



ACN

MIRROR

0345 646 0110 • acn@acnuk.org • www.acnuk.org



No 4 • May 2022



***“Mother of God and our Mother,
to your Immaculate Heart we
solemnly entrust and consecrate
ourselves, the Church and all
humanity, especially Russia
and Ukraine.”***

Pope Francis,

Act of Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary,
25th March 2022

Dear Friends,

On 25th March the Holy Father consecrated the Church and all humanity, especially Russia and Ukraine, to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, as Our Lady requested in Fatima. Indeed, God’s plan and his weapons against spiritual degeneration – the calamities, global catastrophes and great wars which ever since the beginning of the 20th century have spread so explosively across the earth – have not changed. The Rosary, personal conversion, the spirit of loving sacrifice and personal consecration to the Mother of God: these are the spiritual weapons for the defeat of evil. Why then is an act of consecration so crucial and powerful that it has the power to convert hearts and bring true peace to the nations on earth?

From the Cross, our dying Saviour gave Mary to the Apostle John as his Mother, and so for all time made us her children. But so that Mary can fully exercise her maternal protection over us, we must consciously acknowledge and accept her as our Mother. We can best do this through an act of consecration to her Immaculate Heart, as Saint Louis Maria Grignion de Montfort instructs us. “In essence, total consecration to the Mother of God is like a complete renewal of our baptismal vows”, he writes in his “Golden Book”. Because, in a conscious and free act of the will, we are giving ourselves once again to Christ with all that we are and have, and doing so through the hands of Mary. We are entrusting ourselves to her as our Mother, entirely and for ever, since Jesus himself walked this path before us. He is calling us “to go to him by the same path by which he came to us, namely through Mary.”

***“Mother, yours I am for time and eternity.
Through you and with you I wish to
belong for ever and entirely to Jesus.”***



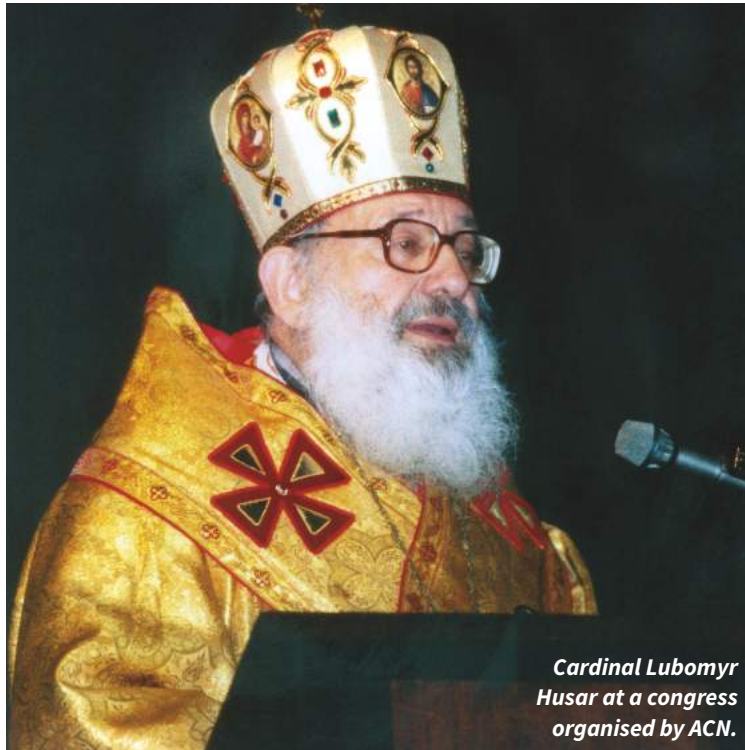
Through consecration to the Heart of Mary we enter into her spiritual womb. This signifies fleeing to an unconquerable fortress, a saving Ark, to which Satan will never have access. At the same time, through our consecration to Mary, we are giving her the very place in our hearts that truly befits her, according to the plan and will of God – the central place, next to her divine Son! Since Satan knows that he will be defeated by Mary, who treads the serpent underfoot, he does everything he can to prevent us giving her this central place.

Saint Louis de Montfort describes the wonderful effects of consecration to Mary in these words: “To the one who consecrates himself to Mary she also gives herself entirely. She immerses him in the abyss of her graces; she adorns him with her merits; she inflames him with her love; she shares with him her virtues.” Thus, the aim of consecration to Mary, God’s “mould” in which the God-man Jesus himself was formed, is the transformation of the whole inner person into Christ. And when Christ reigns in the human heart, then peace will reign in the world. Naturally, consecration to Mary is no magic formula. It requires our own personal commitment also, whereby we strive to imitate the faith and virtues of the Mother of God. Let us begin this task once again, in this Marian month of May, and we will truly experience miracles.

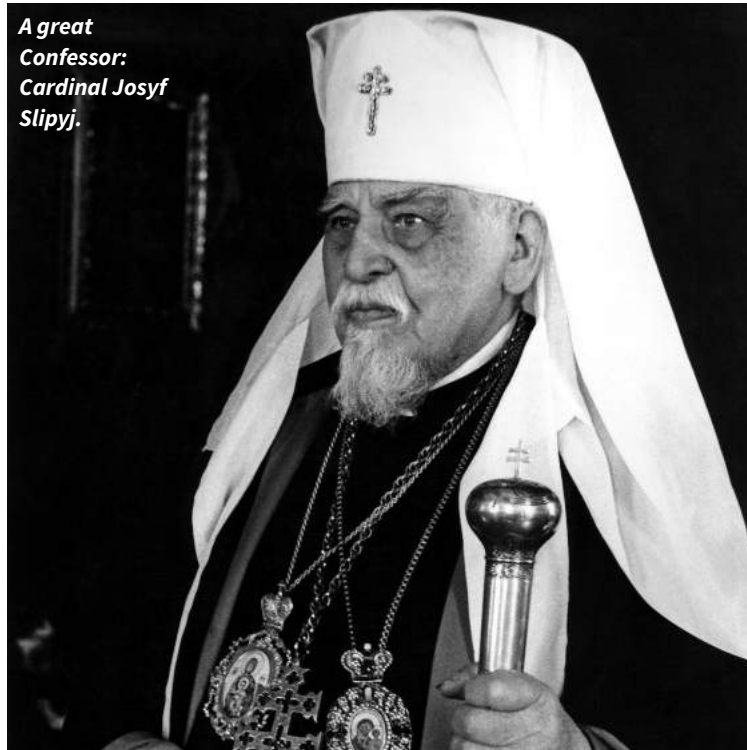
My grateful blessing on you all,

P. Martin M. Barta

Father Martin Maria Barta
Ecclesiastical Assistant



Cardinal Lubomyr Husar at a congress organised by ACN.



A great Confessor: Cardinal Josyf Slipyj.

Helping the Church of the martyrs

For almost 70 years now ACN has been helping the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, which is in communion with Rome and to which most of the Catholics in Ukraine belong. Between 1946 and 1989 it suffered a bloody persecution, and its faithful could only live their faith underground or in exile.

For 18 long years Ukrainian Cardinal Josyf Slipyj (1892 – 1984) suffered in various communist gulags and prisons for having remained true to his faith in Christ. “I had to endure night-time arrests, secret trials, endless interrogations and spyings, moral and physical torments, humiliations, tortures and starvations. I stood before unscrupulous judges as one who, as a helpless prisoner and silent witness, physically and psychologically exhausted, was compelled to witness to his faith to the Church of his homeland, now brought to silence and condemned to death,” he later wrote. In 1946 his Church was officially liquidated by the communist regime and many of its priests, faithful and indeed several bishops suffered martyrdom. Countless numbers were also arrested and imprisoned.

Cardinal Slipyj was finally released from imprisonment in January 1963 and shortly afterwards permitted to travel to Rome. Immediately after his audience with Pope John XXIII he met with Fr Werenfried van Straaten, the founder of our charity, ACN. In those days, our organisation was not only the first to raise its voice against the unprecedented persecution of Christians in the countries behind the Iron

Curtain, but ever since 1953 it has helped Ukrainian seminarians in exile and the members of the Studite order, which was liquidated in Ukraine.

Following Cardinal Slipyj’s meeting with Fr Werenfried, our help for the Ukrainian exiles increased. The cardinal remained a good friend of our charity throughout his life. By the time of his death, in 1984, ACN had helped the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in exile to the tune of 10 million US dollars. The great bulk of this help was to prepare this Church for the day when Ukraine’s faithful could finally emerge again from the catacombs.

That great day finally came in 1989, when Mikhail Gorbachev again legalised the Greek Catholic Church, following his meeting with Pope John Paul II in the Vatican. In 1991 the then head of this Church, Cardinal Myroslav Lubachivsky made a triumphant return from exile in Rome to Lviv, accompanied by a delegation from ACN. Help was now needed more than ever. Since then ACN has supported the Church to rebuild in every way and continues to help to this day.



Today the Church can profess its faith freely and openly.

Cardinal Lubomyr Husar, who succeeded Cardinal Lubachivsky, subsequently wrote to ACN as follows: “Today it can be openly stated that up to the time of the changes, you were the only Church organisation that helped the Church in Ukraine and that you have remained its greatest benefactor ever since. One day history will record just how much you and your organisation have done for the active survival of the Greek Catholic Church throughout its underground existence.”



We must refrain from anger, hatred and violence

From the very first day of the war ACN has received dramatic reports of destruction and suffering from Ukraine – but also of unbroken faith. While war raged, the faithful gathered to pray – often in basements and bunkers.

Fr Mateusz of St Anthony's Roman Catholic Church in Kyiv said they adore the Blessed Sacrament every night in a cellar: "We feel that Jesus is with us. The happiness and joy of being in God's presence and this enormous inner peace that proceeds from the grace that we are granted every day by God are an incomparable experience. In the midst of the war, the shooting and the explosions, it is an experience of resurrection faith."

Bishop Pavlo Honcharuk's house in Kharkiv was struck by a missile that tore a hole in the roof. Miraculously, though, nobody was injured. Bishop Pavlo sheltered in a basement with Orthodox Bishop Mytrofan. Together they visited the wounded in hospital and helped distribute food parcels. **ACN immediately sent emergency aid of £1 million, which has been followed by further support.**

Together with them we pray for peace, for the protection of refugees – and that hearts may remain free from hatred. As Fr Mateusz puts it, "A Christian is someone who prays even for his enemy. We must all refrain from anger, hatred and violence. Christ is the victor!"



Sheltering in the basement of a hospital in Kyiv.

Image: Kristof Holvenyi

The Virgin Mary – a bond between Christians and Muslims

Fr Sebastiano D'Ambra has been living and working on the island of Mindanao in the Philippines for 45 years now. Islamist terror groups are very active here, seeking to establish a hard-line Islamic state. Yet despite this – or rather because of this – he is totally committed to dialogue between Christians and Muslims.

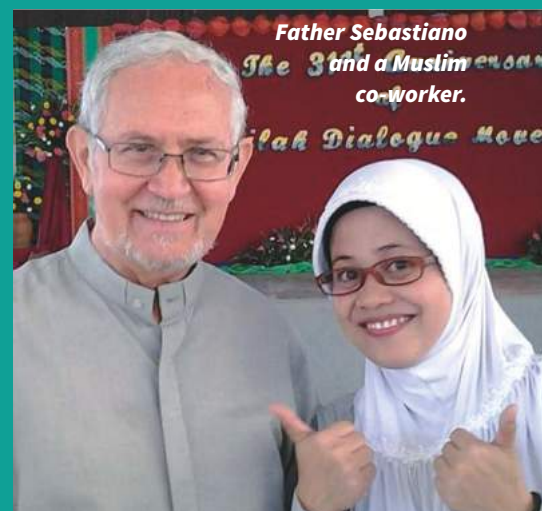
In September 2013 Islamist rebels attacked the port city of Zamboanga. For weeks they fought pitched battles with security forces. When the fighting finally stopped, close to the Marian shrine of Fort Pilar – leaving the holy shrine itself untouched – both Christians and Muslims in the area believed that the Virgin Mary had once again protected the town.

"Not only Christians, but also Muslims light candles to Our Blessed Lady in Fort Pilar," Fr Sebastiano explains. "Muslim mothers bring their children to see her image and explain that Muslims also love Mary. For they too believe in Mary's virginity and honour her. I am personally convinced that Mary is a silent bond between Christians and Muslims," he adds.

Nevertheless, he cannot hide the fact that the situation is becoming more difficult. The

influence of extremist groups is growing and he has been repeatedly threatened, surviving two attacks on his life. A close friend and fellow missionary, Fr Salvatore Carzedda, was murdered in 1992. It is a fate that has been shared by several other priests and even two bishops.

And there have also been attacks on the Silsilah Centre for Muslim-Christian Dialogue, which was founded by Fr Sebastiano in 1984. Yet despite all that, the 80-year-old priest is convinced that this reconciliation work is more necessary than ever. The goal of the centre is to train young people in a culture of dialogue, so that they can work for peace and reconciliation. Christians and Muslims can learn here to understand one another and constructively overcome any problems. The idea is that they will pass on their knowledge to those around them.



This year, ACN will be helping to fund the centre's two-year training course, with **£67,400**.

Indeed, the peace that so many people are yearning for is already a reality in the shrine of Our Lady in Fort Pilar. In Our Lady's month of May huge crowds of people will be coming to the shrine to show their devotion to her. Among them will be numerous Muslims. In a country consecrated to the Immaculate Conception they too are "Mary's people". Not even the terrorists can destroy that.



You are teaching us to be a gift to others

Once again this year, thanks to your generosity, we were able to help 23 young men in the Holy Spirit seminary in Horodok, **Ukraine** to continue their journey to the priesthood. One of the seminarians, Oleksandr, wrote to us on behalf of all his fellow seminarians. "A generous heart", he writes, "is a heart that knows how to deny itself something in order to share with the needy. And this is precisely the kind of heart that you possess, dear benefactors, in constantly supporting us on the path of our formation. In this way you are teaching us how to make sacrifices, and not keep back for ourselves the gifts of grace that our loving God so ceaselessly showers upon us, but rather you are teaching us how to become a gift for others. For as the apostle Paul reminds us, recalling the words of Jesus, 'It is better to give than to receive' (Acts 20:35). May God look with pleasure on each of your gifts and always bless you! Our heartfelt thanks to you all for the gift of your hearts."



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

Dear Friends,

This dreadful war in Ukraine has made us all aware that evil really does exist in the world and seeks to separate us from God. Yet at the same time the great wave of support and sympathy for its suffering people shows us that so many people are responding, in exemplary fashion, to the opportunity God offers us to show charity and solidarity.

But when the weapons finally fall silent, we will have to work together to find ways to achieve reconciliation and prevent another future armed conflict, especially in a Europe that has not entirely forgotten its Christian origins.

ACN sees it as our principal task to support the Church in Ukraine in this devastating conflict, so that her priests and religious can remain with their people and offer them pastoral and humanitarian assistance. Only with this spiritual support will it be possible for Ukraine's beleaguered people to find the strength to reach out to those who are its enemies after the conflict has ended.

From the bottom of my heart I thank you, our ever-loyal benefactors, for continuing to help us fulfil Christ's commandment of love through your empathy, your gifts and, above all in these apocalyptic times, through your prayers.

Thomas Heine-Geldern

Need, love and thanks – your letters

Praying for one another

Thank you for your beautiful letter in response to my donation. May God richly bless the priests, missionaries and faithful in Siberia! I salute ACN for all the good work and help that you are providing. May I ask you for your prayers for my intentions if at all possible? I am also praying for ACN and all its staff.

A friend and benefactor in the Netherlands

From seminarian to seminarian

Every Wednesday we have a very simple soup lunch, and the money saved from this over the year is meant to be sent to a seminary in South Sudan – St Paul's. We send this money via you at ACN.

From a seminary in the United Kingdom

Thank you for your kind gesture

The greatest gift of all is the gift of the risen Lord, who also promises us his peace. So it was a joy for me that we were able – despite the pandemic and its restrictions – to experience a

grace-filled Easter season, keeping the Paschal flame alive in us and at the same time uniting us tangibly with the great throng who have gone before. And I thank you also for your tangible sign of this unity on the occasion of my 60th birthday. I can only say, may God reward you for everything!

An abbot in Austria

A life of dignity for all

It is a great joy to be able to help ACN. I am a catechist, working with children, and my heartfelt wish is that no family should be denied a life of dignity. God willing, I will continue to help ACN as long as I live.

A friend and benefactress in Brazil

Courage and consolation

May God's blessing always rest on your work, whether for those facing oppression or persecution, for those who had to flee their homes or are facing hunger, or the courage and consolation you provide to those in need.

A parish priest 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

UK Mirror Editor: John Newton | Publisher: Aid to the Church in Need
Printed in the UK by Cliffe Enterprise, Eastbourne BN22 8UY
ISSN 0252-2535 *De licentia competentis auctoritatis ecclesiasticae*



Aid to the
Church in Need

ACN UNITED KINGDOM

12–14 Benhill Avenue, Sutton, Surrey SM1 4DA
Tel. 020 8642 8668 | A registered charity in
England & Wales (1097984) and Scotland
(SC040748) | www.acnuk.org