



*Mending souls comes first:
Confession amid the rubble
in St Rita's Cathedral,
Aleppo, Syria.*

"I cannot be baptised many times, but I can go to Confession and by doing so renew the grace of Baptism. It is as though I were being baptised for a second time."

Pope Francis, General Audience on 13th November 2013

Dear Friends,

We are travelling together as the Church along the pilgrim path of Lenten penance, which will lead us into the great "Hallelujah" of the Paschal Feast. This season is marked by our contemplation of the self-offering of Jesus, and the sign of his saving sacrifice is the Cross. This is the treasure which contains every good within itself. In Baptism we were marked with the sign of the Cross and everything – the sacraments that enable grace to grow within us, the prayers and petitions that rise up from each individual and from the whole community, every blessing that has ever been bestowed upon us – everything, absolutely everything in the Christian life flows from the Cross. All light, all spiritual strength, all reason for hope – everything comes from the Cross. A tree led to the world's enslavement, but through the death of Jesus a tree became the source of new life for the whole world. If we wish to be true disciples of Jesus and attain everlasting blessing, then we must follow in the footsteps of Jesus; and – sooner or later – we will inevitably encounter the Cross. And yet from this Cross, empurpled with the precious Blood of Christ, there still shines forth the light of victory.



"All light, all spiritual strength, all reason for hope – everything comes from the Cross."

How great is the light that shines out from the Cross! It tells us that our separation from God was ended at that moment when the Son of God offered himself for our sins and died praying to God for our forgiveness. No crime or blasphemy of ours can exceed the forgiveness of Christ. Even the condemned criminal who repents is promised: "This day you will be with me in Paradise" (Lk 23:43). Hence the message for all of us: Take heart!

In the Cross this offer of salvation is held out to every one of us. Yet everyone must still lay down their own burden of sins at the foot of the Cross and bend the knee before the infinite mercy of Jesus – which in practice means a sincere sacramental Confession with true repentance and an honest intention to sin no more. Even though we know that on account of our weaknesses we will inevitably fall again, nevertheless, each one of us must take this step in Confession. The time has come to learn a new appreciation of this sacrament,

which is in practice the quintessence of the Cross.

All too frequently today people speak about the sins of the men and women of the Church, and of the need for reform and renewal. But authentic renewal can only come about when it takes place in every individual soul and when we make use of the means that Jesus himself has given us for this purpose. And so priests must always make themselves available to hear Confession; this

must be a priority for them. And they themselves must set the example by frequently confessing to one another. All pastoral ministry begins here, and all the Catholic faithful, whatever their age or status, ought to go to Confession regularly. This will bring benefits to us all, to individuals, to families, to parishes, to the entire Church. This is how to achieve a peaceful revolution, the revolution of the Good which conquers evil!

With the promise of my prayers and my blessing on you all, and my wishes for a truly holy and life-changing Paschal feast!

Mauro Kard. Piacenza

Cardinal Mauro Piacenza,
President of ACN



Making Saint Paul their model

“Each new generation needs new apostles” – so wrote Pope Saint John Paul II in his message for World Youth Day 1989 held in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. It was the spark that inspired the Missionary Brothers of Saint Paul in Burma (Myanmar). For 28 years now they have been bringing the Gospel of Christ to the people.

Their charism is “ad gentes” – to the nations – and their motto is “I thirst” from St John’s Gospel (19:28). These two phrases frame the logo of their congregation and are intended to show their desire to imitate Christ and continue his redemptive work.

And like their patron saint, Paul – the apostle to the nations, who spent three years preparing himself thoroughly for his mission – so too the Brothers of Saint Paul place great value on the formation of their novices, postulants and aspirants. The majority of them will go on to bear witness to the Gospel by their lives as brothers in the congregation.

But right now, especially in the anti-Christian environment in which they live, they need a solid theological grounding, including Bible studies and liturgical training. Their formation also includes lessons in Church music and – an indispensable feature today – a basic grounding in IT studies. Once a week they visit the sick and they also



New apostles for the Church: the Missionary Brothers in their formation centre in Myetto.

regularly go out to the remotest villages. Today they are active in a number of dioceses in the country.

There is no shortage of new vocations; currently they have five postulants and 42 aspirants in formation. For such a young congregation, which began with nothing, it is not easy to cope with the cost of their training, board and travel expenses. And, to put it bluntly, they cannot cope.

Yet at the same time they do not wish to turn away any genuine new vocations, nor will they consider taking shortcuts in their formation programme. For the entire Gospel must be proclaimed, in season and out of season. So they have turned to ACN

for help (£6,300) and we have promised our support. “For the labourer is worthy of his hire” (Lk 10:7). And as for us, is it not “more blessed to give”? (Acts 20:35) ●



Computer studies: no doubt Saint Paul would be doing the same thing today.



Studying and finding new strength in their community retreat.

Being the hands of Christ

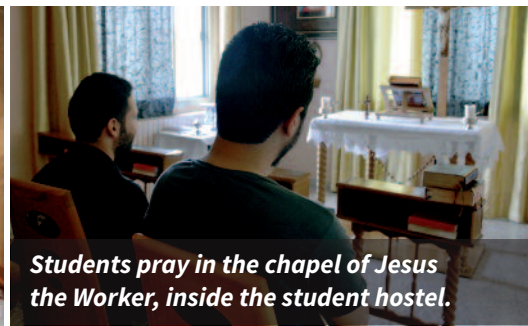
India’s Malabar Missionary Brothers are brothers to the helpless and forgotten.

Founded 70 years ago in the archdiocese of Trichur in Kerala, today their congregation is present in 18 Indian dioceses. Their mission is to evangelise through “service in humility” according to the Franciscan charism. Living a life of poverty and renunciation, working for long hours each day, they give religious instruction, care for mentally handicapped children and young people who have become involved in crime, run orphanages,

help unemployed young men, visit the elderly, abandoned and the sick. For the needy, the brothers are the hands and the love of Christ. Their work is exhausting and saps both their physical and spiritual strength. The brothers are men of prayer, but even they need to recharge their “spiritual batteries” from time to time. They achieve this through spiritual retreats and training courses – but with their charitable work and other expenses they have no money left for spiritual formation. We have promised £2,800 for 43 brothers for a fortnight’s retreat. ●



Paying out bursaries: everything is carefully recorded.



Students pray in the chapel of Jesus the Worker, inside the student hostel.



Medical student Boutros studies in his room in the student hostel.

Praying – and studying – for a peaceful future

“In principio erat Verbum – in the beginning was the Word; at the origin of everything is the creative reason of God”, said Pope Benedict XVI. Faith and reason are necessary for each other. “Without reason, faith degenerates; without faith, reason threatens to become stunted.”

Using our reason is essential for us as Christians, so that we can understand our Faith better. For Christians in Islamic countries, and especially in [Syria](#), it is also needed for

survival. Only well-educated Christians can defend themselves when questioned by their Islamic neighbours and flourish and thrive in this environment. A good education is also necessary for young Christians to have any chance in the job market. And only young Christians who are enrolled at university can avoid conscription in the army.

Education is the key to peaceful coexistence among those of conflicting beliefs. That is one reason why Christians in the Middle East have always attached great importance to their children receiving a good education. For

Christians who are now returning to Aleppo, or who have never left the city, issues such as how they will pay for their children’s studies are never far from their minds.

Working with ten local Christian Churches, ACN has drawn up a programme to support students. Under this scheme some 7,340 young people will receive **£20** per month for the duration of the academic year (eight months) – to help with transport, food and other essentials.

The Church also organises spiritual events for students, to support their souls in addition to supporting their studies. The students’ prayers, along with their studies, can help to build a peaceful future in Syria. Would you consider supporting one student for one year in Aleppo? ●

Hope in a drop of milk

Milk is vital for the healthy growth of children – but it can also be expensive.

Many families in [Syria](#) simply cannot afford it, so for three years now we have been supporting the “Drop of Milk” campaign for Christian families in Aleppo. A list of all children under 11 years has been drawn up and a distribution centre set up in a safe quarter of the city where dried milk is regularly provided. Some 3,000 children receive a regular ration of powdered milk every month.

All the Christian Churches in Aleppo are involved, and the “Drop of Milk” campaign unites families across the religious divide, feeding not only the children but people’s hope for a life lived in peace together.

One month’s supply costs **£18,000** – and we have promised help for the whole of this year. ●



This is our milk powder – Thank you to everyone who has helped us!



A Family of Divine Providence



“He who ventures nothing for God will achieve nothing great for him either.” St Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort (1673 – 1716) ventured a great deal, and today Montfortian Brothers, inspired by his spirit, are achieving great things too.

They are not performing miracles, and yet in their actions and prayers they bear witness to the beauty of the consecrated life, which they have chosen for the love of God. The Brothers of Christian Instruction of St Gabriel devote themselves to the education of children and young people. “Education is our special charism”, says Brother Mathai Moolakara,

who heads their monastery in Dar es Salaam, **Tanzania**. They run schools and organise retreats. Faithful to Church teaching, they fulfil their mission with perseverance and prayer. And they are attracting new vocations. When they began in Morogoro in 2009, they had just three novices. Now they have 23 from seven different countries. Worldwide, this congregation of pontifical right now has 1,300 members in 33 countries. Like Louis de Montfort, they pray the Rosary daily. Pope St John Paul II himself referred to Louis de Montfort as his “reference point in life, who gave me light in all the decisive moments of my life”; and took his papal motto, “*Totus Tuus*” (“All yours [O Mary]”) from St Louis.

Saint Louis described his congregation as a “family of divine providence”. And the brothers in Dar es Salaam display this same trust in Divine Providence. They beg alms and give to the poor, they work in the fields and share the fruits of their labour with needy families, they pray with young people and go into villages to visit the sick and elderly. In short, they bear witness to God’s loving mercy. For



Education is the charism: Montfortian novices attending a lecture.

years they lived by the fruit of their own labour, but with growing numbers of brothers the land does not yield enough, and costs are rising. Yet they still want to continue teaching the young, and they would like more brothers to join their mission, but these would need a solid training. They are asking us for **£4,100** for their novices. Once again they are trusting in Divine Providence. Not that they have not put their hand to the plough themselves. In the coming years they are planning to become self-sufficient by cultivating more land and growing more bananas, maize and vegetables. And they also plan to develop their present chicken coop into a farm, with rabbits, 10 cows and 20 pigs, hoping to be able to live from the income generated by this livestock rearing. But first they need help for the next two years. They have a bold vision for God and the mission – and we can help them with our prayers and whatever we can give. ●



“God alone” was the motto of Saint Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort.



Fraternal and missionary

After 32 years as Bishop and then Archbishop of Huambo in Angola, Mgr José de Queirós Alves has now retired. In a letter to ACN he thanks all of you, on behalf of his people, for all the help you have given over the years. “Whenever we turned to you in our need, you were there, both as mis-



*In the midst of his faithful...
Archbishop Emeritus José de Queirós Alves.*

sionaries and as brothers and sisters. When your support came to us it was a sign that God was with us; your encouragement helped us to grow in faith.” Now archbishop emeritus, he thanks us, “not just for your great generosity, but also for the missionary spirit” in which we helped them and he prays to “the risen Lord to continue to fill and enlighten the hearts of the benefactors.” And Mgr Alves promises to remember us every day when he offers the holy sacrifice of the Mass.



Thomas Heine-Geldern,
Executive President,
ACN (International)

Dear Friends,

A Christian industrialist once said to me that our task in everyday life was “to reduce the distance that separates us from Jesus Christ in our daily activities”. If this is really the case, then fasting is one way in which we can go about drawing closer to our Lord. By fasting I am not talking about some kind of modern detox programme, but rather the genuinely Christian notion of freely giving something up for God. I always find it very moving when I hear of individual Christians, and also of religious communities, who have consciously renounced some of life’s comforts in order to come to the aid of our needier brothers and sisters. I am quite sure that our giving to the persecuted and suffering Church – when it comes at the same time as a conscious act of renunciation for the sake of the Gospel – has a particular spiritual power, because it has its origin in the desire to imitate Christ. Perhaps this Lenten season can lead us to a deeper understanding of the profound significance of fasting, as a form of spiritual sharing.

I am moved to share these thoughts with you by the many, many appeals for help that reach us daily. And I have no doubt that I can continue to count on your generous response.

Yours gratefully,

Thomas Heine-Geldern

Need, love and thanks – your letters

Little things with love

Every month I collect up my small change and put it in a piggy bank, so that in December I am able to give a bigger donation with the money I’ve saved over the course of the year. I’m just an ordinary woman and can’t contribute much. So this is my offering for my brothers and sisters in greatest need.

A benefactor in Brazil

Closer to God

We’d like to thank you for your very profound letter in the August ’18 issue of the Mirror. By reminding us of the great need of the Church in the Holy Land, you showed how through a closer relationship with God and educating families in God’s peace we can help the Good News to reach every family in the world!

A married couple in Belgium

Greetings from an old friend

As a friend of your wonderful charity for many years, I want to thank you for all you are

doing for our persecuted and suffering brothers and sisters. I have come to appreciate the truly evangelical warmth of those working for your charity, which is truly in the spirit of Father Werenfried! For some years now I have been promoting your spiritual and fundraising initiatives and this year we have been able to collect a total of 80 Euros, which I am now sending you. Of course it is only a drop in the ocean of need, but it is a drop of water which can little by little form a ripple, then a stream, and then a torrent...

A benefactor in France

Ordinary benefactors’ “integrity”

I enjoy the Mirror very much. I am frequently moved by the ‘testimonials’ by the donors (apart from the content of the bulletins themselves). Often the donors are poor pensioners in Europe or Australia giving their widows’ mites. This has integrity and I am sure the Lord is pleased with these offerings.

A benefactor in Australia

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 direct debit, or have sent a donation recently, please accept our sincere thanks. This Mirror is for your interest and information.

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