

# MIRROR



*Aid to the Church in Need*



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*New Evangelisation means facilitating the encounter with Christ again. Pope Benedict XVI in Eastern Germany.*

***“We are being tested in our love – a patient, understanding, helping and comforting love. Dear friends, and adversaries, if we do not possess this love and radiate it, then the darkness will not lift from that part of this earth for which we are responsible. Then there will be no Christmas, and no peace. For we must be the doors, the wide-open doors through which the love of God can shine out.”***

**Father Werenfried (1913-2003)**

*Dear Friends,*

For many years, the British author CS Lewis was an atheist, but finally, as he relates in his autobiography *Surprised by Joy*, he could fight the call of God no longer. At last, “I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England”. He subsequently wrote many books about faith, one of the best-known being his *Mere Christianity*. His own experience had taught him that faith cannot be imposed, but must come from within. Faith, as the Church teaches, has three components, namely grace, understanding and will. It is a gift that we gladly embrace once we have understood its joy, depth and beauty.

This is where ACN can help – and is already helping: helping to build seminaries and supply religious literature around the world. We are also helping for the formation of catechists and teachers of religion. Thus, thanks to your help, the Good News is being carried to every corner of the Earth.

And yet in those countries where Christianity took root far earlier than in China and the Americas, Christ is an unknown figure to many today. That is why the late Blessed John Paul II called for a new evangelisation in Europe and why, during his visit to Germany in September, Pope Benedict XVI spoke of the nature of man and recalled the deep roots of faith that underlie it. This nature



***Faith cannot be imposed – it must come from within.***

presupposes a creator; indeed God himself assumed this nature when he became incarnate in the womb of the Virgin Mary and saw the light of this world for the first time through the eyes of the Child in the stable.

Whoever is willing to see, will see. At Christmas time the churches become full again and people become more willing to speak about faith. How can we reach out to them? A countryman of CS Lewis, Cardinal John Henry Newman, gave us an excel-

lent “guide” to such an approach to the new evangelisation, when he wrote, “I want a laity, not arrogant, not rash in speech, not disputatious, but men who know their religion, who enter into it, who know just where they stand, who know what they hold and what they do not, who know their creed so well that they can give an account of it, who know so much of history that they can defend it”.

The new evangelisation requires that we use our reason and intelligence. For “such is the structure of the human spirit. Hunger for truth is its fundamental aspiration and expression” (Blessed John Paul II). It is ultimately a hunger for Christ, a turning in faith to this divine Child who has assumed our human nature. His Nativity is the “joyful surprise” that redeems us – if we let him.

My heartfelt blessing on you all

*P. Joaquín Alliende*

Father Joaquín Alliende, President



# At its heart is the encounter with Christ

In his Apostolic Letter *Ubicumque et semper*, in which he establishes the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelisation, Pope Benedict XVI defines the new evangelisation as “a task ... (that) presupposes first of all a constant interior renewal, a continuous passing, so to speak, from evangelised to evangelising”.

In saying this, the Pope had in mind those countries and nations where Christianity was established in early times. Yet the same kind of “indifference to religion and the practice of religion devoid of true meaning in the face of life’s very serious problems” that he spoke of is also to be found in regions where Christianity is no more than half a millennium old. This surely includes places like the diocese of Mocoa-Sibundoy in the southern Putumayo region of **Colom-**

**bia** – with its sub-tropical climate, fertile soil, oil reserves, fanatical

Protestant sects, roaming guerrilla bands, drug plantations and trafficking, widespread alcoholism and family violence. The Church was once respected here and her laws were observed. Bishop Luis Alberto Parra Mora longs to see the Word of God flourish anew in people’s hearts. “But that will only happen through a personal encounter with Christ”, he says. And so his “counter-programme of love and solidarity” involves training catechists and forming small village and parish groups – and also holding retreats and days of recollection. The bishop says this will help renew “our own Christian image of the person, of

the family, of the community”. This is the pastoral and social alternative to the collapse of society in Putumayo. And we have promised 12,600 euros towards the cost of this extensive programme.

This programme can speak to all times and places. As Pope Benedict XVI observed during the Christmas Mass of 2005, “Where there is love, light shines forth in the world; where there is hatred, the world remains in darkness. In the stable of Bethlehem there appeared the great light which the world awaits. In that Child lying in the stable, God has shown his glory – the glory of love, which gives itself away.” This self-giving requires goodwill, yet it also needs to be learnt and taught. The lack of well trained and truly Catholic catechists and teachers of religion is a worldwide problem – though in the parish of Biharamulo in

**Tanzania** it is one that is (relatively) easily solved. All it needs is our gener-

osity. They are hoping to organise courses for catechists and teachers of religion for their 22 schools as well as around 15,000 pupils, but they need 1,800 euros in order to do so. Impressed by the thorough programme they have devised – ranging from Church history, through the Sacraments and sin, to liturgy – we have agreed to help. For a similar programme in the Archdiocese of Lusaka in **Zambia** we have promised 6,000 euros, while in India, Eastern Europe, Brazil and many other countries too, similar programmes of “ongoing interior renewal” are still waiting to be implemented. To do this they need our help. ●



**Czech Republic. Waiting for the catechism class – in an old railway carriage!**



**Understanding the Word, internalising the Faith. Zambian youth outreach.**



**God is with us – the Emmanuel Community and its founder, Pierre Goursat.**



**Many new spiritual movements are expressions of the new evangelisation, like the Focolari founded by Chiara Lubich (shown next to Fr Werenfried) and the Shalom Community in Brazil. As always, it is a case of “interior renewal”.**





# Martyrs on a daily basis

*Like children the world over – Iraqi children reading the ACN Child's Bible.*



**Mosul is one of the most dangerous cities in Iraq. Walking down any street can be fatal – because of the snipers. This Easter, Archbishop Emil Nona had to travel to the Vigil Mass in a police van.**

He was not expecting to see many of the faithful, as just two years earlier his predecessor had been abducted and killed. But when Archbishop Nona arrived, the church was full to overflowing. "How did you get here?" he asked them. "On foot". Many had walked kilometers, sometimes with children. "For these people, who risk their lives for a Mass, I will stay on and pray, for they are faithful", he says.

Recently he came with another Iraqi prelate, Archbishop Bashir Warda of Erbil, to Brussels where he was received by EU parliamentarians and senior representatives. The aim of this trip, organised by ACN, was to give the politicians accurate information on the situation of Christians in Iraq. Europe needs to wake up. The number of Christians in Iraq has fallen from 1.4 million in 1987 to just 300,000 today, and since the end of the second Iraqi war in 2003, some 2,000 Christians have been murdered. Some 40% of Iraqi refugees abroad are Christians. These figures can also be found in international statistics. But what they do not tell us is, what the two

bishops explained, that "There is no freedom of religion. Article 3 of the Iraqi Constitution gives primacy to the Islamic law, the sharia. No law may conflict with the sharia. Our women are frightened, they cannot walk onto the streets without a veil." Not infrequently Christians are approached by their Muslim neighbours and ordered to leave house and home. To stay on means

***"Our womenfolk are frightened."***

risking their lives and those of their families. Hence it is not surprising that these days Christians only feel safe living in Christian areas and villages.

What can we do to help them to stay? We are providing financial support, Mass stipends for their priests, and supporting youth work. But education is perhaps the best way for Christians in Iraq to contribute to a more free and humane society in the future. And so, as the archbishops explained, they also want to establish more schools. In



***Survival is the first priority – in the care of the Good Shepherd Sisters in Syria.***

the existing Christian schools many of the children are Muslims. Only through education will it be possible to build a new culture with religious freedom. And this will also give some hope for young people for the future, especially the women. Besides, the Christian schools have a good reputation among the Muslims too. And the schools can use their own books, something very necessary, since the official history books make no mention of the ancient Christian presence in Mesopotamia. For many centuries, and long before the arrival of Islam, Christianity shaped the social culture in Iraq.

Today, snipers threaten churchgoers, and yet the faithful still come to Holy Mass – "not least so as not to abandon their shepherds", as Archbishop Nona emphasises. "They come, despite storms and dangers. In Europe it takes years before someone is canonised. With us it only takes a bullet. For these Christians are martyrs on a daily basis. I have learned from them, their courage gives me strength." We cannot and must not abandon these faithful Christians. ●



***Safe now, but far from home – Iraqi refugee children in Amman, Jordan.***



***Archbishops Nona (l.) and Warda with President van Rompuy of the EU Council.***



## Love that spans the world



The Church is young. More than one and a half million young people prayed, sang and rejoiced at the World Youth Day – among them 16 young people from Bangladesh supported by ACN. Altogether you helped well over 500 young people from Sudan, Iraq, Burma and China, from Haiti and Turkmenistan and other countries, to come to Madrid. Without you they would never have experienced the joyful and world-embracing reality that is the Catholic Church. The Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh has written to us. "In deep gratitude, we greet the family of ACN", they wrote, remarking what a great spiritual event it was for the young people and what "an example of the love of Christ, which through the Church spans the whole world".



*"Reconciliation – this was the maxim of all Father Werenfried's actions". With these words the Archbishop of Cologne, Cardinal Joachim Meisner formally dedicated a monument in honour of the founder of ACN (and of two other "Church Fathers of Königstein", Bishop Maximilian Kaller and Bishop Adolf Kindermann) in front of the international headquarters of ACN in Königstein, Germany. And reconciliation was there right from the start – when he went begging bacon and clothing for German refugees among people whose countries had been trampled underfoot by the Germans – when he sent the Chapel Trucks to the East – and again when, at the request of Pope John Paul II, he sought dialogue with the Orthodox. Innumerable were the initiatives that flowed from Father Werenfried, right up to his death in 2003. His monument and that of his two friends - the "Königstein Trinity" - was funded by private subscription. As the famous "hat of millions" in the hand reminds us, he was a beggar, a "beggar for God". Looking at him, we are reminded of the "one thing" that really matters, for as he himself once said, "Only the love that makes us poor can enrich us for all eternity".*

## Need, love and thanks – Your letters

### **"Adopting" a priest in Sudan**

*I am concerned at the news from South Sudan. Since I have no money at present to help a priest in this young and strife-torn land, I want to "adopt" a priest instead. I intend to pray for him daily, and I thank God for everything he is doing through ACN for this suffering world.*

### **A lady in Portugal**

### **In gratitude to Father Werenfried**

*ACN has always been close to my heart, for it was through the words of Father Werenfried, almost 20 years ago, that*

*God helped me to take the first steps on the path of my vocation. And now, thanks to your help in recent years, I can follow this authentic calling and be a missionary in the Amazon region. Thanks be to God!*

### **Father Peter, in Brazil**

### **A mother's gift**

*Please find \$100 cash enclosed which I received as a present for Mothers' Day but I know ACN will put it to a good use. May God bless you all for the great work you are doing throughout the world.*

### **A benefactress in Australia**

## Where to send your contribution for the Church in Need:

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Aid to the Church in Need, 151 St Mobhi Road, Glasnevin, Dublin 9.  
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