy charity market, in a spirit of solidarity with ACN. Whoever wished to could bring in the surplus produce from their garden and sell it on the spot to anyone who wanted to buy, setting the

price themselves. As this was the first time we did this, we were very satisfied with the result, and so now we are sending you a sum of €306.80 for the suffering Church. It is just one small stone in the great edifice of the battle against discrimination and persecution of Christians throughout the world, and most recently in Iraq.

From a parish in France

Thank you for the incredible love

Us being on low-income, we are sending what we can to such a wonderful mission you are doing for our brothers and sisters so much in need. We thank you for all the incredible love you put for our families everywhere. Do know of our daily prayers to Our Lord Jesus Christ, beloved Mother Mary and ever loving St. Joseph are constant and will try to pass the word to others on the Heavenly work you are doing. God bless you all!

A benefactor from 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.

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