

Easter edition

MIRROR



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"In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ": Fr Gregory conducts the burial of a young child in Namukuse, Kenya, a village with a population of just 200 people.

"Our hope is not just optimism; it is something else, more! It is as if believers have an additional 'piece of heaven' over their heads ... accompanied by a presence which some are not even able to sense."

Pope Francis, General audience, 4th October 2017

Dear Friends,

"But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel" (Lk 24:21). Thus the two disciples expressed their disappointment on the way to Emmaus on that first Easter Sunday. Two deflated travellers walked towards a future without meaning or purpose. They had lost all hope. Only in the breaking of the bread did they recognise the Risen One and at the same moment they were given the divine gift of hope. Of course, they had "not yet" achieved final salvation, but now they saw the future clearly. Filled with hope, they now possessed the sure and firm anchor of their souls, and could safely set sail to heaven.

The French poet Charles Péguy describes Hope as like a little girl, almost unnoticed as she trips between her two big sisters, Faith and Love – yet it is this little one who carries everything with her. "Faith sees only what is. But Hope sees what will be. Love addresses itself only to what is. But Hope sees what will be. Hope cannot be understood on its own. Faith is simple, and not to believe would be impossible.

Love is simple, and not to love would be impossible. But to be able to hope – that is the difficult thing."

Many Christians survive suffering, imprisonment and torture, only through hope. This is not an escape from reality or taking consolation in the life to come, but a supernatural force that is directed unerringly towards the blessing and salvation of the world. Christian hope gives true meaning and direction to the here and



"Christian hope gives true meaning and direction to the here and now!"

now. Freedom, philosophy, progress – all these cannot eliminate poverty and suffering in this world. But we can accomplish more than we think if, through the Resurrection of Jesus, the hope of salvation remains alive in us.

In his encyclical letter *Spe Salvi* Pope Benedict XVI enumerates three essential ways by which we learn hope. The first is through prayer. For prayer, in its original

sense of entreaty, is nothing else but the voice of one who hopes. The second way is in someone's sincere and righteous actions carried out every day, even in the face of apparent failure, obstacles or impotence when they are confronted with the overwhelming powers of evil. The third way is in bearing and sharing in another's suffering. Of course we must always strive to minimise suffering, but God alone can ultimately overcome it. Our hope is deepened the more we unite ourselves with him in suffering, embrace it and "offer it up" in order to overcome the world's sin and evil which are the sources of suffering.

Dear friends, we are all called to be witnesses to hope.

Through our prayer, our good deeds and our sharing in the sufferings of others, let us strive to be a source of Easter hope for those afflicted by poverty and suffering.

My grateful blessing on you all,

P. Martin M. Barta

Fr Martin Maria Barta
Ecclesiastical Assistant

Ukraine



221 voices for Christ. To proclaim the Gospel, they need good seminary formation.



Despite war and economic crisis, vocations remain high. Ordination ceremony in the seminary of Ivano-Frankivsk.

Hearts that beat for Christ

In the east of the country there is an ongoing conflict, in the west rampant corruption, and everywhere galloping inflation. Yet in the midst of the darkness the seminarians sing the praises of the Risen Lord, in the midst of the chaos they revere his divine wisdom and continue to study for peace and reconciliation.

In the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic seminaries of Ivano-Frankivsk and Ternopil-Zboriv in west **Ukraine** the Faith endures and seminarians still look with hope to the future.

Their sense of community strengthens their certainty that God is with them. There are 221 seminarians in Ivano-Frankivsk and 153 in Ternopil-Zboriv. They come

from a number of different dioceses. The Church recovered the seminary buildings, which had been confiscated and left in ruins by the Soviets, and thoroughly repaired and refurbished them, filling them once again with young men whose hearts beat for Christ and for his Church. But despite these signs of the Faith's resurrection, the seminary's bursar notes that the prices of electricity, water, gas and even basic food supplies are rising relentlessly.

For years the seminaries have been trying to cope with this situation by growing their own food, keeping bees and raising livestock. But it's just not enough. Quite often the seminary also helps the poor in the region. The state provides no support. It costs around £3,000 every year to support each seminarian in western Ukraine. This year we have promised them £525 each. This is also an investment in the future of the Ukrainian Catholic communities abroad, as a number of the young priests who emerge from these seminaries will later go to Kazakhstan, Italy and other parts of the world where they will proclaim peace to all people of goodwill. Will you help these seminarians to continue singing the Lord's praises?

Another ecumenical milestone

In February Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and Metropolitan Hilarion, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations, met in Vienna.

The main focus was the situation of Christians in the Middle East and a joint response of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches to the persecution of the faithful in the region. Cardinal Koch highlighted the aid provided by ACN: between 2011 and 2017, ACN

approved £31 million in aid for Iraq, over £18 million for Syria.

A booklet by ACN was presented at the Vienna meeting, describing ACN's aid in Syria and giving a preliminary overview of the churches in Syria that had been destroyed during the war. Cardinal Koch and Metropolitan Hilarion, who both wrote a preface for the publication, expressed their thanks to ACN.



Cardinal Koch with Metropolitan Hilarion in Vienna.

Algeria



*(Back) at home again:
Father Paul-Elie.*

The difficult path of Father Paul-Elie

Algeria is a ticking time bomb, with a surge in migration, an uncertain political climate, and an economic crisis facing its 43 million inhabitants, two-thirds of whom are aged under 30, with one-third of its young people unemployed. And the Islamists are waiting for their moment.

Such a situation needs hope, hope in the future of the country. Father Paul-Elie has this hope. He knows his own country, he knows his own people, and he has an insight in to what people are thinking – and not just the Christians. As a young man he was a Muslim, in those days he was called Ali. He lived through the dark years of Algeria's civil war in the 1990s. Over 200,000 people died, in a pitiless battle between Islamist extremists and the army. That was when he lost hope, no longer believing in anything, focusing only on his studies towards his diploma in information theory. One day he went with a cousin to a hidden chapel run by an Evangelical Christian community. "There I heard Jesus", he recalls. "He spoke to me by my name and told me he was protecting me and had always done so. I felt loved as never before. I was deeply moved, and for ten minutes I could only weep."

He was baptised, but he still hungered for the truth. Years later a Catholic missionary revealed the fullness of truth and he converted. But Islamists learned that he had converted, and hunted him, threatening his family. He left for Europe, still restless at heart. In Belgium he joined a religious community, then moved on to France and at the age of 34 began to study Theology. Six years later, in 2016, he was ordained to the priesthood. Now he is home again, a priest of the Missionary Fraternity of John Paul II.

In the name of the Fraternity, or rather "in Jesus' name", he has returned to Algeria. "I am needed here", he says. "My heart is at peace, even if the storms should rage around me." He recalls the words of Saint Teresa of Avila who once complained to the Lord, saying "Where were you, my beloved Jesus? Where were you during this terrible



Corpus Christi: bringing the presence of Christ to the people.

storm?" Our Lord responded, "I was in the innermost depths of your heart." That's how Father Paul-Elie feels as well, and it is this inner peace from God that he wants to bring to his people. According to the Protestant Church of Algeria there are over 200,000 converts from Islam, most of them are Protestants, but the number of Catholics is also growing. Precise figures are hard to come by. Most live in the Kabylie region of northern Algeria where Father Paul-Elie comes from. Many of them live widely scattered among the mountain villages. He wants to bring them the Lord in the Eucharist. He wants to lead a "dialogue of coexistence" between Catholics and other faiths in the villages so that they can all experience the love of Christ. But for this work he needs a robust vehicle, and he has asked us to help him. We have promised him £19,200. ●



That all may feel the love of Christ: Father Paul-Elie imparting his priestly blessing.



By the heartbeat of divine providence

Thanks to your kindness and generosity, we were able to give £2,700 to the Servants of Mary, Help of the Sick in Cuba.

Sister Brunilda writes to say that "thanks to your help" she and her three fellow Sisters are living their lives to "the heartbeat of divine providence". For God alone

"can inspire people to help" projects such as these, where "the sick are suffering in inhuman conditions, without the right medication and often in houses that have been destroyed by the storms". The Sisters are the "feet and hands" of Jesus, she writes. "But you are the heart and the nervous system that is keeping alive the body of Christ in Cuba." Without the help of our benefactors the Sisters could not "keep God's hand open to heal, to comfort and bestow his Mercy, freely and without expecting any reward".



**Johannes
Freiherr
Heereman,**
Executive President,
ACN (International)

Dear friends,

It is seven years now since I responded to Cardinal Piacenza's request to place myself at the disposal of ACN. At the time I did so purely out of a sense of duty towards the Church, but without any great enthusiasm, since I was not familiar with ACN and had altogether different plans about what I would do after I retired. But today I look back with great gratitude on these years. I was able to use my professional experience to help the charity when Pope Benedict reinstituted it as a pontifical foundation. But above all I had the privilege of getting to know this jewel among Church aid agencies. Father Werenfried saw our mission as one of building a bridge of love between you, the generous benefactors, and the persecuted and suffering Church. On both sides of this bridge I came to know wonderful individuals, outstanding missionaries and generous-hearted benefactors. In the national offices and in the international headquarters in Königstein, Germany I came across people who were working with passion and devotion to keep the bridge open. The immense fruitfulness of this work can only be explained by prayer, which allows people on both sides of this bridge of love to sacrifice themselves for one another. The hands of God, blessing and protecting, are tangibly present here on a daily basis.

These years have enormously enriched my life. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

Johannes Heereman

Need, love and thanks – your letters

Making an impact

Thank you for helping those in most need all over the world. It is good to hear how ACN is making such an impact. We who have "everything" tend to take our faith and our blessings for granted. God bless.

A benefactor from the United States

A Peso a day

My class (2CA1 from the Faculty of Arts and Letters of the University of Santo Tomas) are sending a letter committing us donate a peso everyday to support ACN. We would like to know what is the proper procedure to deposit the donation and other instructions.

Thank you and more power to your organisation. God bless!

**Maria, on behalf of her classmates,
Manila, Philippines**

Inner freedom

On receiving your letter, I began to pray the Rosary. After a few days, the Lord granted me such great inner healing and freedom that I now feel more at peace than I have or a long time. With all my heart I wish God's blessing on your wonderful work, which I am delighted to support.

A benefactor from Germany

Spread the word!

We feel a profound bond with ACN and we constantly spread the word about your work. For three years now I have been baking bread for an Advent market. Today I am sending you another €1,000, which is the proceeds and some donations from a few good people.

A supporter from Austria

Where to send your contribution for the Church in Need

Our address is Aid to the Church in Need, 12–14 Benhill Avenue, Sutton, Surrey SM1 4DA. Please use the Freepost envelope – it saves you money and helps us. 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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