



**“Now is the time to start afresh,
relying on the grace of God,
who guides the destinies of all
individuals and peoples.”**

**Pope Francis,
during his trip to Iraq**



**A symbol of peace,
amid the ruins of Mosul.**

Dear Friends,

Jesus once said to Blessed Conchita of Mexico: “The world is going to its ruin because it has turned away from the Holy Spirit, and all the evils that afflict it have their origin in this. Pray for the ‘New Pentecost’. The whole world must turn to the Holy Spirit. Then peace will come, together with a moral and spiritual transformation that will be stronger than the evil that oppresses the world.”



***“The Holy Spirit is the
inexhaustible source of strength
that we are so urgently
seeking at this difficult time.”***

The Holy Spirit is the Counsellor and Consoler promised by Jesus, who will teach us all things (Jn 14:26). He is the soul of our soul, the inexhaustible source of strength that we are so urgently seeking at this difficult time. Someone once asked a preacher, “Why are you always preaching about how we must be constantly filled anew by the Holy Spirit?” He answered: “Because I am a leaky vessel!” Yes, it is true, we all suffer from a leaky faith, a lack of faith, that makes us vessels with holes in. How quickly we forget the Creator, whom the wind and waves obey (Mk 4:41)! How little we think of the indelible seal of the Holy Spirit that was imprinted on our souls in the sacraments of

Baptism and Confirmation, making us belong totally to Christ and placing us fully under his protection. The Holy Spirit confirms in us our conviction as children of God that God is indeed an infinitely loving Father.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth (Jn 15:26). Pope Benedict XVI described “scepticism about truth” as the profoundest problem of the modern age. “The concept of truth has practically been abandoned and replaced by progress, practical experience, calculation and good intentions”, he writes. A similar view was expressed by the holy Russian Saint Seraphim of Sarov: “There are many things we no longer understand, because we have distanced ourselves from the original simplicity of the Christian understanding. Through our so-called enlightenment we have fallen into a darkness of uncertainty, so that today the self-revelation of God, of which the ancients still had such a clear concept, seems incomprehensible to us.” The Spirit of God

gives us the fullness of insight, enabling us to recognise where life is to be found and where the poison lies.

The Holy Spirit is the personified love between the Father and the Son. He is the true “reason”, which is love. He teaches us the language of selfless love, which turns our humanistic grammar on its head. For the spirit-filled person it is no longer a question of “me – you – him”, but rather the grammar of

Pentecost, namely, “God – you – me”. Trust in the living God, who contains all things, has absolute priority. Then comes the “you” of my sisters and brothers, in second place. And then, finally, each one of us will also discover his own “I/me”, because we will have discovered the joy of being ourselves in the service of others. Let us all pray fervently, together with Mary, the Spouse of the Holy Spirit: “Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of thy faithful.”

With my grateful good wishes,

P. Martin M. Barta

Father Martin Maria Barta
Ecclesiastical Assistant



Pathways of mission

During the Easter Vigil, the blessing of the baptismal water includes these words: “O God, whose Spirit hovered over the waters, so that the very substance of water would even then take to itself the power to sanctify...”

The baptismal water, says the Catechism, is the “visible sign” of the mystery of Baptism, the gateway to salvation. In the Amazon region of **Brazil**, water is at the same time the physical pathway of mission. Four-fifths of the communities in the diocese of Coari, in the heart of the Amazon, lie on the riverbanks and are accessible only by water. This young diocese has a total of eight boats, just one car and a few motorcycles. Its 15 priests can only rarely visit the scattered communities of the faithful – 300,000 people altogether – so long are the journey times in their ageing, heavy, wooden boats. Little by little these are now being replaced by lighter, faster and more economical aluminium boats, making the journeys quicker so that more people can be baptised and receive the other sacraments. “These boats are vital to our pastoral outreach” says Bishop Marek Marian Piątek. And given the rapid spread of the sects, even in this region, every visit helps to strengthen and save souls.

The parish of Our Lady of Nazareth is now planning to sell its old wooden launch *Jaçanã*, and purchase a 50ft by 13ft (16m x 4m) diesel-powered aluminium launch, with built-in galley, climate control and on-board



In the dry dock: major repairs for the Santa Teresinha.



Time for an overhaul: the Santa Teresinha waiting for a refit.



Soon it will be “Duc in altum” (Put out into the deep) once more: Bishop João Muniz Alves with the crew of the Santa Teresinha.

generator. After all, the parish pastoral team often spends weeks on end in the boat. But the sale won’t cover the cost, of course, so we have promised **£43,900**. For there is a real sense of urgency about this mission in the Amazon region.

The parish of Saint Francis Xavier lies in the diocese of Xingu-Altamira. The people living on the banks of its vast network of rivers are for the most part indigenous Indians. As soon as the *Santa Teresinha* moors up, the children come running, and for the next few days there are baptisms and catechesis – preaching “from the boat”, just as Jesus did (cf. Lk 5:3). In this way they minister to over 400 small riverside communities. Many are deep in the rainforest, up to 1,000 km (650 miles) from the parish centre. But they too

are part of the “all nations” to whom our Lord commanded his apostles to go, making disciples of them, and “baptising them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you”. (Mt 28:19-20) Some of these communities will have to wait for over two years to participate in Holy Mass. The catechists do what they can, but they cannot replace the priest. So what he really needs is a sturdy and reliable boat, and the *Santa Teresinha* is now in the boatyard, being thoroughly overhauled. The cost of repairs is way beyond the means of this poor parish, so we have promised the **£5,300** they need. Time for the Spirit not merely to ‘hover over the waters’, but to penetrate every human heart.



Long voyages now a thing of the past: the ageing Jaçanã is too costly to run and maintain.



The replacement for the Jaçanã: sleek and swift and aluminiumhulled.



The driving force of the Church



'Fruit of the earth and work of human hands': seminarians working in the fields.



Strength in numbers: seminarians taking a break from their studies in Butembo, DRC.



The sums add up: more motorbikes = more catechesis in Dori diocese, Burkina Faso.

The east of the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** has been bled dry by three decades of war, exploitation and terror. The security situation is still precarious, destitution is everywhere. The state has failed, but the Church has not.

In Butembo-Beni, for example, the seminary of Saint Octave has managed to keep going despite everything. Given the present situation, it is also striving to be self-supporting. There are 93 seminarians here, plus six priests to guide and support them. They have a farm, around 35 miles (60 km) away, that keeps them in fruit and vegetables and

later they plan to set up a simple bush clinic and a primary school. The people follow where they lead. They have confidence and trust in these young men of the Church. They see how they care for the frail and elderly, for the young people and the poorest families. They can also see the ancient pickup truck, and wonder how much longer it will hold out. It's what is used to ferry the academic staff, the food supplies, the seminarians to work on the farm – and all this on "roads" scarcely worthy of the name. Bishop Melchisédec Sikuli Paluku has asked us to help with a new 4x4 vehicle. We have promised him **£29,300** so the Church can continue as the driving force in the region.

There are similar challenges in the north of **Burkina Faso**, in the diocese of Dori. Here too, on the edge of the desert in the Sahel region, it takes great strength and a spirit of mutual solidarity to live life as Christians in an Islamic environment. And in fact the distances between the Christian villages are still greater here. So it is all the more important that these Christians should share this sense of solidarity. Here small motorcycles are the main way for the catechists and priests to visit the local communities and share the mutual love and beauty of the faith. We are giving **£18,900** so that the diocese can purchase 11 small motorcycles for its pastoral work in these desert regions. ●

Ecumenical dialogue

"May they all be one"

The past can cast long shadows. Fraternal relations between the denominations can help to disperse them.

Fraternal relations mean recognising that in Christ we are all children of the one Father. It is in this spirit that the Institute for Ecumenical Studies, at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv, is striving to foster and strengthen the shared faith above all of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches in **Ukraine**. Very often resentment and hostility have their roots in ignorance and misconceptions. And so the Institute has organised four two-day sessions



In the Cross is unity: the University team fighting suspicion and fear.

each year, as well as talks and workshops in 10 different dioceses. They are open to priests, religious and laity of the different confessions, so that they can learn about the traditions and saints of each other's faith community and thus come to better understand the spiritual world of their brothers and sisters in faith, whom they may have

hitherto viewed with some suspicion. In this way they can establish a mutual dialogue and so fulfil the prayer of Jesus to the Father: "that they may all be one" (Jn 17:21). This unity in Christ will thereby bear witness to the redemptive power of the Gospel and so lead to peace. We are supporting this dialogue with a contribution of **£4,300**. ●

The 'ministering angels' of La Guaira



*Trusting in God:
Sister Maria shows the
way forward in faith.*

Give us this day our daily bread ... What we often say unreflectingly in the Lord's Prayer is a heartfelt plea in Venezuela. There is no daily bread. Hunger dominates people's lives; galloping inflation devours their means to buy bread.

Venezuela's own currency, the Bolívar, is in freefall; banknotes are denominated in millions, and hyperinflation is affecting also the dollar cost of items. Things that cost \$10 a year ago now cost over \$30. And coronavirus hangs like a dark shadow over everything. There is a lack of medicines, flour, milk, rice, soap and hygiene articles generally. People are fleeing the country, simply in order to survive. Already 5 million have emigrated, most of them to neighbouring Colombia. "We are staying, together with the poor", says Mother Felipa of the Little Sisters of the Poor, in Maiquetía, near La Guaira on the coast. She is Spanish, and could go home at any time. But she sees the children in school,

wide-eyed and expectant, the mothers with their empty cooking pots, the sick without any medication. Sister Maria Larissa, of the Missionary Sisters of Charity, is from India and like her nine fellow Sisters would not for a fraction of a second contemplate abandoning her charges. For these 21 children with Down's syndrome and other conditions it would mean rejection for the second time, and most would not survive it. In the parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Sisters Orfilia and Milange, Servants of the All-Holy, care for the homeless who scavenge the rubbish heaps for leftovers and cardboard. Their parish is part of the Las Tunitas township, in the poorest quarter of town, named "Hope".



*Malnutrition can also affect the
circulation: Sister Aurelina takes a
blood pressure reading.*

In the parish of San Sebastián in Carayaca, Amelia, Nelida and Barbara run a soup kitchen where they not only serve hot meals but also share out clothing. Some doctors are also supporting them and providing basic first aid. And the queues are growing longer and longer.

Without the 46 Sisters from 10 different congregations in the diocese of La Guaira, hope would long since have died for countless people here. They are surely the visible "ministering angels" of the diocese, giving everything and asking nothing. They manage somehow to survive on less than £1 a day. Bishop Raúl Biord Castillo asks, indeed begs, but with great dignity, for basic support for these Sisters. No one knows what the future will bring in Venezuela. But the Sisters are here, and in their faces the people can see that God is also here. He gives us bread... May his will be done, in Venezuela as in heaven... Is there something we can do as well?



*Soup kitchen in San Sebastián:
at least one meal a day for these
little ones.*



*No one leaves empty-handed: the
Sisters of Divine Providence share
what little they have.*



Education brings hope



*Modern methods,
modern equipment –
all on foundations
of faith.*

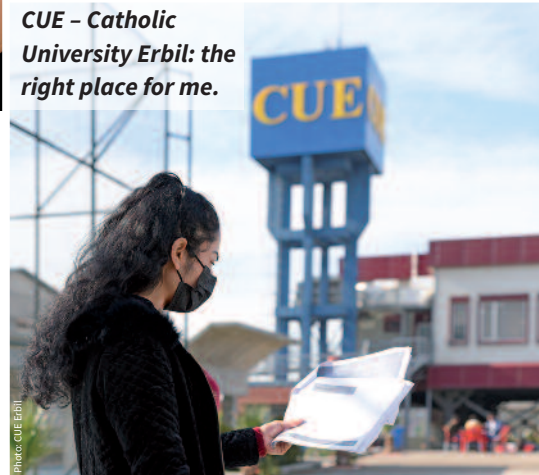
Investment in knowledge yields the best returns – this idea of Benjamin Franklin's holds good for every age and in every place. Including in Iraq. And here the returns take the form of finding work, hope for the future, promoting reconciliation and above all safeguarding the Christian presence in the country.

These are just some of the returns yielded by the project for the Catholic University of Erbil. Today there are over 100,000 Christians living in the archdiocese of Erbil in northern Iraq, many of whom fled here in 2014 as refugees from the terror of Daesh (ISIS). For many Christians, this part of Iraqi Kurdistan has now become their home including the close on 200 students at the Catholic University. "Our goal for the academic year 2022-2023 is for 825 students –

615 Iraqi Christians, 125 Muslims and 85 Yazidis", says Archbishop Bashar Warda, who explained the project to Pope Francis during the papal visit in March. The University is based in Ankawa, the Christian suburb of Erbil, in an area that offers a sense of shelter and security. All lectures are in English. The students study for academic degrees in such topics as financial administration, information technology, engineering and architecture. And naturally, Catholic social teaching is also included. Soon medicine and pedagogical studies will be added to the syllabus. There are links with universities in Italy, the UK, Australia and the United States. "The objective is to give our young people educational and professional opportunities" Archbishop Warda explains, "to train people from the Christian minority for leadership roles, and through the University to establish a lasting home for the Christian community in Iraq. The University will offer the Christian community an important sense of self-worth and belonging."

Of course, the archdiocese alone cannot possibly fund the investment in such a project. The average cost of the courses is **£2,100** per student per year. Since the government in Baghdad only invests in state universities and not in private ones, and additionally offers study grants to its students, there is great temptation for poorer Christian families to send their children to these

CUE – Catholic University Erbil: the right place for me.



institutions. But here they are subjected to social pressure by the Islamists, to discrimination and isolation. How different the atmosphere is in Erbil! Over half the students are young women, there is no discrimination, and the teaching is excellent (just five years after its foundation, Erbil is in 41st place out of the 250 higher education establishments in Iraq). In order to enable the University to grow, ACN is funding 150 four-year scholarships for Christian students – for a total of **£1.2 million**. By then the University is hoping to be able to stand on its own feet.

Education is what is left when the last penny has gone: In fact, these ironic words attributed to Mark Twain contain a good deal of truth. Once the last penny has been invested by ACN, there will undoubtedly be much useful education in the heads, and still more hope in the hearts, of those we have helped. Both these things will help to safeguard the Christian presence in Iraq. ●



Quality and competence come first: practical work in a seminar.



Feast of the Sacred Heart – Benefactors' Day

On 11th June this year – the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus – ACN will for the first time be celebrating its first Benefactors' day. It is only thanks to the generosity of our friends and benefactors that we are able to make such powerful gestures of loving compassion for the suffering Church throughout the world. ACN is therefore inviting our thousands of project partners all over the world – priests, religious and laity alike – to share with us on this great feast day the most beautiful thing of all – their prayers and remembrance at Holy Mass. From earliest times the Sacred Heart of Jesus was honoured, and the liturgical feast was extended to the whole Church in 1856 by Pius IX. In 1899 the whole world was consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus by Leo XIII and since then every Pope, right up to Benedict XVI and Francis, has referred to the importance of the Sacred Heart of Jesus as a symbol of the redemption, through the suffering of Jesus and the Merciful love of the Father. And if you too, dear friends, will pray for one another on this day, then we will see the fulfilment of the prayer in the Preface of the Mass for the day: "...that, won over to the open heart of the Saviour, all might draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation". So may we all be one in the Heart of Jesus on that day.



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

Dear Friends,

On April 20th, ACN's Religious Freedom in the World Report 2021 was formally unveiled, via a series of parallel Internet conferences in various capital cities around the world.

Why does ACN subject itself every other year to the challenging task of compiling a report on the worldwide situation of religious freedom – and one moreover in which its findings focus not only on the situation of Christians?

We are convinced that the right to the free exercise of religious faith is directly bound up with the inviolable dignity of every individual human being and that as such it is a fundamental human right that has its origin in the very nature of man. There is therefore an urgent need, through scholarly research, to regularly bring to public attention the global observance, or nonobservance, of this basic human right. Only those studies which address the situation of all religions will form an acceptable basis for our persistent appeals to the community of nations to safeguard and preserve this vital human right.

As the report makes clear, Christianity is the most widely oppressed religion in the world. And it is thanks to your loyalty and generosity that we are able to help these Christians and be a voice for them!

For this I offer you my heartfelt thanks,

Thomas Heine-Geldern

Need, love and thanks – your letters

I never lack for anything

May the good Lord bless you for the great love you show to our needy brothers and sisters. I'm sending 100 Euros for priests in the North of Mozambique to celebrate Holy Mass for the souls of those who have died. I would love to help more. I have an income of 400 Euros and a dependent son, but God is so good to me that I never lack for anything. I have so much more than those unfortunate people who are being martyred by the Islamists. I am united with them in my prayers, and you too can always count on my prayers.

**A supporter of ACN
in Portugal**

Learning to be grateful and share

Thank you for your wonderful gift, which has delighted us all, especially the children. We follow your work closely and read out from the Mirror when we say our evening prayers together. You help us to lift our eyes from our

own often trivial problems and desires, to be grateful and learn to share what the Lord has given us. We have the highest regard for people like you, who give yourselves for others. We wish you all strength and creativity in your continuing work.

A family in Slovakia

My Rosary, and a standing order

Thank you so much for remembering my intentions at Mass on 29th January. As long as I can, I will continue to pray my Rosary for your mission, and I am setting up a standing order for the financial support of your work.

A benefactor in Belgium

Once project partners, now benefactors

Heartfelt thanks for helping us to purchase a car for our monastery. Now we have also decided to send you a symbolic monthly contribution for the support of our brothers and sisters in need.

A Franciscan project partner in Brazil

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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