



Faith in the battle against COVID

One of the families receiving a food parcel from the Church to help them during the coronavirus pandemic.

As COVID-19 runs rampant across Brazil, claiming more than 200,000 lives – the second highest number of deaths from the disease in the world – the Church has intensified its work helping those worst hit by the virus.

Priests, Sisters and laity have faced challenges supporting the most vulnerable in a country estimated to have more than 7 million cases.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, a number of Brazil's parishes have been providing poor families with a daily meal. But, with the Church's income having fallen by 60 percent because there are no Mass collections and money fast running out, ACN answered their urgent appeal for help.

Across Latin America, priests and

religious communities are struggling to find funds. Aid to the Church in Need has responded by supporting them, including Carmelites in Colombia and Venezuela, the Missionaries of Jesus, Word and Victim in Bolivia, Franciscans in Peru and the Daughters of Mary in Paraguay. They are all showing the love of Christ to those affected by the pandemic.

Brazil's Father Francisco Danízio Silva said: "You, the benefactors of ACN, have helped us greatly. During this time, your support is directly linked to the help we can give to these brothers and sisters of ours who need so much... who need our compassion, our attention and our loving support as well.

"I pray to God, through the intercession of his most holy Mother Mary, that he may bless each and every one of you,

and that your generosity will be the source of your salvation. **May we never forget that helping our neighbour is one of the most effective ways of imitating our Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd.**" ☕



A Franciscan Friar helping in the Amazon (see back page).

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ACN UNITED KINGDOM

Food for the body



Lay members of the Catholic community Mar a Dentro in Belém transporting food parcels by boat to give out to those who need them.



Preparing daily bread.



Distributing food parcels.

“With your assistance, we can do something to help our brothers and sisters have a more dignified life. At the moment, we are organising food collections and then we organise the distribution of baskets for families who do not have resources.

“People are hungry and almost all of them cry with emotion. We believe that this kind of initiative brings people together and that they can feel what the love of Christ really is.”

This is how Sister Beatriz Krstacic described the vital work that her order is doing, helping those struggling to find food because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Across Brazil a number of parishes and religious communities have been providing food, clothes and other essential items to those who need them – and Aid to the Church in Need has been supporting communities who are themselves facing difficulties because of COVID-19.

Sister Romana dos Santos of the Daughters of Mary, Servants of the Poor told us: “At this very difficult time in our country’s history, many people are unemployed and do not have enough money to ensure they have basic food...”

“We are eternally grateful that your generosity will help us to help so many needy families.”

Only through your generosity can ACN continue supporting the Sisters and other communities in their mission of love. ✚



Father Jeidson Cardoso of Januaria Diocese receives his PPE kit.

Food for the soul



During the pandemic ACN has been supporting priests teaching at Brazil’s St John Maria Vianney seminary with Mass stipends.



Online streaming by the Shalom community.



Father Romulo hears confessions.

As the COVID-19 crisis consumed Brazil, providing spiritual support for the faithful as churches closed was vital.

Not only were Masses broadcast on social media, but other initiatives were rolled out to provide spiritual succour – and the Shalom Catholic Community’s Father Romulo came up with one novel way of providing pastoral support.

He said: “When lockdown began, I prayed to the Lord, asking him what he wanted me to do... I asked my bishop if I could take Confessions in my garage – which I had seen that some Italian priests were doing... The people come in their cars, wearing facemasks for protection. They remain in the cars during confession, so they are three feet away from me. I have drawn closer to the people that God has given me through this.”

The Shalom Community is also present in far-flung places like Chaves in the Amazon delta, which can only be reached by monoplane or by an eight-hour boat journey from Macapá city.

Throughout the COVID lockdown the eight lay members of the community here have sought ways to support people, including telephone counselling for those feeling isolated.

They have also been running prayer groups via the internet to bring people together and raise their spirits during this time of crisis.

Dilma of the Shalom Community thanked ACN’s benefactors for their support, saying: **“With all our hearts we give thanks to God, and to you, for your generous hearts and your sharing with those who are most in need. May God bless each one of you, your families and all that you do.”** ✚

Protecting priests’ parish ministries

Among the current challenges facing Brazil’s priests are caring for grieving relatives, isolated and despairing parishioners, and those in dire poverty. But they need to stay safe as they minister to their flocks.

With hundreds of priests in the country having fallen victim to the COVID-19 virus, ACN has provided protective equipment for them so they can carry out vital pastoral care more safely. This includes more than £1,000 in PPE for 40 priests of Januaria Diocese, southeast Brazil.

Through your generosity, we have given these brave priests face masks, disinfectant, disposable gloves and other equipment so they can visit those in need. Our heartfelt thanks for your continuing help, which will help Faith flourish despite the pandemic. ✚

Tackling coronavirus across the globe

Across Latin America and around the world, ACN has backed initiatives supporting communities hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic.



Food preparation in Venezuela.

Venezuela – Father Angel of La Guaira Diocese opened a parish dining room to feed more than 100 children from poor families and the elderly – but with the COVID-19 crisis, the kitchen has come into its own. Father Angel told us: “We have responded to Our Lord’s call to ‘feed the hungry’ throughout the pandemic... at the moment food is prepared in the kitchen of the dining room and delivered to people in containers”.

Guinea-Bissau – National Catholic radio station Radio Sol Mansi is providing programmes about COVID-19. Sister Alessandra Bonfanti, the station’s assistant manager, said: “In the current times, it is our mission to act as ambassadors of hope for a society that fears the pandemic. We have to help keep burning the flames of faith in hope – the hope that the world will return to normal if everyone does his or her part.”



Broadcasting in Guinea-Bissau.

Russian Federation – The contemplative Carmelite Sisters in Novosibirsk, western Siberia, are battling the pandemic with prayer. The Sisters wrote: “We pray for the healing of the sick, comfort for those who are suffering, relief for medical workers and for the protection of the most vulnerable groups of people against infection... we also include ACN and its benefactors in the prayers we offer up to Our Lord.”

Democratic Republic of Congo – Kabinda Diocese’s Administrator Monsignor Richard Kitengie said: “With the latest measures taken to limit the spread of COVID-19, our priests who live essentially on Sunday offerings are experiencing great difficulties and are no longer able to meet their basic needs. Your financial assistance [in the form of Mass stipends] is welcomed as a heavenly intervention. May the Lord repay you a hundred times more.”

Pakistan – Lahore Archdiocese are reaching around 2,000 vulnerable families in urgent need of food because of the pandemic.. Archbishop Sebastian Shaw told ACN that he has never seen such poverty and aims to enable families to feed their children so they can all stay alive.



Food distribution in Pakistan.

Supporting the Amazon’s scattered communities

Brazil’s vast Amazon region has been hit badly by the COVID-19 pandemic – but the Church has continued to provide support for these scattered villages.

ACN is helping 25 Capuchin Franciscans who are assisting the indigenous Catholic communities with vital relief including food packages and medical supplies.

Bishop Neri José Tondello of Juína thanked ACN for its ongoing support for the Amazon, which has included backing catechetical formation, family apostolate, evangelisation materials, rosaries for children and 2,000 Bibles.

Bishop Tondello said: “Our diocese



The Franciscans have a long history of helping communities in the Amazon.

has benefited enormously from the projects in which ACN has been involved.”

And through your love, ACN will continue helping hard-to-reach communities along the Amazon. ✚



Franciscans bringing food and medicine.