



ACN

## MIRROR

No 4 • May 2025

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www.acnuk.org**Dear Friends,**

We are now in May, the month when the Church particularly honours the Mother of God. There are many ways that this is expressed, for example by decorating statues of the Blessed Virgin with flowers or turning to her through the prayers of the Rosary. There are innumerable testimonies, from all around the world, of Christians who have received help and heavenly aid through Mary's intercession. In this edition of the Mirror we tell the stories of Christians who have had confidence in Our Lady and received her assistance.

In a tradition rooted in centuries-old experience, the Church honours St Mary under numerous different titles, such as: "Mother most amiable", "Virgin most merciful", "Virgin most faithful", "Virgin most powerful", "Mother of good counsel", "Health of the sick", "Refuge of sinners", "Consoler of the afflicted", "Help of Christians", "Cause of our joy"...

With this in mind, we invite you this May, to join together in prayer with our President, Cardinal Mauro Piacenza and the ACN pilgrims with him at the Lourdes grotto in the Vatican gardens during our Jubilee pilgrimage to Rome. There he will consecrate ACN, along with all its staff, its project partners and all of you, our benefactors, to Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary with the following words:

*O Mary, Mother of God, we come to you at this solemn moment. All the thoughts of our hearts lie open to you. O Mother of Mercy, how often we have experienced your tender loving care, your peaceful presence, in which you lead us always to Jesus, the Prince of Peace.*

*O Queen of the Holy Rosary, awaken in us once more the desire to pray and to love.*

*O Queen of the human family, teach all the nations the way of brotherly love.*

*O Queen of Peace, beseech your Son to grant peace to this world.*

*O Holy Mother, in so many ways this troubled and wearied human family stands with you beneath the Cross. We feel the need to turn to you, to seek your help and, through you, to consecrate ourselves to Jesus Christ.*

*We entrust ourselves to you and, through your Immaculate Heart, we consecrate to your divine Son Jesus Christ, Our Lord and God, our charity Aid to the Church in Need, all our staff, our benefactors and all whom we are privileged to serve, together with our projects, plans and travels, our families and our vocations and all for whom we are responsible before God.*

*Graciously accept this act of consecration which we now make with confidence and love. Grant us the grace to faithfully serve God and all mankind and protect us from all dangers in this time. Accompany us and lead us safely to the true goal of our lives, to perfect communion in God, through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

My greetings to you all, united with you in this prayer,

*P. Anton Lässer CP*

Father Anton Lässer CP  
Ecclesiastical Assistant







# Following Mary's example



*São Tomé and Príncipe: Staying close to the poor.*

**Help of Christians, Mediatrix of graces, Consoler of the afflicted – these are just some of the titles given to St Mary. Just as at Cana, when the Blessed Virgin brought the plight of the wedding party to the heart of her Divine Son, so today she brings our needs to his loving attention. Around the world almost 600,000 religious women now imitate her role, identifying the need around them with maternal hearts and striving to help.**



*India: Sister comes with a smile and a warm meal for the homeless.*



*Peru: Children in the Andes, learning about God's love for them.*



*Kenya: With a kind heart, Sister Pascalina cares for young mothers in need.*

“Good morning Sister!” The happy voices of children ring out in innumerable orphanages around the world. Many of these children would not be alive if the Sisters had not taken them. Some were left abandoned when they were newborn babes, others are handicapped or suffered abuse. In many cases the mother died in childbirth, while in others their parents have AIDS or leprosy, or are addicts. Many of the children were left to fend for themselves, sleeping on rubbish tips, in cemeteries or urban drains. Not a few were rescued from the clutches of criminal begging gangs. The Sisters also offer shelter to young girls who were thrown out of their homes for falling preg-

**Every year ACN helps over 20,000 religious Sisters in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe, supporting their life and ministry. Would you be willing show your appreciation of these selfless women by giving them the ongoing help they need so they can follow in Mary's footsteps and assist those in need?**



*Peru: The women know they can rely on Sister Jessica.*

nant – not infrequently as a result of rape. And sometimes the Sisters are able to reconcile and reunite them with their families.

The Sisters also visit the vulnerable old people who live in ramshackle huts and hovels to wash and feed there, praying with them and bringing a rare smile to their lips. They care for the sick, keep vigil with the dying, visit prisoners, rescue prostitutes from the streets, and pull drug addicts out of their despair. They know who needs help, in which house they are crying, and who has buried potential that needs to be nurtured and allowed to flourish. At the sight of the Sisters many a face, marked with pain and sorrow, breaks into a smile of joy.

The great majority of these religious Sisters offer their faithful service for the love of God alone, often unnoticed and unrecognised. Bishop Raymond Mupandasekwa of Masvingo Diocese, in Zimbabwe comments: “Often people only tend to talk about the priests; they say he's doing good work. But frequently it is the religious Sisters who bear the greatest burden, often without recognition.” On one occasion a Sister wrote to the Bishop, thanking him for supporting a young girl who was wheelchair-bound and now had finished her schooling with top marks. But it was the Sister herself who had encouraged him to take an interest in the girl. “It wasn't me as bishop, or the priest, who had singled out this girl, but the Sister herself.”



*India: This child struggling with disabilities knows he is loved and supported.*





# Steadfast in persecution



*The convent of the Carmelite Sisters in Sofia is a much loved place of prayer.*

**Bulgaria** is one of the countries where Christians were heavily persecuted in communist times. Many who survived the oppression have related the special help they received from the Mother of God.

Jordan (48) – like most Bulgarians – is Eastern Orthodox. He grew up with his grandmother, a believer. One day a heavily armed Communist militia summoned her to an interrogation. She couldn't leave the four-year-old alone, so he had to come with her. The experience was so traumatic for him that he became dumb. His grandmother was desperate. Then one night Our Lady appeared to her in a dream. "Why are you tormenting the child? Come to see me in the Church of the Dormition of Mary in Pernik." They went there and prayed before the icon of Mary. That very day the child was healed.

Carmelite Sister Blazhenna in Sofia, who died aged 86, also experienced the help of

the Virgin Mary during a time of grave trial. Arrested for her Christian faith, she shaped a tiny statue of Mary from a piece of bread and held it hidden in her hand, night after night, while they tormented her with interrogations. On one occasion the official ordered her to open her hand. "Does that give you strength?", he asked and put the little figure on the table. Afterwards, and for the rest of her life, Sister Blazhenna was convinced that he had "experienced a grace that emanated from it".

The Carmelite convent in Sofia was founded in 1935 to pray for the unity of Christians. It was the first Carmel of the Byzantine rite. In 1957 all the convents were shut down and their property confiscated. But though closed and shuttered, the Churches were not confiscated and so the Carmelites, and the Holy Eucharist Sister who took refuge with them, lived for the next 40 years crammed into the church's organ loft. And the young women who subsequently joined their communities fully accepted that these were to be their living conditions for the foreseeable future.

Today the Sisters can follow their vocation freely. The Carmelites live a strict contemplative life. Their convent has be-



*Sister Vera-Anna of the Precious Blood, taking her perpetual vows.*

come a much loved house of prayer in this part of southeast Europe, where Catholics only account for a tiny minority, making up not even 2 percent. But the Holy Eucharist Sisters are an active congregation: they teach the faith, lead prayer groups, do duty as sacristans in the parishes and care for children and young people, the sick, elderly and homeless.

Both communities are facing growing challenges because of the economic crisis. Soaring fuel and energy prices have placed a particularly heavy burden on them.

**We are supporting the life and ministry of both communities of Sisters with £7,600 each year. Would you consider giving them a gift during this Marian month of May?**



*Praying for the unity of Christians and the needs of the world.*





## Miraculously protected

**Back in September 2024 the city of Lviv in western Ukraine was hit by a nocturnal rocket attack. Seven people died and 51 were injured.**

Also damaged was the building shared by members of the congregation of the Little Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Franciscan Family of Mary. The Sisters themselves were unhurt, as they were praying the Rosary in the sitting room at the time. Had they been asleep in their beds, it is likely that some would have been killed. The force of the explosion also blew out the doors and windows of the chapel. The reason the Sisters had not gathered in the chapel was that – woken by the Air Raid alarm at around 4am – they were not dressed in their religious habits and didn't want to appear before the Blessed Sacrament without them. So they were also saved by their respect for Christ in the Eucharist.

**Thanks to our kind benefactors, we were able to help with £4,200, so now the sanctuary is resplendent in beauty once more – the Sisters send their thanks.**



**One of the Sisters helping distribute food.**



**Regina Lynch**

Executive President,  
ACN (International)

*Dear Friends,*

*I think that most of us have at some time visited our national Marian shrine but how many of us are aware of the other hundreds of Marian shrines that are scattered about the world? One that I would like to mention today is Kibeho in Rwanda, where Our Lady, appearing between 1981 and 1989 to three young schoolgirls, conveyed messages considered to be prophetic, considering the recent tragic history of Rwanda.*

*In the early years of the apparitions that are officially recognised by the Church, Our Blessed Mother repeatedly called for repentance and conversion, while there is still time. She lamented how the world conducted itself very badly and risked falling into the abyss. During one of the apparitions, the visionaries saw a river of blood and many people being killed. Sadly, just over ten years later in 1994 a genocide resulted in the estimated death of 800,000 people. Today this shrine is dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows and has become a centre for reconciliation not only for the Rwandan population but for people in other parts of the world marked by conflict.*

*Bishop Misago, one of the local Rwandan bishops at the time of the first apparitions, said that the messages of the Mother of God should lead us to rediscover the Gospel of brotherly love. It is a message for each one of us.*

*Regina Lynch*

## Need, love and thanks – your letters

### Helping the poorest in their need

*I regularly receive ACN's Mirror and love reading it, and I am happy to respond to your requests for donations to your wonderful organisation. My parents were regular supporters of your charity, and since they went to their eternal reward I am happy to help in my turn. So I want to continue helping the poorest of the poor to the best of my ability. I wish every joy and strength, and every blessing of God to the staff and co-workers of your charity who are continuing Father Werenfried's work in the same spirit.*

**A friend and supporter in Germany**

### Children of the same Creator

*Why is there so much evil among mankind? We are all the same, regardless of where*

*we live, what colour our skin is or what religion we belong to. We are children of the same Creator – brothers and sisters – so why can't we all respect one another? The hurt we do to others could be the very hurt we could not endure ourselves. How long will humanity continue this way? All I wish for mankind is peace, justice and love. My greetings to you all.*

**A friend and benefactor in Portugal**

### News about your work in the world

*I'm happy to receive the Mirror every month. I love your newsletter, which brings me so much news about world events and about your beautiful projects. I pray every day for your charity to receive the support it needs.*

**A friend and benefactor in Belgium**



Aid to the  
Church in Need

ACN UNITED KINGDOM

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(SC040748) | [www.acnuk.org](http://www.acnuk.org)

Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) is a Catholic charity bringing spiritual and practical help to Christians – especially those who are persecuted for their beliefs. We carry out our mission of reconciliation and love through local Church partners: supporting priests, Sisters and catechists, building churches, providing transport, training seminarians, and providing religious literature and media – as well as supplying emergency aid for Christians struggling to survive or fleeing persecution. ACN also advocates on behalf of suffering Christians denied a voice. Through prayer, information and action we are keeping the Faith alive in a troubled world.

UK Mirror Editor: John Newton | Publisher: Aid to the Church in Need  
Printed in the UK by Cliffe Enterprise, Eastbourne BN22 8UY  
ISSN 0252-2535 *De licentia competentis auctoritatis ecclesiasticae*