

# MIRROR

**“The enemy will say to us: ‘Close yourself up in yourself... do not be trusting!’**

**Goodness, on the contrary, invites us to open up, to be clear and trusting in God and in others.”**

**Pope Francis,  
Regina Caeli prayer, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2020**

*Communing with God:  
an Indian seminarian reading the Bible.*

*Dear Friends,*

God is love, and love is about relationships. The Most Holy Trinity is the “pure relationship” of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Created in the image of God, we are also created as “relational beings”, and from the beginning, we are born into a world of relationships that make us who we are. The family provides us with our first experience of relationships and therefore of love. The family is the most important institution in forming our relationships, attachments and personality.



**“Our relationship with God cannot be lived online, but needs real presence and communion.”**

Our family relationships have been put to the test by the coronavirus crisis. Suddenly, families had to spend long periods together at home. It was both a challenge and an opportunity to forge something precious out of all this time spent together. The emergency also tested our relationships outside of the family. Although this has been, in many ways, a time of great solidarity, it also distanced us from each other. We could be easily tempted to see our neighbour, not as an image of God, but as a danger, as a potential carrier of the virus. On the one hand, the immense possibilities offered by the modern means

of communication have helped us, during the crisis, to maintain close contact with our family, friends and even the Church; on the other hand, with the virtual world of the Internet there comes the risk that our relationships will become less personal and more superficial. Even our relationship with God cannot be lived online, but needs real presence and communion.

Whoever learns to live in a genuine relationship of love with God, with their neighbour and with the world, becomes a saint. Let us ask ourselves, how do we behave towards God who never stops loving us, even though we often live as if he does not exist? What about our relationship with others, with our family, the world and ourselves? Thanks to modern technology, we are connected to each other as never before. Yet so many people lack real interpersonal relationships. Excessive use of social media changes our perception of reality: it can turn us into narcissists, erode the spirit of empathy and the capacity for independent

thinking, create dependencies, make people apathetic, and destroy the perspective of eternity. The challenge is to use these means of communication in moderation, with a sense of proportion, and above all to nurture personal relationships.

Dear friends, let us take advantage of this period of pandemic as an opportunity to foster genuine relationships. Let us relearn how to listen to God, to listen to one another, and above all give special attention to our children. Let us take time to pray, to reflect, to read. Let us make an effort to

build relationships with our children, by playing games with them or reading to them. This will bring our lives into line with the reality of divine love and then we will feel real empathy for all those who need our help.

With my grateful blessing on you all,

*P. Martin M. Barta*

Father Martin Maria Barta  
Ecclesiastical Assistant





# Teaching about true love in Africa

**“Indeed, the grace of the sacrament of marriage is intended before all else to perfect the couple’s love”, writes the Holy Father, and to this end, “Training in the areas of emotion and instinct is necessary”.**

The goal should be to perfect the love of the spouses by educating them about their emotional life and thus teach them a sense of “responsible parenthood” (as *Humanae Vitae* (10) puts it). This is why married couples are being trained to become counsellors, and experts in Natural Family Planning in many countries in Africa. In Kumbo Diocese, **Cameroon**, for example, 54 couples will each teach two others every month on the current course. By the end of the course more than 5,000 couples will have learnt about the Natural Family Planning methods permitted by the Church.

Project leaders Sebastian and Clarisse summarised the programme’s fruits thus: There are fewer abortions (secular organisations have been aggressively promoting artificial contraception and abortion among poorer families); fewer maternal deaths; parents can devote themselves more carefully to the upbringing of their children, thanks to better spaced births; couples discover a greater respect for the dignity of the woman; the spiritual life is enriched and conjugal love is deepened. ACN is supporting this programme with **£10,800**.



**After the course, Derrick and Antoinette are ready to teach others.**



**Cameroon: Clarisse, explaining human biology.**



**Bukavu: learning about marital happiness.**

In the Archdiocese of Bukavu in the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, Archbishop François-Xavier Maroy and the Council for the Laity are running a programme with young adults in 13 parishes. It aims to teach them about true love before they get married. They learn, as Pope Francis writes, that people can channel their

passions “in a beautiful and healthy way, increasingly pointing them towards altruism and an integrated self-fulfilment that can only enrich interpersonal relationships in the heart of the family”. We have promised **£13,500** towards the cost of programmes helping 26 married couples and 52 young adults.



**Being community: praying and singing are a vital part of it.**

## Religious literature

# Together let us praise the Lord

**Praising the Lord brings us together. Singing lifts up the soul to God.**

That is why prayer books and hymn books are like the glue that binds the community together. All the more so when the book in question is in one’s own local language – in this case Santalese, the language of the largest ethnic group in the diocese of Dina-**mpur** in northern **Bangladesh**. The diocese currently has around 62,000 Catholics and is

growing rapidly, and priests say that this book is one of the most important ways the Faith is taught to the people. By now the eighth edition (2013) is out of print, and they don’t have enough money to print a ninth . So since last December Bishop Sebastian Tudu has been looking for generous souls to help him. It will cost **£6,200** to print 5,000 copies. We have already said yes to him, on your behalf, so that next Christmas everyone can come together in prayer and song.





# God's word for children builds up the Church

**Saint Therese of Lisieux, the Patroness of the Missions, often liked to quote the words Jesus had spoken to Saint Francis of Assisi: "Go Francis, rebuild my ruined Church". In essence it is the same missionary mandate as "teach them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Mt 28:20).**

Today the Salesian Father Antonio is trying to rebuild the missionary work of the parish of Saint Therese in the diocese of Bo, **Sierra Leone**. There are 150 Catholic schools in the diocese, each with anything up to a thousand pupils, and the best way to proclaim the Gospel is through the ACN Child's Bible, "God speaks to His Children". In many of the schools there are practically no other books available. "It's a quite special experience for these children to actually hold a book in their hands", Father Antonio tells us. And with the Child's Bible "they can learn to read and at the same time come to know the Word of God. Reading opens the eyes, the intellect and the heart, while the Word of God builds them up."

For many of the children the book is something treasured throughout their lives. Father Antonio recalls once asking one class of children, "How much do you think a book like this would cost?" None of them could say. Estimating the price Father Antonio put it at around £4.50, which would be 50,000 Leones. So then he asked them how much of this 50,000 they would be able to contribute in kind. They thought maybe around 1,000 Leones. So Father Antonio suggested: "Bring in the thousand. And every time you read the



*God loves me, and speaks to me – in Iraq as everywhere else.*

book, say a prayer for the people who have contributed the other 49,000." They agreed. So he did the same thing with all the other classes and with 1,000 Leones for each book, he was able to fund the summer camp for those pupils who couldn't afford to give anything.

Again and again Father Antonio reminds the children about those people working quietly in the background, without whom the Word of God could not be spread. Such people, he



*Children and the Bible – a friendship for life.*

told them, also include "the person who can hardly move but who sits in his wheelchair translating the Child's Bible into the local dialect". Father Antonio learned Benin's local language Bariba, thanks to the Child's Bible, and also the Moba dialect in the north of Togo. He says the Child's Bible is also a kind of Family Bible, since many adults are keen to purchase it for themselves, their children and grandchildren. He is asking us for an additional 5,000 copies for the schools in the diocese. We have promised him **£9,000** towards the cost in order to build and strengthen the parish of Saint Therese with God's Word for his children. ●



*A treasure for life – and not just in Sierra Leone. Altogether there are 51 million Child's Bibles in 191 different languages.*





## Standing up for suffering Christians

Despite the fall-out of COVID-19, lots of political progress has been made this year for the suffering Church. At a general debate in parliament in February, the work of Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) was mentioned by MPs. Oral and written questions are regularly tabled by MPs to try to ensure the UK government is helping those persecuted for their Faith. The advocacy strategy for the next few months is built around #RedWednesday. It has been a wonderful vehicle to raise awareness of the plight of persecuted Christians. Now we will be looking for tangible political action.

To find out more, or help our advocacy, please contact ACN's Parliamentary and Press Officer, Mr Fionn Shiner, on [fionn.shiner@acnuk.org](mailto:fionn.shiner@acnuk.org)



Westminster Cathedral on #RedWednesday



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

*Dear Friends,*

*One day after Holy Mass, I heard a 12-year-old altar server say to her mother: "Mummy, I don't know if I believe everything I hear in the church, but I feel so happy there!"*

*I think, with God's grace, these parents have succeeded in preparing their child for her life with God. We need to feel in our relationship with God the same sense of loving security and support that, hopefully, we find in our families: so that we grow in Faith at the same time as we grow in years.*

*Thanks to your constant help, ACN is able to provide the necessary tools for family and youth apostolates around the world. This includes the millions of copies of the ever-popular Child's Bible ACN publishes, and also the YOU-CAT series, which is particularly useful in preparing young people for the Sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation. The digital version of YOU-CAT is also encouraging young people to discuss religious issues.*

*Let us rejoice together over these developments, and please don't stop generously helping us to pursue this course.*

*Thank you in advance,*

## Need, love and thanks – your letters

### Wonderfully well adapted for children

*Once again, our heartfelt thanks to you for the work you are doing, for your wonderful projects and above all your written articles. We especially love to use the Child's Bible materials and give them as gifts, for example for children's birthdays. It's such a wonderfully well adapted form of teaching for children. It touches their hearts and really brings them closer to the Lord. Many thanks.*

#### A family in Germany

### A joyful message

*This is a joyful message, to hear that Mass is being said for us, your benefactors, in this time of the coronavirus. I can identify in a very small way with many of the people I try to support, especially since Mass is at present not available. God bless us all!*

#### A benefactor from the US

### We found a copy of the Mirror in church

*When we first encountered one of your*

*appeals for helps, we weren't initially persuaded to give you a donation. Before doing that, I wanted to check out the information you gave to donate to you. But then, just a few weeks later, I came across a copy of the Mirror on a table in our church. I sensed at once that this was no mere coincidence but had a deeper meaning. May God bless you all and your work!*

#### A family in Slovakia

### A joint Muslim and Christian donation

*I recently sent you a small donation online for refugees in Syria. I also want to tell you about my friendship with a Muslim family. They are facing a difficult life themselves, with very little income and two mentally handicapped children. At the end of Ramadan they gave me a small sum of money for your charity. I was so delighted that I decided to double the amount before passing it on to you.*

#### A benefactor in the Netherlands

## 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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