



# Fostering a Faith under Fire

Mass at the chapel at Kububa outstation, Holy Cross Catholic Parish, Dhadim, southern Ethiopia. ACN is providing pastoral support for the parish.

**As Christians come under increased attack across the Horn of Africa, ACN has redoubled support for our suffering brothers and sisters.**

During the past two years more than 30 churches have been attacked in Ethiopia – with about half burned to the ground. Around 100 Christians were killed in these attacks.

In neighbouring Eritrea, the last 12 months saw government troops forcibly confiscating 21 hospitals, health centres and clinics run by the Catholic Church. More than 150 Christians have been arrested because of their Faith.

The problems in these countries have very different causes. The reason for the attacks in Ethiopia divides commentators, although heightened tensions between different ethnic groups may have played a part.

By contrast, in Eritrea the authorities' severe clampdown on religious groups has led the US Commission on International Religious Freedom to list it as a "Country of Particular Concern".

Aid to the Church in Need is supporting a wide range of pastoral projects to foster the Faith as it comes under fire – including helping to pass it on to the next generation.

Project partners in Ethiopia are happy for the charity to share information about our project work there but in Eritrea this is not always possible for fear of putting the faithful at risk.

Thanking our benefactors, one religious superior in Eritrea told us: "We always keep you in our prayer, and may God reward you a hundredfold for your generosity." ✚





## Rich in Faith

**Parishioners in the parish of Our Lady, Shebo, are praying for a new chapel.**

Located in the far west of Ethiopia, the families living here were resettled from other parts of the country by the Marxist head of state Mengistu Haile Mariam during the devastating drought of 1985. They were promised a better life here, but became rapidly disillusioned. Shebo parish was set up to minister to those who were resettled there.

At one of the parish's five chapels there are 700 Catholic faithful – and an additional 62 people preparing for baptism. But the small mud chapel built by the community 15 years ago is now unusable following a termite attack and storm damage.

Parish priest, Father Netsanet Yadeta, turned to ACN for support to build a permanent chapel, which would provide a worthy place to celebrate Mass – not to mention somewhere to hold catechesis during the rainy season. ACN has promised to help with more than £25,000.

Father Netsanet said: "They are poor, but rich in faith. They have a strong faith and they insist that it is only thanks to the help of God that they are able to cope with all the difficulties of their lives." ☩

Palm Sunday being celebrated in the parish of Our Lady, Shebo, where they are hoping for a new chapel.

## The Word of the Lord came to me...



Father Mathews Augustine of Bethany Ashram on a pastoral visit.

**In a historic move, the Ethiopian Catholic Church invited friars from another Eastern Catholic Church to minister in three rural parishes – and the friars are ensuring that all parishioners are rooted in the Word of God.**

When in 2017 friars from Bethany Ashram took over the parishes in the Ethiopian Catholic Church's Apostolic Vicariate of Nekemte, it was the first time the Church had entrusted parishes to priests from another Eastern Rite.

Bethany Ashram is the main monastic order of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church – which, like the Ethiopian Catholic Church, is an Eastern Catholic Church in full communion with Rome. Brothers from the Ashram were first invited to minister in Ethiopia in 2009.

Father Mathews Augustine, one of the friars, described how they realised that they needed to renew the knowledge and love of the Scriptures among the people.

He said: "During the time of our house visits we came to know that there is the absence of Holy Bible in the families. Only the catechists and very few members in the congregation are having the Holy Bible. So we are trying to give some practice of reading and reciting the Bible, [and] reciting liturgical prayers before the Holy Mass."

It will cost just over £3,200 to ensure that not only each family but also every young person in the three parishes has a copy of the Holy Bible.

This important project will help renew and revive the spiritual life of the parishes to which the priests of Bethany Ashram are ministering. ☩

## Passing the torch among a scattered flock

**There are 5,000 baptised children under the age of seven in the Ethiopian parish of Dongora – and Father Mulugeta Moges Naramo wants to help them "mature in mental, psychological and spiritual growth".**

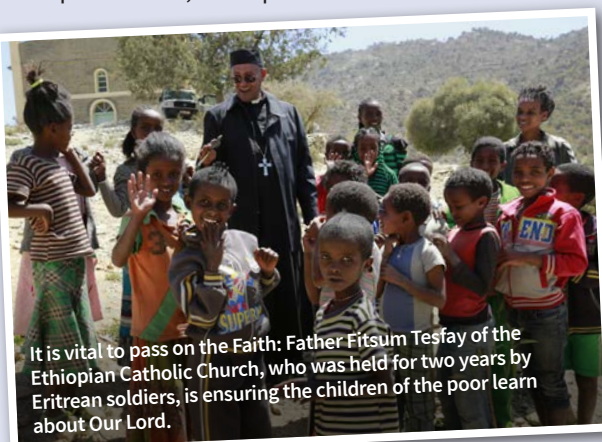
Father Mulugeta is determined to ensure that the Faith is passed on to the next generation - but that is no easy task when your parish is 33 miles from the nearest city, Hawassa, and consists of 32 rural chapels with 16,700 baptised Catholics.

Father Mulugeta tells us that all the children "are from baptised Catholic families. In most outstations their number is very high – more than 100".

Assisted by four missionary Sisters, four part-time Catechists and under the watchful care of assistant parish priest Fr Teshale Filo, the plan is to ensure that every child is taught the Faith and has fun learning about Our Lord and his Church.

They have a detailed plan on how they will pass on the torch of Faith to the coming generations at the 32 Mass stations and they need our support to provide text books, exercise books and other essentials so that the children can learn.

Father Mulugeta said: "We are one in Christ who said 'Go and preach the kingdom of God'. I assure you that we – all together with my Dongora Parishioners – pray for your spiritual and physical wellbeing." ☩



It is vital to pass on the Faith: Father Fitsum Tesfay of the Ethiopian Catholic Church, who was held for two years by Eritrean soldiers, is ensuring the children of the poor learn about Our Lord.



Even in remote places like Dongora parish the faithful are being strengthened with the Sacraments.



# Supporting the Sisters' struggle



Aspirants of Daughters of St Anne working in the fields.



Renovating the Sisters' convent.

**With Eritrea's priests and Sisters facing severe restrictions on travelling abroad to study, Aid to the Church in Need has offered to help with their training.**

The Provincial Superior of the Ursulines told ACN government restrictions have impacted the formation of novices and other Sisters. She said: "We can't send any of our young Sisters abroad for further studies."

The local church has implemented distance-learning programmes to enable them to gain the knowledge they need. ACN has provided financial aid for the formation of 26 Ursuline sisters in Eritrea which has included tuition, books, pens, transport, clothes and basic living costs such as water and electricity.

ACN has also helped the Ursulines – whose work includes educating girls – to renovate one of their main convents.

The Provincial Superior told us: "The exterior part of the wall lost its plastering because of humidity, fracturing the masonry, the water enters into the inner part of the wall, the cement is getting extracted little by little thus disposed the building to ruin." She added that the humidity created health problems for those residing in the convent's dormitories.

The Provincial Superior said: "Once again I thank you very much on behalf of my congregation for your generosity... Our prayers go to your donors for without their generous hearts your hands would be empty." 🙏



Ursuline Sisters studying hard.

## Sanctifying Eritrea with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

In these times of crisis, Aid to the Church is supporting priests – including clerics from the Eritrean Catholic Church – via your Mass stipends, so they can minister to the faithful. Every 22 seconds Mass is offered somewhere in the world for the intentions of one of ACN's benefactors.

