

*Cuba: the Rosary is
reviving faith, across
the generations*

“In Christ, our life is a mission! We are mission, because we are God’s love poured out, God’s holiness created in his own image. Mission, then, is our own growth in holiness and that of the whole world, beginning with creation.”

Pope Francis

Dear Friends,

Pope Francis has proclaimed October 2019 as an Extraordinary Missionary Month, to mark the hundredth anniversary of Pope Benedict XV’s apostolic exhortation on mission, *Maximum illud*. The aim of the month is to raise more awareness about mission. In Pope Francis’s letter on *Maximum illud*, he writes: “Today missionary activity still represents the greatest challenge for the Church and the missionary task must remain foremost... Throughout the world, let us be ‘permanently in a state of mission... May the Extraordinary Missionary Month prove an intense and fruitful occasion of grace, and promote initiatives and above all prayer, the soul of all missionary activity.”

Being in a state of “permanent mission” can only be achieved by being in a state of “permanent prayer”. We are taught this by the “Little Flower” Saint Therese of Lisieux who, although she never left her convent, was nonetheless proclaimed by the Church as Patroness of the Missions. “Yes, prayer and sacrifice are my entire strength. They

are the invincible weapons that Jesus has given me. Far more than words, they have the power to touch souls”, she wrote. And together with so many of the saints we can confidently say that no other prayer can lead us into a state of ever deeper, more childlike abandonment to God and Our Lady than the Rosary. It is the true weapon of the saints. So it is surely no coincidence that the missionary month of October is also



“A ‘permanent state of mission’ can only be achieved through a ‘permanent state of prayer!’”

the month of the Holy Rosary.

The “smiling Pope”, as John Paul I was often called, related the following story: “Sitting in the train, I watched a woman who had placed her baby in the luggage net to sleep. When the little child awoke, he looked down from the net at his mummy, who was sitting opposite, watching over him. ‘Mummy’, he murmured. ‘Yes, my darling’ she replied. For a long time the conversation continued to and fro like this: ‘Mummy!’ – ‘Yes, my darling!’. No other words were necessary. So

is the Rosary a boring prayer? Well, that depends. It can also be a prayer full of joy and happiness. When we pray the Rosary properly, it can become a simple glance towards Mary and Jesus, a look that grows in loving intensity as we pray. It is like one of those simple refrains that well up from the heart and which, as we repeat them, soothe the soul like a song. Or would you rather hear lofty theological reflections? Such things are not suited to the poor, the elderly, the humble and simple souls.”

Dear friends, the goal of mission is to bring the Kingdom of God to every human heart. And this

Kingdom, as Jesus tells us, belongs to those who become like little children (Cf. Lk 18:16). May the prayer of the Rosary, during this Missionary Month of October, inflame our hearts with new confidence in God and with a missionary love for all people.

My grateful blessing on you all,

P. Martin M. Barta

Father Martin Maria Barta
Ecclesiastical Assistant



Trusting in God



Go out to all nations: grassroots mission in India.

St Therese of Lisieux, Doctor of the Church and Patroness of the Missions, summed up her life's mission in the following words: "My way is all about trust and love. Trust with your whole heart! It would be impossible for God not to respond, as he always measures out his gifts according to our trust. Trust can accomplish miracles!"

The missionary life demands trust in God. In the parish of Saint Joseph the Worker, in El Alto Diocese, **Bolivia**, trust in God has led the diocese to build a house where the Missionary Community of Christ the Shepherd will live and study. In a country suffering one of the most acute vocations crises in all Latin America, the community will be providing a 'new way' of forming priests and seminarians for missionary work. Men of different ages will live together in community, facilitating a mutual exchange of ideas and, as you'd find in a family, a mutual growth in understanding. Seminarians will have a spiritual director

who will support them and advise them in all aspects of their lives, so that they can grow, not just intellectually, but also personally. With the help of this support and the community's family atmosphere, seminarians will develop a deeper sense of their vocation and become more settled and confident in themselves. The community's spirituality also includes a commitment to poverty, in the sense of freedom from material things; chastity, as a source of vitality drawn from a deeper sense of devotion to God; and obedience, as a form of self renunciation helping them to serve Christ better. Their daily routine will include manual activities and work in the fields or gardens to help provide for the support of the community. Once training has finished, the missionaries will also be sent out into other dioceses of Bolivia in the confident trust that God is with them. We have promised **£24,700** towards the cost.

In Maintirano Diocese, **Madagascar**, Bishop Gustavo Bombin Espino found himself without any resources for missionary work. But knowing that over half the population of Madagascar still worship nature, he set to work nonetheless. And his trust



The mission house in Bolivia: trust is the cornerstone.

was rewarded: God has sent new vocations, and the people are eager to listen to him and to his priests. But for the bishop and his priests to be able to visit the small – but growing – coastal and riverside communities more easily and more often, he needed a sturdy boat with an outboard motor. His diocese extends around 260 miles (450 km) from north to south; travelling by car would take him three days and cost considerably more. We have provided **£19,400** so that he could purchase this boat.

Primary evangelisation is also vital in central **India**, particularly in the eparchy of Chanda. Together with his priests, deacons and religious Sisters, Bishop Ephrem Nariculam of the Syro-Malabar Church reaches out to the families. They visit families in their homes, give instruction to young and old alike, distribute Bibles, prepare candidates for Baptism and the other sacraments. They call it grassroots mission and have worked out an action plan for the next three years. The aim is to strengthen the Catholic presence, so that people can live in peace and trusting in God's love. We are supporting this programme with **£12,400**. ●



Ready for her maiden voyage: Bishop Gustavo and the new boat.



This is my Body



Adoro te devote, latens Deitas

Godhead here in hiding, whom I do adore...

This Eucharistic hymn by St Thomas Aquinas is among the most beautiful attempts in Christian literature to penetrate this great Mystery of our Faith.

Whether high in the Andes, in the depths of Africa, or in a small chapel in India – God is there.

Seeing, touching, tasting, are in Thee deceived. How says trusty hearing? That shall be believed...

All the great saints have revered this sacrament, this everlasting gift of Christ. It is the living sign, the very core of our faith – God is here. God is with us.

On the cross Thy godhead made no sign to men. Here Thy very manhood steals from human ken. Both are my confession, both are my belief...

Both God and Man beneath the outward form of bread... How can our limited human understanding ever fully grasp the breadth, the height and depth of God's love for his creatures?

Jesus whom I look at, shrouded here below, I beseech thee, send me what I long for so. Some day to gaze on thee, face to face in light, and be blest for ever with thy glory's sight.

The Eucharist is a sign of God's presence. And the priests – through whose hands the Mystery is made present – are vital. Without them there can be no living Eucharistic presence of Christ. God comes to us through the sacrament. Every 22 seconds, somewhere in the world, Mass is offered on behalf of one of ACN's benefactors. It is a gift of life, in a double sense. Firstly, for the faithful, who are thereby united with the Lord, it leads to divinisation, as the great mystic Saint John of the Cross calls it, our partaking in the very nature of God. Secondly, for the priest who calls down from heaven the Bread of Eternal Life that feeds souls, it allows him at the same time to receive the bread of earthly life that feeds stomachs – thanks to the benefactor's Mass stipend. Often this is the only financial support priests receive. Thanks to our benefactors, we are able to support one priest in every 10 worldwide. Given the nature of the miracle, should it not be even more?





When children pray

It is a worldwide movement, a garland of children around the globe. A children's chain of prayer, spanning from Australia to Asia, to Europe, to Africa, to America. They pray the Rosary - on 18 October each year - and have been doing so for 13 years now. And this year they will be praying for the missions as well.



It all began in Venezuela, when some mothers discovered a little group of children, all aged 10 or under, gathered beneath a tree praying the Rosary for their families and for peace in the world. It was their little secret. But soon the children and their mothers wanted to share their secret. Their dream was for a million children to pray the Rosary at the same time, all around the world. Their mothers helped initially, then catechists, Sisters, teachers and grandparents from every land joined in, organising and coordinating Rosary groups with the children around the world. There are a great number of these today, although we have no precise statistics. But there are also costs involved - for translations, letters, prayer cards, travel costs, not to mention the maintenance of the internet site (www.millionkidspraying.org).

This year the campaign, "A million children praying the Rosary", will include an additional intention - support for the Missions. Pope Francis has proclaimed this October as an Extraordinary Missionary Month, with the aim of giving new impetus to the Church's mission. What better prayer could there be than the Holy Rosary? For as St John Paul II tells us, it puts us "in living communion with Jesus through the heart of his Mother". And this is the goal of the Church's mission. A goal for which the children are offering their hearts - a million times over.



Sri Lanka:
Hail Mary, full of grace...



Kazakhstan:
...the Lord is with thee.



Malawi: *Blessed art thou among women...*



India: *...and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.*



Macedonia:
Holy Mary, Mother of God...



Gabon:
...pray for us sinners, now...



Bolivia: *...and at the hour of our death. Amen.*

From a prayer of Fr Werenfried to Our Lady

Mother, now that the need is at its greatest and the powers of darkness seem to have free rein, we come to you with childlike trust and implore your powerful aid. Now, swept away and rudderless on the tempest of this age, we place ourselves, together with the whole of disfigured humanity and our organisation for the Church in need, in your maternal hands.

We consecrate ourselves to you, dear Virgin of Fatima. Preserve us in the love of your Son, protect us from the evil of this world and lead us safe to the heart of God. And grant, dear Mother, when we have passed through death's dark gate and stand before the Judgement Seat of your Son, that we may find you there with a smile in your eyes, and be able to say without fear: "Here we are, Mother."



Opening hearts to God

“The human soul has two powers, one is active and the other contemplative. Through the former the soul advances, through the latter the soul attains its goal.” These words of St Augustine guide the Sisters of the youthful, contemplative – but not enclosed – community of Mary, Star of the Morning.

Theirs is a life of silent prayer and adoration – especially with young people. Founded in Spain in 2014, the community already numbers 300 Sisters in 13 different countries. For the past three years they have lived near to the Marian shrine of Our Lady of Yagma, in Ouagadougou Archdiocese, **Burkina Faso**. They start their day with prayer at 5 a.m. During the day people from the surrounding villages come to them, seeking counsel and joining with them in prayer. Often the Sisters also go into the villages, helping women in their homes and teaching the children about God. It is a mission of prayer and works. And the seed is sprouting; many young people are coming to the Sisters and to the night-time

adoration sessions, especially on the major feasts like Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. Here in the community chapel you can see the concrete evidence of what Pope Francis meant when he said, “Young people are the greatest and most precious treasure of Africa”.

In order to bring children and young people closer to God today, it is essential to provide a solid formation for their hearts and spirits. To this end the Sisters particularly rely upon the Holy Scriptures and on the encyclicals of the recent popes. They encourage study and prayer in small groups of six people. Ultimately, though, it is the good example and the joyful spirit of the Sisters themselves which persuade the young people and help open their hearts to God.

In just a few years since the original four religious Sisters from France, Taiwan and Cameroon arrived in the archdiocese, their numbers have already grown to seven, and there are others already waiting – despite the fact that they can see that the Sisters live in



Joyful in everything they do: Sister Marie and Sister Alix enjoying a short break.

poverty. The monthly cost of the upkeep for all seven religious, including rent, food, transport, medication and other daily needs, comes to almost £900. They manage to bring in a few hundred pounds by their weaving, embroidery and producing Easter candles. But inevitably, the Sisters are dependent on outside donations; this not surprising in a country and a diocese that are among the poorest in the world. However, they entrust themselves entirely to God. We have promised them **£4,600** for the support of their life and ministry. ●



Unless you become like little children... Adoration in the Sisters' chapel.



Work is also prayer: supporting themselves through weaving.



Music for the glory of God: the five Sisters and two postulants.



It was encouraging and gratifying to have ACN's work recognised at the highest level. On the Solemnity of the Assumption, Pope Francis blessed 6,000 Rosaries at the request of ACN. This happened during the Angelus in St Peter's Square. The Rosaries are destined for Syrian Christians who have lost loved ones during the war yet still remain in their country – thanks in no small part to your own generous support. The photo shows the Holy Father examining one of the Rosaries presented to him by ACN (International)'s executive president Thomas Heine-Geldern. Syria's Christians now face new battles, fighting to rebuild their homes and praying for peace.



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

Dear Friends,

This column gives me the regular opportunity of thanking you most warmly on behalf of our project partners and so strengthen the bridge of love and faith between our benefactors and the suffering Church. However, today I am also taking the liberty of asking something of you as well!

No, this is not another appeal for money.

Instead my request is much more about your involvement in the mission, and quite specifically the mission to our fellow men and women in our own home countries. All of us, whether benefactors, volunteers or full-time employees of ACN, or friends of the charity, are called to bear witness in our own environment to Jesus and his Gospel message. I am convinced that we can ultimately only help our oppressed Christian brethren if we always try to reveal God and his loving plan of salvation to others by our own personal example.

It is not a matter of seeking to impose our faith on others but rather of radiating the faith in such a way that those around us may find the courage to give it a chance for themselves.

Let us work together to awaken their interest in God! This is my request to you,

Need, love and thanks – your letters

A tangible sign

Thank you for your generous practical aid for all those among us who are still suffering the unimaginable consequences of war. It is encouraging for me to see how you are putting into practice what the Church teaches and which represents her most fundamental essence. This is in sharp contrast to the empty rhetoric with which the threats to traditional values from Western society or from Islam are so often greeted. It is the people who are suffering and dying, and your response to them, that constitute the tangible proof of our faith and of the Christian message. I thank you for this witness.

A benefactor in Slovakia

For ACN instead of the gardener

I have a very large garden and I used to employ a gardener to look after it. But I recently decided to stop using the gardener and began to give up some of my very busy time in order to look after the garden myself. In this way I have been able to save

some money which I can now send to ACN, since I am profoundly moved by the work you are doing.

A benefactress in Portugal

For married couples and families

We are enclosing a contribution of 240 Euros that we were given for our 10th wedding anniversary. We would like this money to go on a couple of projects for strengthening married couples and families.

A married couple in Austria

Helping to carry their Cross

Thank you for your work on behalf for our brothers and sisters who are suffering for their faith. You are by their side, helping us to be aware of the difficulties of their daily life. These people are the Simon of Cyrene of our times. Jesus has granted them the honour of helping him to carry his Cross. And we too are privileged to share this honour through our own prayers and offerings.

A benefactress in France

Where to send your contribution for the Church in Need

Our address: 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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