

# Ministering to IDPs

**More than thirty armed men on motorcycles burst into the compound and quickly surrounded the parish church where Mass was being held, vandalising everything and torching it,” Fr Olivier Lompo told ACN.**

Six people were killed during the attack on Dablo parish including Fr Yampa Siméon. The parish has now been closed, and its Christians are IDPs in Kaya – Burkina Faso’s fifth largest city.

The Church knew something needed to be done for those who had fled there from Dablo and elsewhere. Fr Isidore Ouedraogo said: “Kaya hosts more than 100,000 displaced people driven out of villages occupied by terrorists – the city is hosting more displaced people than anywhere else in Burkina Faso.”



IDPs on the outskirts of Kaya

**With help from ACN, a new chaplaincy building is being constructed at the diocesan centre which will provide a base for those ministering to IDPs. Fr Isidore said: The IDP situation requires a new model of pastoral care to help those who fled their homes.”**



## Sisters struggling to survive

**“This year, many young women came without support from their families because of the war. Families have fled their villages, it’s really hard for them – and us.”**

Sister Eugénie told us that – because of the conflict – the Sisters of the Annunciation are struggling to cover their costs at their house in Bobo-Dioulasso where they train their postulants and novices.

**Sister Eugénie said: “We carry out numerous activities to support ourselves including, selling ice cream and fruit juice, rearing chickens and pigs, and growing plants. But we are still not able to cover all our costs.”**

A local religious congregation founded in 1948, the Sisters of the Annunciation work in parishes visiting the sick, teaching catechism to children and carrying out other vital ministries. Most of the young women have basic qualifications and now receive theological training – including Biblical studies, Church History and how to teach the Catechism. They also gain the practical skills they will need for their ministry including sewing and embroidery, agriculture and livestock rearing, and computer science.

**Sister Eugénie said: “We express our great gratitude to all our revered benefactors.”**



In Burkina Faso the Annunciation Sisters rear pigs, like the Redemptorist Sisters (above), to support themselves.



Rearing pigs helps bring in an income



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Defaced statue of the Virgin in Tansila parish, which has suffered eight attacks

Destroyed crucifix in St Kisito de Bougui Seminary – attacked February 2022.

Pilgrims praying at the Shrine of Our Lady of Yagma

Fr Olivier Niampa

## Seeking light in the darkness

**“Terrorist attacks have plagued Burkina Faso for over a decade now... Armed terrorist groups have caused deaths... Some saw their parents murdered before their eyes.**

Others fled leaving their children behind. When even what was sacred is lost, it can feel as though all the lights have been extinguished, leaving humanity in darkest night. But, to borrow the words of the Roman poet Virgil: **There is hope, even in the darkness. We only need to seek the light.”**

Fr Olivier Niampa gave a grim assessment of life in Burkina Faso, which again topped the Global Terrorism Index in 2025 because of the ongoing jihadist assault on the civilian population. Millions have been left homeless by extremist activity which the military government struggles to control.

**But Aid to the Church in Need is helping the local Church seek the light in the darkness – with aid for Sisters, seminarians, catechists and others ministering in the midst of the country’s maelstrom.**

We are also providing vital pastoral support, trauma counselling and other aid for internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Fr Olivier said: “You have come alongside your brothers and sisters in Burkina Faso who are going through this war that has been forced upon them, you show us the goodness of God. We express our gratitude and say a true hero is one who supports others in their trials. **Again, I thank Aid to the Church in Need, and I thank each and every one of you who support them.”**

**This #RedWednesday – help support Persecuted Christians.**  
[acnuk.org/redwednesday](https://acnuk.org/redwednesday)







Across Africa, soldiers are combating terrorists – Ugandan soldiers, part of the African Union Mission in Somalia, are fighting jihadist group Al Shabab (Image: AMISOM Photo/Tobin Jones used under CC0 Licence 1.0)

# Captive catechist told ‘You must become Muslim’

Following threats that “bad things would happen” if he didn’t close the church, catechist Mathieu was abducted by extremists who tried to force him to convert to Islam.

But Mathieu would not desert Baasmere’s 150-strong Catholic community. He said: “They told us they didn’t want Christians praying here. I was afraid... but I thought, I cannot stop preaching the Word of God, that is why I am here.”

Then on Pentecost Sunday ten armed jihadists burst into his home and kidnapped him. He was kept captive for four months. Even today, Mathieu does not know where he was – or even what country he was in.

His abductors gave him a Muslim name and clothing, and made him learn Islamic teachings. “During this whole period, I never stopped praying. I remember one night that I prayed seven hundred Hail Marys, I counted them out with pebbles. Prayer was the only thing that sustained me.”

He added: “They did not treat us well, we suffered greatly. Some said they should kill us... Finally, one day they told us we were free to go.”

Despite the risks, Mathieu decided to return to Baasmere. In the ashes of his home he found “the Bible that the bishop had given me when I was commissioned as a catechist.”



Catechist Mathieu

ACN is supporting catechists like Mathieu with Breviaries, motorcycles to reach other parishes with no priest, and food support. Fr Edgard Ouedraogo, Director of Kaya Diocese’s Centre of Formation of catechists, said: “Among pastoral workers, it is the catechists who are the most exposed and who are paying the heaviest price in the terrorist war – there have been more martyrs among them than among priests.”



Fr Guy with seminarians outside the library

# Seminarians targeted by terrorists

Studying for priesthood can make you a target for terrorists.

Almost 40 percent of students at St Peter and St Paul Seminary come from the “red zone” – the area worst affected by jihadism. Rector Fr Guy Moukassa Sanon said one seminarian “went home to spend the holiday with his family. While he was outside the house, the terrorists arrived. Their initial target was his father, a catechist, who fortunately was away at the time. However, the terrorists, who were well informed, then demanded the seminarian son. Hearing their threats, he climbed

over a wall and fled into the fields under the cover of night. Although the terrorists went after him, they didn’t manage to find him.” He remained in hiding for a whole day.

Seminarians often stay in diocesan centres or with other students during the holidays as going home could risk their lives.

Despite the risks, vocations at the Seminary have increased by more than 10 percent in the past five years. There were 281 students at St Peter and St Paul Seminary in the academic year 2024-2025, up from 254 in 2019-2020.



Seminarians in the classroom

Fr Guy said: “Some of our seminarians are in a precarious situation – they don’t receive any help from their families, because these are in a sorry condition: displaced or prevented by the terrorists from bringing in the harvest.” Last year ACN supported seminarians from six dioceses as well as helping lecturers through Mass stipends. “I want to express my deep gratitude to ACN and all its generous benefactors who give sacrificially so that we can form Burkina Faso’s future priests.”



Elizabeth on placement with tribal woman and children in Tuum

# Healing inner wounds

Over 340 Christians from Débé were told by terrorists to leave their village.

The IDPs are now receiving emergency assistance – as are almost 60 poor families who have taken in displaced people despite their own plight – and trauma counselling.

ACN has supported trauma training for hundreds of priests, religious and catechists, so they can help the thousands who have suffered serious mental anguish.

Benedictine postulant Elizabeth, who

has a degree in psychology, is just one of those receiving training at the Church’s Psycho-Spiritual Institute in Nairobi in Kenya. She said: “I realised how much my training helps move people from hatred to forgiveness and love.

So I will be able to help people this way, as part of my mission, especially those weighed down by their burdens who knock at the convent door.”

She added: “May the Lord bless you and repay you a hundredfold for your blessings.”

