

# Coming to the aid of St Thomas's children



A Sister from the Missionaries of Mary Mediatrix, whose vital pastoral work in far-flung villages, like this one in Gumuda, Odisha State, has been helped by ACN.

**The persecution of India's Christians sharply increased in 2016 following the rise to power of Prime Minister Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) – and has continued at record levels ever since.**

It is difficult to say just how many attacks have happened – but one report suggested there were 440 anti-Christian incidents in 2017 and 477 in 2018. These have included:

- Christians beaten for their Faith.
- Christians denied access to water or other essentials.

■ Attacks on churches and the desecration of holy images and statues. The biggest factor in the growing oppression of Christians is the spread of Hindutva ideology – a right-wing form of Hindu nationalism that sees India as a Hindu nation which should not tolerate other religions.

The BJP's political success has facilitated a surge in attacks against minority religious groups by Hindutva extremists.

But in a situation of spiralling persecution, Aid to the Church in Need

is helping the Church continue its mission of love in some of the most far-flung areas.

**ACN is providing support for Sisters, catechists, priests and other pastoral workers who are toiling for the Church** not only during times of persecution, but also in the distant, rural villages across India – as you will read on the back of this report.

Your love is enabling us to come to the aid of St Thomas's children – who still cling to the Faith that the apostle brought to India in the first century. ✚





## Training shepherds for a suffering Church

Across India ACN is helping seminarians – these seminarians in Bangalore have just been ordained to the diaconate.

**The Church in Assam has faced persecution before – but nothing like the series of ferocious attacks which rocked it in late 2018.**

These began in early October when a Hindutva mob beat up three Christians in Dhaligaon village, Bongaigaon District – demanding all Christians leave the area.

The violence culminated shortly before Christmas when St Thomas Church, Chapatoli was vandalised on 15<sup>th</sup> December.

In Assam's Bongaigaon Diocese there are around 67,000

Catholics among a total population of some 64 million, mostly belonging to the indigenous peoples.

**Despite the unrest, young men are hearing the call of God and coming forward to minister to Christ's flock in these troubled times. So ACN is providing help for the training of 23 seminarians in Bongaigaon Diocese.**

These men come from poor, indigenous families who can do little to contribute financially to their sons' formation, which is why your love is needed so we can help these young men and others like them to respond to God's call. 🙏

## Journey into the wilderness – by moped

**In south-east India, many of Eluru Diocese's 1,150 villages are accessible only via narrow, rough roads that priests and catechists have spent many hours traversing on foot, as they made their way from one village to the next.**

There is deep poverty among the faithful living in these villages – most of them work as casual labourers, living from hand to mouth. Even children work in the fields.

But if they are poor in the world's goods nevertheless they want to store up treasure in heaven – and always rejoice when they are visited by priests or catechists.

The Church is committed to providing social and pastoral support for the villagers.

**Thanks to you, we have been able to provide four mopeds, so that the priests, catechists and other pastoral workers can reach these villages more easily and bring the Faith they are hungering for.**

Bishop Jaya Rao Polimera of Eluru extends his heartfelt thanks and promises his prayers for all our benefactors.

Thank you for your love. 🙏



Sisters, pastoral workers and a priest with two of the new mopeds which will put their pastoral ministry into a higher gear.