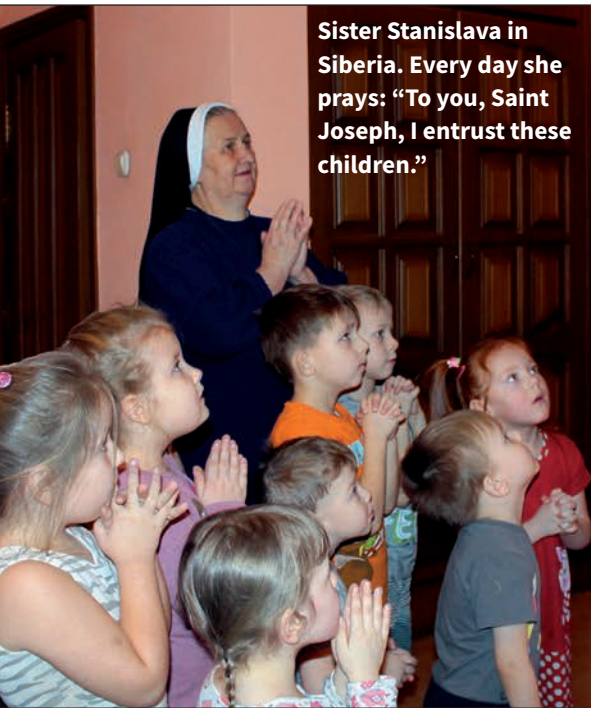


MIRROR



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Sister Stanislava in Siberia. Every day she prays: "To you, Saint Joseph, I entrust these children."



"From Saint Joseph we must learn... care and responsibility. We must learn to love the child and his mother, to love the sacraments and charity, to love the Church and the poor."

**Pope Francis,
Apostolic letter, *Patris Corde*, 5.**

Dear Friends,

For over a year now, the world has been fighting the coronavirus crisis. And yet it was at this time in particular that Pope Francis decided to proclaim the Year of Saint Joseph. But then these terrible times of confusion need an experienced "crisis manager". Didn't God himself choose Joseph for the greatest and riskiest venture in history, for the work of salvation? Didn't he entrust this just man, this skilled craftsman, with the most precious treasure he possessed – his only son and his son's mother? Joseph was called to take the place of the heavenly Father on earth – to be God's earthly representative, so to speak. A job that could only leave all the patriarchs, prophets, kings, apostles, popes – in short all men on earth – dumbstruck with wonder.

But Joseph himself had to learn that there is no great vocation, and no great love, without great sacrifice. The Gospel tells us that "before they came together she was found to be with child..." (Mt 1:18). Can there be anything more devastating for a bridegroom than to discover that his bride is expecting

someone else's child? Plunged into a profound personal crisis, Joseph remained silent, praying and waiting for God to answer. He hoped against all hope (cf Romans 4:18), trusted beyond all human limitation, and so became a father in faith for all generations. But this was just the beginning.



"Joseph went through times of severe trial... yet he knew one overriding imperative: I need only serve in love."

Joseph went through times of severe trial and spiritual conflict, yet he knew one overriding imperative: I need only serve in love. In the words of Pope Saint John Paul II, "Joseph is the model of those humble ones that Christianity raises up to great destinies... he is the proof that in order to be a good and genuine follower of Christ, there is no need of great things – it is enough to have the common, simple and human virtues, but they need to be true and authentic." The greatness of Saint Joseph is little recognised, because it consists of virtues which have little value in the eyes of the world. How many of us prefer to be hidden, silent, little, gentle, obedient? But

Joseph always lived in the shadows. Doubtless, like all of us, he knew the burden of his own weaknesses and imperfections, yet close to Mary and the divine child, he grew day by day in selfless love. Focusing his gaze on them, on their purity, inspired him to constantly surpass himself, and also provided his greatest happiness. In all things he learned to obey God and always trust in divine providence.

Jesus made Saint Joseph, his faithful foster father, the one who helps us in all distress. Joseph can obtain all things for us from Jesus, because just as the Son was obedient to his guardian on earth, so now in heaven he will grant him all that he asks. And how greatly Saint Joseph desires that the light of Easter may shine in each one of us, that it might enkindle a humble love which can overcome every crisis and defeat all evil.

A blessed and joyful Easter to you all!

P. Martin M. Barta

Father Martin Maria Barta
Ecclesiastical Assistant



The courage of the Carmelites



“The truth may suffer, but it is never overcome” (Teresa of Avila): Via Crucis for elderly Sisters in wheelchairs.

Lockdown, enforced isolation, economic paralysis, social distancing. The Covid measures imposed by governments worldwide have fallen hard on many contemplative religious, as they rely on outside help. Yet they continue to trust in God and pray for the healing of the world.

Sister Maria of the Rosary is the Superior of the Discalced Carmelites of Saint Teresa of Avila in Havana, the capital of **Cuba**. She writes to us from their quarantine to tell us what they need: milk, bread, soap, medicines, disinfectant and money for the

telephone and electricity. Their country has been plunged into a downward spiral of poverty by the pandemic, because it depends so extensively on imports and tourism to stay afloat economically. The borders are shut, and many goods can no longer reach the country. A lack of PPE makes it harder to tackle effectively the pandemic, resulting in still wider economic shutdown in yet more areas.

Then there is the lack of basic services. Workers can no longer do their work, nurses are unable to visit: uncertainty about the future hangs over everything. But the Carmelite Sisters turn to the wise words of their foundress, the holy Doctor of the Church, Saint Teresa, who wrote in her *Way of Perfection* that for those who live in the love of God, “We have nothing to fear, only to look forward to”. Certainly, “He sends contemplatives heavier crosses than to



“Every day I understand the fruit of prayer better” (Teresa of Avila): 93-year-old Sister Maria Josefa with her breviary.

others”, but at the same time “the first thing our Lord does when he sees them waver is to give them courage”.

Now the Sisters want to share this courage with others. They ask for “our prayers, that in the midst of this critical situation [they] may be a flame of hope for the people, who suffer so greatly” – such is the appeal from these contemplative souls. We have promised them our support. Their presence strengthens not just Cuba, but us as well, as they are praying for us every day. ●



“God wants us to be joyful” (Teresa of Avila): Sister Luz del Carmen and Sister Reina in the convent garden.



Loving, serving, glorifying



In his apostolic letter *Redemptoris Custos* Pope Saint John Paul II discusses the “important task” of “raising” Jesus, that is, “feeding, clothing and educating him in the Law and in a trade, in keeping with the duties of a father”.

The Sisters of Saint Joseph in **Ukraine** do the same, as they see their real mission as raising children and young people in a Christian spirit, and caring for orphans. Their charism can be summed up in three words: loving, serving, glorifying. The Sisters of this Greek-Catholic congregation see themselves as “the heart with which Jesus loves, the hands with which Jesus serves, and the lips with which Jesus praises and glorifies the Father in heaven”.

In this spirit they are running a school, three children’s homes and several kindergartens in Ukraine. Among these is the Pysanka (Easter egg) Orphanage and Children’s Home in the town of Potelych in west

Ukraine. Three of the 40 Sisters live here, caring for nine children. But the house is old and ramshackle, and the wind whistles through the rotting window frames: snow and rain keep bringing the damp into the house, which can cause illness. These are not their only challenges: the kitchen is too small for twelve people, and the electrical wiring and the ventilation system need urgent repairs. Although not impossible, it is not easy to talk to the children about the love of the Holy Family in such conditions. As a carpenter himself, Saint Joseph would have done something about it long ago.

We have promised his Sisters **£8,800** towards a safer, better orphanage. ●



Bringing the love of God to the children: religious education with Sister Aloisia.

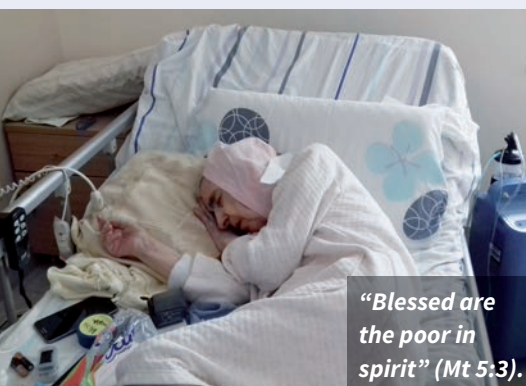


A must, given the name of the orphanage: two of the children dyeing Easter eggs.

Lebanon

Candles in the twilight

Sisters often spend all their lives looking after the poor, the sick, the orphans, but if they become ill at the end of their lives who looks after them?



“Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Mt 5:3).

There are 26 elderly Sisters of the Order of Saint Basil living in the convent of Our Lady of the Annunciation in Zouk Mikael in north Beirut. This used to be the order’s Mother House, but it is now a retirement home for elderly nuns. Those living there have served the Church all their lives, like candles giving light to thousands of other people, but burning themselves up in the process. With tender mercy they have given their lives for those who could no longer help themselves;

now they are dependent on the help and care of others. They need wheelchairs, walking aids, special beds, not to mention medication – the cost of which sadly far exceeds their resources.

Wages also have to be found for the fifteen carers who help the active Sisters tend these frail and often bedridden nuns. Yet these ‘candles’ continue to burn brightly through their prayers. But right now we are their hope, says Sister Nada Tanios, the Superior of the home, as we have promised them **£26,300**. These Sisters deserve our loving support. It is surely not right that these light-giving candles should be allowed to flicker out before their time. ●



“United in prayer”

Mozambique is heading for the kind of situation that Somalia and Afghanistan are already familiar with – Islamist gangs controlling vast stretches of the countryside, while the central government can no longer protect the people and the pandemic rages. In many areas now, only the Church is able to provide structure and hope. This is certainly true of the diocese of Gurué in Zambezia province, in the centre of the country. We have received a message of heartfelt thanks from the Capuchin Sisters ministering there. Sister Maria Nunes de Sousa, who is responsible for the formation of the novices (the photo shows some of the young Sisters with their formators), writes to say that it is only thanks to the financial support we have sent them that many of their pastoral activities and study courses have been able to continue. The pandemic has brought many activities to a standstill and caused prices to increase drastically. But our help has above all shown the Sisters that the Church is not alone in this corner of the world. Hence their heartfelt thanks and their desire to remain “united in prayer” with us.



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

Dear Friends,

The pandemic continues to exert its grip on us. The necessary restrictions continue to test us and are proving especially challenging for families with young children.

At the same time in our Western democracies, the foundations of solidarity and peaceful coexistence have been challenged by the willingness of some to engage in violence. In many parts of the world the prospects for a shared and prosperous future, based on mutual respect for all and esteem for human rights, are growing dimmer.

War, oppression and persecution are increasingly seen as ways of resolving problems. On top of all of this, we Catholics are facing the increasingly aggressive pressure of the secular world, which seeks to do without God and make Man the measure of all things. And the unease is made still greater by disputes about the direction the Church should take, which are undoubtedly contrary to the mission of Jesus and the efforts of the Holy Father.

This is the daunting situation in which we are approaching the Easter season this year. Is our faith still sufficient to embrace the power of the Resurrection and so overcome the darkness of our times?

Let us all pray that it will be!

Need, love and thanks – your letters

My life has become prayer

I have been supporting Aid to the Church in Need for many years and I look forward to reading the Mirror with great interest each time. Thank you again for the January 2021 issue with the section about Carlo Acutis who said: “The Eucharist is my highway to heaven”. Thank you for all these moving pages. I often reread the texts 2 or 3 times, they encourage me in my prayer life. Living alone at 83 years of age, I can truly say, “My life has become a prayer”, and I give thanks that I can offer “a joyful ‘yes’ to the love of God”. “Rejoice in the Lord always...” (Phil 4:4): with these words I would like to wish all involved in this wonderful work of ACN joy, health and courage.

A friend of ACN in Switzerland

Admiration and respect

I would like to thank you very much for all your letters and the very interesting information about the lives of people who live in difficult conditions but still do not lose

hope and joy in life. The work that your team of dedicated people is doing for those suffering in the world deserves immense admiration and respect, and only God can reward you sufficiently for it.

A benefactor in Slovakia

For those who have nothing

You are truly helping those who are suffering in the world! I always send you a contribution, because I know how important it is to be there for those who have nothing.

A benefactress in Brazil

God looks upon the lowly

Thank you for your encouraging newsletter, in which you again ask for our prayers. We will happily pray for you. Our prayer reveals the poverty of our existence in the sight of God. Because it reveals our lowliness, it is perhaps especially appropriate for us to pray that God will bestow his Mercy on all who need it.

A benefactress in Germany

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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