

**“Mother, help our faith! Help us to be touched by God’s love, that we may touch him in faith.”**

**Pope Francis, *Lumen fidei***



***Our gift to Syria:  
Pope Francis blesses the  
icon of Our Lady of Sorrows,  
Consoler of the Syrian People.***

*Dear Friends,*

When we recite the Creed in Holy Mass, the liturgy indicates that at the words “by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary” we should bow (something many people don’t seem to know). And at Christmas we kneel at these words. The mystery of Christmas lies at the heart of our faith. Without the Incarnation of God, without the birth of Christ, Christians would indeed be living in the dark ages (as they were mockingly accused of doing during the Enlightenment) and faith would indeed be no more than dark obscurantism, holding people in ignorance, preventing them from thinking for themselves.

Instead, the opposite is true: our faith is the true Light. It is no mere leap into the dark, in defiance of all reason. Faith can see, hear and touch the truth. Faith enables us to understand the most important thing in all the world: the Light that enlightens all things, which came into the world so that all who believe in him might not remain in the darkness (cf Jn 12:46). The light of faith is no mere subjective feeling, capable only of

warming the heart for a time or bringing a sense of personal consolation. Faith is a testimony to a real person, Jesus Christ; faith in his deeds and words as God made Man. In our encounter with him, God grants us his overwhelming love and speaks to us the words of truth that enlighten not only



***“Faith is no mere leap into the dark, in defiance of all reason. Faith can even see, hear and touch the truth.”***

particular moments of our lives, but our entire existence. He has done all this in order to give us the guarantee that his love is utterly dependable and that every good thing has its origin in this love.

Hence, our faith is a form of knowledge that gives new meaning to the whole of reality. Only the truth of the love of God, who is faithful to us in all circumstances, can give us the confidence and courage to approach the future with hope. Faith recognises that love always goes before us, that love is the first gift, the fundamental gift that transforms us and works in us and through us. Faith is the great truth that explains all others.

But might not this claim to all truth perhaps seem suffocating? Does it not deprive us of our freedom? Not at all. Let us simply contemplate the Christmas mystery, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The faith revealed in Jesus does not prevail by force, but gives itself in service to others and thus speaks to the intellect, the conscience and the heart. The genuine believer is not arrogant but humble. He knows that it is not he who possesses love, but rather that it is love that surrounds and possesses him.

My dear friends, Christmas invites us to welcome the joy of faith once more, so that we can share this joy with one another and mutually bestow on one another the rich gifts of faith.

To all of you, and your families, my grateful wishes for a blessed Christmas,

*P. Martin M. Barta*

*Father Martin Maria Barta  
Ecclesiastical Assistant*



## For the future of the Church

“Your Mass stipends are not merely a support for us, as formators in this seminary, but also a testimony of faith and solidarity”, says Father Bruno Saleh, the rector of Kasongo seminary, Democratic Republic of the Congo. He gives thanks to God first and then also to you for the kindness and help shown to him and his four brother priests in the form of Mass stipends for 20 sets of Gregorian Masses. It is through the Holy Eucharist, precisely, that they feel so closely united with you. Your kindness makes them “conscious of just how lovingly the benefactors have taken us into their hearts and above all how great is their faith in the future of the Church in placing their trust in the future bearers of the New Evangelisation.”



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

*Dear Friends,*

*Christmas is coming, and we look forward to it with joy. With the feast of Our Lord’s birth, Mary and Joseph also became a family. Depending on where we are in our lives, we are striving to live, longing to live, or gratefully recalling our lives, as a family. We do this despite the prevailing mentality, which seeks to lead us in the opposite direction.*

*When we gather around the manger to contemplate the miracle of the Incarnation, we are celebrating a family feast that is often regarded by Christians as the greatest of the year. But what about Easter? Perhaps to our human minds the mystery of a newborn Child and a family is easier to grasp than the mystery of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus.*

*Both feasts are fundamental to our faith, however, and it is only together that they bring us redemption.*

*Perhaps we can share this understanding with those we love through a “gift of faith” and in this way help our oppressed brothers and sisters also to experience Christmas as a feast of joy, peace and light.*

*With my warmest wishes to you all for a blessed Christmastide, together with my heartfelt thanks for your understanding and your generous help.*

## Need, love and thanks – your letters

### For our priests and their flock

*Enclosed a little help for our dear priests and their flock. I pray for hope, strength and love for all those who are suffering in Nigeria. I pray for those who are causing the suffering. May God the Holy Spirit enlighten their minds and fill their hearts to overflowing with love. God bless you.*

**A religious Sister in Australia**

### Tangible proof

*My warmest thanks for sending your 2018 report on the work of ACN. I am filled with wonder and admiration at the determination with which ACN is bringing the love of God to so many people through these helping hands. You are tangible proof of the fact that our God is the God of Love and that this love reveals a human face in so many kind hearts.*

**A bishop from Austria**

### Heartwarming

*I have always been convinced that ACN is inspired by God’s grace and that every donation, no matter how small, bears rich fruit thanks to your work in God’s vineyard. What I find so particularly heartwarming about the Mirror, and what has really given new heart to my own life of faith are the many young people about whom you report. Whether it be the summer camps for children, the many young novices in Ukraine or the travels of young people from Belarus to the World Youth Day in Panama, it is all so good to see.*

**A benefactor in Germany**

### The arm of Divine Mercy

*ACN is like a powerful arm of Divine Mercy, helping us to save souls and lives through the little offerings we are able to make in love and fidelity!*

**A benefactor in Brazil**

## 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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