

Witnessing to Christ's love in the COVID crisis

A woman visits a cemetery on All Souls' Day to pray for the departed, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

India is suffering one of the worst COVID-19 crises in the world – more than 30 million people have fallen ill with the virus and upwards of 350,000 have died.

During the pandemic, priests, Sisters and lay Church workers are doing all they can to support those who are suffering.

Archbishop Anil Couto of Delhi told ACN: “The importance of pastoral work in this time of crisis cannot be exaggerated.”

The archbishop added that, with the rapid spread of the virus, there is no way of knowing where it will strike next or who will be infected.

“We don’t know how the next day will unfold. It is only our faith that keeps us going.”

The work of Sisters, priests and others witnessing to Christ's love in one of the countries most severely affected by the pandemic is truly heroic. ACN has provided support for those helping the sick and some of the most vulnerable in society after they lost their income

because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mass stipends are also supporting priests carrying out essential pastoral work across the country (*see inside for more on these projects*). **Only through your generosity can we help them to help others in their need.**

In a message to you, Archbishop Couto said: **“I just want to thank all**

our benefactors for all the solidarity they always manifest with the Church in Need and right now undergoing much suffering due to COVID-19.

“Please keep it up – your concern and your love give us the strength to go ahead and be courageous witnesses of the Good News of Our Lord Jesus Christ.” ✚



Emergency food help given to poor families hit by the pandemic in Hazaribag Diocese.



Pandemic Pastoral Work

The Daughters of the Cross have continued their vital pastoral work in Rourkela Province throughout the pandemic.

As well as supporting the purchase of PPE, ACN helped them buy food after they lost their income – and they literally shared their bread with the hungry. But, because of their dedication to the people, several Sisters got COVID-19 so seriously they had to be hospitalised. Most recovered but some died.

Sister Anupama wrote to us with an impassioned plea for help: “We do not know how long this COVID is going to last. The Sisters who are ill need to be taken good care of... You have been very kind and generous in the past. If you and your organisation think of supporting the Province at this time of crisis, I shall ever be grateful to you for your kindness.”

Please help those suffering in India with your love. 🙏



The Daughters of the Cross have provided aid to those in quarantine.



Masses of help

“During COVID 19, our priests are carrying out a lot of charitable work – feeding many migrant workers and going to villages and distributing food materials and all other essential things for the poor people who are suffering heavily”.

This was the message Brother Ignatius, Superior General of the Indian missionary congregation the Heralds of Good News

Your love is a lifeline

Ranchi state has been a priority area for ACN because of its great suffering.

Not only are its tribal peoples – most of whom are Catholic – terribly poor, but Ranchi faced a severe crisis when migrant workers returned home from New Delhi during the country’s national lockdown. **Millions took to the roads in an effort to go back home. Many of them had the virus and it spread quickly through the crowds.**

The Church was the only real source of help for these people. Priests and Sisters distributed food. Catholic schools were used as quarantine centres, with the care

of the sick being left to the Church.

But now the Archdiocese is facing serious problems. Resources are depleted because of their COVID care programmes and, on top of that, many priests and Sisters have fallen sick ministering to those with coronavirus.

So ACN has provided vital help: it is also set to help Schönstatt Fathers in Bangalore, Carmelite Sisters in Tapovan and Sisters working in the Archdiocese of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar among the orders and dioceses needing assistance.

Your love is the lifeline that enables us to help them in their time of need. 🙏



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Attacks continue unabated...

As if contending with COVID-19 wasn’t enough, Christians continue to be targeted by extremists.

In the State of Chhattisgarh – amongst others – there are ongoing attacks. Archbishop Henry Thakur of Raipur said: **“Earlier we used to have sporadic attacks – now they are regular, organised and coordinated.”**

More than 50 incidents of discrimination or targeted violence were recorded in Chhattisgarh in 2020. In November a cross was pulled down (see image) and a Hindu shrine put up in its place in Madanpur.

Nor have things changed in 2021. In early March, a prayer meeting in a private home in Surguda was disrupted when a 70-strong mob burst in around 8.30 in the evening. At least six people needed hospital treatment for their injuries.

According to Arun Pannal of the Chhattisgarh Christian Forum, rhetoric accusing Christians of proselytising Hindus whips up hatred against believers. He said: “Days before an attack on Christians, newspaper reports against conversion started appearing, followed by TV channel debates, where no Christians are invited to defend themselves. Social media too are used, there are hate speeches, rallies against conversions are staged. When the atmosphere of hate is ripe, then the attack takes place.”

Please pray for India’s Christians. 🙏



Supporting vocations in a time of pandemic

Seminarians have been badly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. During India's national lockdown, a number of seminaries confined students to the compound, others shut down entirely sending students home for online teaching – but poor connectivity, especially in remote village

areas, caused challenges for staff and students alike.

Across India ACN is continuing to support seminarians during this difficult period, as part of our commitment to tomorrow's priests. There are 115,880 Catholic seminarians around the world – roughly one in eight of them is supported by ACN. 🇮🇳

A new scooter for Sister Shobka

A new moped has made it easier for Sister Shobka Rani to visit far-flung villages deep in the jungle in Chhaygaon, north-east India. The Sisters minister to various tribal groups who have embraced Christianity, and their work has not stopped during the pandemic. **Sister Lilly Urakadan, the Mother Superior, told ACN: "We were able to help 320 families who were in dire need."**

Sister Shobka's order, the Daughters of Divine Providence, also run a small boarding school educating children from the villages – this became vital

during the COVID-19 pandemic.

They turned their school into a quarantine centre, sheltering those isolating because of coronavirus.

Sister Lilly told ACN: "Since Sister Shobka Rani has the moped, she has been able to double the number of visits she makes to the villages." ACN donated £800 for the scooter. She added: **"We are extremely grateful for your generous help. You and all of the benefactors can be assured of our prayers. Please pray for us that we may always eagerly proclaim the kingdom of God through our words and deeds."** 🇮🇳



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