



## Hope and healing for Sri Lanka's Christians

St Sebastian's Church, Negombo, in western Sri Lanka, was damaged during the Easter 2019 explosions.

**Thanks to your generosity, Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) provided help for more than 2,000 people following the 2019 Easter Day bombings in Sri Lanka.**

The explosions that devastated three churches, killing 259 and physically injuring many more, were part of the biggest attack on Christians in recent times.

As Sri Lanka's Christian community reeled from the atrocity – which Daesh (ISIS) claimed responsibility for – ACN supported those caught up in the violence, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with them in their pain.

**ACN assistance included backing the local Church's psychological and pastoral aid programme for bomb victims.**

Father Nishantha Cooray, a Franciscan who ministered to the

injured and dying following the atrocity, shared his testimony at recent ACN events. **He said: "Our people need healing. We are accompanying them through their pain."**

Your prayers, support and kindness have helped their healing process begin.

Unfortunately, the bombings were the latest in a series of attacks that have affected Sri Lanka's Christians and other minorities since the end of the civil war.

But, as you will read inside, ACN has provided ongoing help including building churches, supporting Sisters and distributing Mass stipends to priests ministering to beleaguered Christians.

With your assistance the country's Christians are recovering from their wounds. 🙏



# Showing the love of Christ to bomb victims



"The Church who, as Mother, has borne the Christian sacramentally in her womb during his earthly pilgrimage, accompanies him at his journey's end, in order to surrender him 'into the Father's hands'... and she commits to the earth, in hope, the seed of the body that will rise in glory" (Catechism 1683).



This statue of the risen Jesus was marked with the blood of the faithful killed during the Easter bombing. The Church did not remove it, leaving it as a testimony to their martyrdom. The statue is now displayed in this glass case.

**Aid to the Church in Need is supporting the victims of the Easter Sunday terrorist bombings, working with the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka.**  
The Archdiocese of Colombo moved quickly to provide medical



Damaged Church items in St Anthony's Shrine shortly after the deadly blast.

Image: Archdiocese of Colombo

**and material aid for affected families.** Many not only lost a beloved family member, but also the family's only breadwinner, meaning they now face financial ruin.  
The archdiocese set up a team of 40 certified trauma therapists to provide psychological assistance to those traumatised by the bombings, including those who lost family members. ACN is funding this project.  
In the months following the bombings, our Church partners also developed

therapy programmes designed to help children, families and people living alone. **These initiatives are supporting more than 2,000 people.** 300 specialists were trained to deliver the programmes.  
The programmes also look after the spiritual health of individuals, and includes a Bible-based session called "Healing for the Wounds of the Heart".  
Only through your generous love have our partners been able to follow the Lord, who "heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (Psalm 146:3). ☩

## Father Nishantha – caring for a bomb-blasted Church

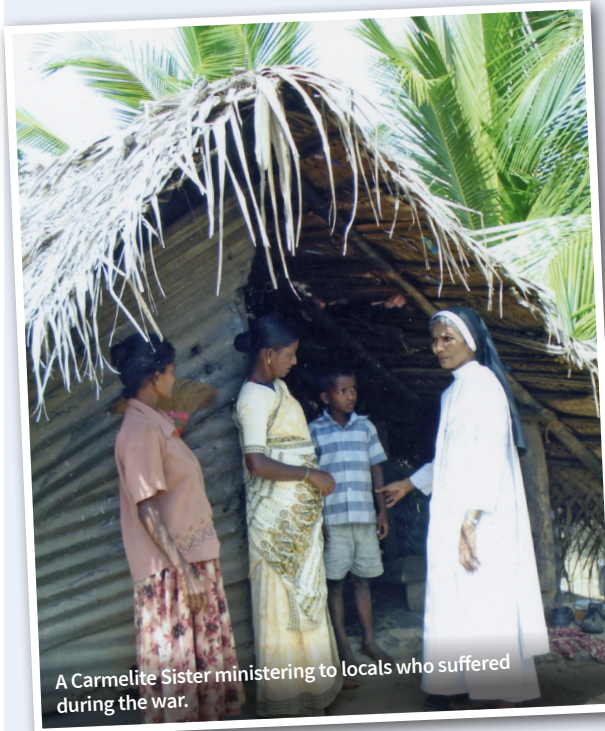


**Father Nishantha Cooray helped victims of the 2019 Easter Day bombings.**

Speaking in the Houses of Parliament at the launch of ACN's *Persecuted and Forgotten? A Report on Christians oppressed for their Faith 2017-19*, he described ministering to a flock hit by tragedy, saying: "The people who are grieving, the people who are wounded, need justice..."

Father Nishantha thanked ACN's benefactors for all their help: **"Your generosity is highly appreciated and your generosity will heal many wounded hearts."** ☩

## Rebuilding a monastery so Sisters can rebuild lives



A Carmelite Sister ministering to locals who suffered during the war.

**The Carmelite Sisters in Karaveddy ministered to the suffering people who bore the brunt of the bloody civil war between the Tamil rebels and government forces for almost three decades (1983-2009).**

The fighting eventually forced the Sisters to flee. **When they returned after the war, they found their monastery was ruined.**

Moving temporarily to a rented house, they immediately resumed their apostolic work, giving catechetical instruction, leading prayer groups, preparing children for their first Holy Communion and working with poor children and those still suffering from the war.

The Sisters wanted to help more children, particularly the girls who have



This is what the Sisters found was left of their monastery when they returned.

suffered during the war, but they could not do so in their temporary home.  
So, they turned to ACN, writing: "We hope and pray that the Lord may inspire still more people to help us to finish this urgently needed building."

**Today, they are in their new home, and thankful for your help which has allowed their ministry to flourish.**  
Their work is helping to give hope to the needy, the poor and those whose lives were devastated by the war. ☩



# Giving the Church room to grow



**ACN helped repair and extend the small chapel of St Anthony in Sri Lanka's central highlands (pictured left).**

It is located in a jungle village, miles from the nearest town. When it was built in 1948 there were just 43 Catholic families here – today that has grown to 95.

Over the years the chapel suffered the ravages of time, desperately needing repairs, and became far too small for Holy Mass, prayer or catechism classes. Currently there are six catechists and almost 80 children attend the catechesis group.

**Father Alvin Peter Fernando comes every fortnight to celebrate Holy Mass – even though it takes him more than an hour to complete the 20+ mile journey.**

He told ACN: “After the renovation and extension work was completed, the chapel was formally consecrated by our bishop. It now rises up majestically, standing tall and offering more space, more light...”

**“I want to thank you for your contribution and to assure you that we will always pray for you and all your generous benefactors.”** ✚

## Sri Lanka's Suffering Christians



A priest in a cemetery in Negombo points out the graves of those killed in the 2019 Easter bombings.

**Attacks on Christians and other minority groups – most significantly the country's Muslim community – increased following the end of the civil war.**

Usually, Sinhalese Buddhist nationalists carry out these attacks. They see faith, nationality and ethnicity as closely intertwined and want to drive out what they see as foreign faiths – even though there has been a small

Christian presence in the country since the early Church period.

**The National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka recorded 86 incidents of discrimination, threats, and violence against Christians in 2018, the vast majority carried out by nationalist groups.**

Aid to the Church in Need's recent *Persecuted and Forgotten?* report described how on Palm Sunday 2019

– which coincided with Sinhalese New Year – a mob surrounded a church in Anuradhapura and made “murderous threats” to the congregation, pelting the building with stones and firecrackers. But such attacks pale in comparison with the Islamist extremist bomb blasts which occurred a week later.

Please keep our suffering brothers and sisters in Sri Lanka in your hearts and in your prayers. ✚