



ACN

MIRROR

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“Let us allow Our Lady to take us by the hand. Each time that we hold the Rosary in our hands and pray to her, we are taking a step forward, towards the great destination of life.”

Pope Francis, Angelus greeting, 15th August 2019

Our true home is in heaven: a Syrian priest, praying in a desecrated cemetery.

Dear Friends,

Cardinal Comastri, the Archpriest Emeritus of Saint Peter's Basilica, likes to retell a personal experience that deeply impressed him. “One day in Rome, I was waiting with Mother Teresa for a taxi to take us to the Vatican. A car pulled up and the driver, who had recognised Mother Teresa, excitedly asked her, ‘Mother, what are you waiting for?’ ‘For heaven, my son’, she replied.”

Only a saint who loved heaven and carried it in her heart could have given such an answer. In our daily lives we often forget that heaven is our home and that we are journeying towards it. Paradise often seems to be a nebulous, distant and unearthly, not to say ‘uncertain,’ reality to us. At best, heaven is something remote and faraway, something to be put out of our minds so as to avoid having to contemplate death and the “hereafter”. But didn't Jesus come down from heaven to earth to open the way to our eternal homeland?

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” This is what Jesus announced at the beginning of his public preaching. In revealing his heavenly Father to us, Jesus unlocks the mystery of the kingdom of heaven. Wherever the

love of God has entered this world, we can already experience something of the heavenly reality. Jesus has given his Church the keys to heaven and he has given his priests the power, through the Sacraments, to call down heaven upon this earth. He has given us the Bread of Heaven, his very self, and the Holy Spirit as the gift from above.



“In our daily lives we often forget that heaven is our home and that we are journeying towards it.”

Everyone, even unbelievers, carries within themselves the hope of heaven. In particular, we hope that those who have died, especially those we have loved, may come to a “place of happiness” and that we may one day see them again. Yet in many places heaven is treated as something ridiculous, dismissed as a cheap source of comfort, and obscured by the violence, hatred and suffering of this world. But it is precisely because there is so much injustice and evil, that there must be a heaven. Wouldn't it be unjust if every act of violence went unpunished? If every victim of violence was denied justice? Heaven is the ultimate answer to all evil, the only thing that can ensure

justice for all those who have suffered innocently, bringing reparation and making all things well again.

A Franciscan religious, Sister Sebalda, once rather thoughtlessly asked a paralysed boy, “Robbie, wouldn't you also like to be able to walk?” The boy responded spontaneously, “Yes, of course I would! If there were no heaven!” The kingdom of heaven belongs to childlike souls such as these. Especially in the month of October, our Heavenly Mother invites us to pray the Rosary and so gain a deeper understanding of the mysteries of heaven. She has given us the Rosary as a sort of ladder, leading up to heaven and to the Communion of the Saints.

Thank you, dear friends, for your faith and love, through which the glory and joy of heaven shine forth into the world.

With my grateful blessing on you all,

P. Martin M. Barta

Father Martin Maria Barta
Ecclesiastical Assistant



Where the priest has to travel by canoe



No fear of the unexpected: navigating the jungle in Christ's name.



Bringing the joy of the Gospel – by water to the riverside settlements.

The people of the Amazon region have “a right to hear the gospel”, writes Pope Francis in his post-synodal exhortation *Querida Amazonia*. But many of the villages in the Amazon rainforest are inaccessible – except by boat.

Father Washington Dioleno Araújo Tavares has to put all his faith in God whenever he sets out in his small wooden canoe. And yet the crocodiles, the rapids, the half-submerged trees and the vagaries of the weather do not bother him as much as the fact that it takes him so long to get anywhere. “So many opportunities of evangelization are wasted, simply because we don’t have a suitable means of transport”, laments the 30-year-old priest, who was only ordained four years ago.

His parish of John the Baptist is based in Curralinho, in the **Brazilian** Amazon delta region. It covers a vast area, and includes 57 small village settlements scattered along the banks of the river. The lives of the people, who live in simple stilt huts, are based around the river. Most families live in deep poverty. For the Church it is a race against time, as wherever she is not present, the sects proliferate. Drugs and alcohol are likewise on the increase, especially when people have little to hope for. So the good news of the Gospel, the Sacraments and the direct practical support of the Church are a vital necessity.

A motorboat would change everything, as it would not only make his journeys safer but also much faster. The young priest and his team could visit more people in a shorter space of time. **£11,700** is surely a small price to pay to bring more comfort and hope to these river-side dwellers. Will you help us buy a motorboat for Father Washington’s mission?

Three other parishes in Brazil’s Amazon region, close to the frontier with Venezuela and Colombia, already have motorboats. But their diocese is appropriately called “São Gabriel da Cachoeira”, or “Saint Gabriel of the Waterfall”. And, yes, there really are several waterfalls in the region, which represent a real challenge for the mission boats. But at present the price of petrol is the priests’ biggest headache. So, to make sure that the people in these parishes are not left high and dry, we have promised a total of **£12,700**, to help keep the mission afloat for another twelve months.



The greatest gift of all

Ghana: Helping the pastors who nurture these young vocations.

Last year, a priest celebrated Mass every 18 seconds, somewhere in the world, for the intentions of our benefactors. On 1,782,097 occasions a benefactor's intention was offered up together with the host on the paten during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass: for the soul of a departed loved one; for the healing of a sick person; for a parent or grandparent grieving over a child who has lost their faith, all these were brought before God.

Having Mass celebrated for someone is not only the most beautiful, but in many cases the only thing we can do for a loved one, especially for a departed soul. In doing so, we are offering the greatest possible gift, Christ himself, in the Eucharist. The Mass stipend we offer is not a "payment", but an expression of love and gratitude. In a sense, our Mass offering more intimately unites our intentions with the Sacrifice of Christ.

For priests in the poorest countries of the world, Mass offerings are often their sole means of support – they are vital to their very survival. Without them basic necessities such as shoes, medication and even food would be unaffordable. They also make it possible for priests to carry out their pastoral work and help others. For example, Father Francis Yagau writes to us from **Papua New Guinea**: "Thanks to your Mass stipends, I can buy wafers and



Even in faraway Papua New Guinea, Mass is celebrated for your intentions.

wine for the celebration of the Eucharist. They also enable me to visit one of the ten communities under my care each month." He and his 18 fellow priests in Alotau-Sideia Diocese can count on us providing **£12,900** in stipends to support them this year.

Priests working as teachers in seminaries also rely on your Mass offerings are these. Most of them receive little – if any – remuneration for their work. They don't have time for parish work, since the formation of these future priests demands care and dedication, so they don't get stipends from there. That is why we are helping thousands of seminary teachers, including those in three major seminaries in **Ghana**, who have been working throughout the pandemic. "Despite COVID-19, our seminaries are able to continue as before, while observing strict hygiene measures. God has been so good to us", writes the rector of Saint Victor's seminary in Tamale. We are giving **£16,500** to support 17 seminary teachers, so that they can devote themselves unreservedly to their most important task – forming young seminarians in the love which comes from the Heart of Jesus. ●

A lifebuoy in a tsunami of need

The second wave of the pandemic hit India hard and without warning. There was a shortage of everything: hospital beds, oxygen, PPE, vaccines. The Catholic Church has fearlessly supported those who are suffering, but it has paid a high price – as of 15th July at least 520 Indian priests and religious have died of COVID-19. And fears of a third wave are growing ...

"Every day we hear news of the death of friends and relatives", we are told in countless letters from India. "We don't know who

will be next." The actual death toll in India may be at least ten times higher than official estimates, as, particularly in rural areas, it is almost impossible to get accurate details.

The Church is the people's only hope in those places where no one else cares. Catholic priests and religious have not put themselves first during this pandemic, but instead they have stood by their suffering people – even at the cost of their own lives. Isolating themselves would be contrary to their vocation. In the towns pastoral work
(continued on next page)



"Body of Christ, save me": sheltered by the Sacrifice of Christ, even in a pandemic.



Mourning a priest and friend, who died of COVID-19.



Across India Masses are being offered for your intentions.

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can be done partly online. But there is no Internet in the jungle or other remote areas. Here the priests must personally visit people's homes to bring them comfort and help, though all too often they find themselves empty-handed, and facing a tsunami of need. To help change this situation, we have provided almost 100 dioceses in India – over 5,000 needy priests – with Mass stipends totalling more than £1.4 million.

Archbishop Anil Couto of Delhi expresses his

gratitude to our benefactors: "Your care and your love give us the strength to go forward and be witnesses to the Good News of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Please continue to help us!" This call for help, which is echoed by other bishops, must not be ignored. Which is why we would like to give **£720,700** to another forty dioceses, with over 2,770 priests. It would be a lifebuoy in a time of need.

But we have also received an SOS from neighbouring Nepal, where just 8,000 Catholics live, as the pandemic is also raging

unchecked in the Himalayas. Bishop Paul Simick humbly wrote to us, saying: "If you should have any Mass stipends left over for us, it would be an enormous help. Mass stipends are the only means of support and medical care for our priests, and also support many of their pastoral activities. I would like to be able to help at least the priests in the poorest and most remote parishes." With your help, we hope to send **£20,300** in Mass offerings, so that the priests in Nepal, like those in India, will not sink beneath the waves of COVID-19. •



Children's Rosary breaks all records

2020 was a record year for the children's Rosary campaign "A Million Children praying the Rosary", backed by ACN. On 18th October last year children from 136 different countries prayed the Rosary for peace in the world and an end to the pandemic. Pope Francis himself called on Catholics to take part. **"We believe that the prayers of children are pleasing to God, and that they are powerful and will be heard"**, writes Father Artur Zaráš from Kazakhstan. In his parish the children from the local orphanage took part in the campaign and joined in prayer with their



peers in Iraq, Congo, Venezuela, India and many other countries. Together their pleas go straight to the Father's Heart, as children's prayers can pierce the very clouds! In this Year of Saint Joseph the campaign will again take place on 18th October. You all are warmly invited to join in.



Need, love and thanks – your letters

Inspiring hope and confidence

Many thanks for sending us your Annual Report 2020. As part of the universal Church, and as brothers and sisters in the Faith, we must always strive to participate in the Church's international missionary outreach and be committed to working together in partnership. You have good reason to rejoice at the generosity of your benefactors, who have not been deterred by the pandemic but rather spurred on in their generosity. How wonderful that your projects can bring fresh hope and confidence to people around the world! So thank you for the work you have done. With my warmest greetings and blessing.

From a bishop in Austria

The widow's mite

Reading the Mirror, I am always amazed by the great variety of ways in which ACN's projects provide help in so many different countries. May God bless you for your hard work! I'm enclosing my own small donation, for the poor people of Syria.

A benefactor in Germany

Thankful for life

I'm sending my donation of \$50 for you to spend wherever the need is greatest. I wish I was younger so I could personally do more, but that time is over for me. On the 6th of June, I celebrated my ninety-seventh birthday. I am still in good health. I have never had a terrible sickness. I don't know why the Good Lord has preserved me for so long, but I am still grateful for the life I have had, and if He wants me around a while longer, I am all for it. None of this asking to die for me! I am sending you a cheque for \$50, wish I could do more but I can't.

However, I can pray for all the people who need help so desperately and that is a plus, isn't it?

A benefactor in Canada

No greater gift...

I was touched to read that on the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Aid to the Church in Need around the world celebrated Benefactors' Day by offering Masses for the benefactors. What a beautiful gift! There is no greater gift than that! Thank you so much. Blessed and Praised be God for ever and ever!

A benefactor in Australia



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

Dear Friends,

When I was asked about four years ago whether I would accept my current role with ACN (International), I was impressed – and influenced in my decision – by the fact that so many benefactors and co-workers, both employees and volunteers, were not only 'practising Christians', but were also striving to constantly deepen their personal relationship with Jesus. As disciples of Christ, they are striving to experience and understand the Son of God made man more profoundly. This enables their Faith to shine like beacons, and thus fulfil the mission of evangelisation that has been entrusted to all of us.

Our attempts to imitate Jesus are greatly strengthened by being able to talk about our lived experience of our faith and by praying for one another, and with one another.

The central mission of our charity involves not just supporting the suffering and persecuted Church with material aid, but also making it possible for more and more Christians around the world to become authentic disciples of Jesus.

Your example, your prayers and your financial support are the most important elements in the success of this mission.

And for this I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart,

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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