

# Don't let Margaret suffer in vain

Persecuted but not forgotten: Islamists have targeted a number of churches in Nigeria including one in Owo, in the south-west, where 41 Mass-goers were killed and more than 70 were injured including Margaret Attah (right).

**Nurse and mother-of-four Margaret Attah was at Mass one Sunday when her life changed forever.**

She lost both legs and her sight in one eye when militants stormed St Francis Xavier's Church, Owo, in south-west Nigeria.

Margaret was one of more than 70 people who suffered serious injuries in an attack where 41 people were killed, including six children.

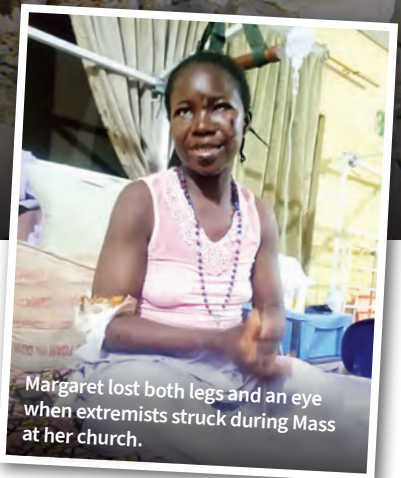
Amid genocidal violence and political crisis, **Aid to the Church in Need is doing everything possible to help Margaret and thousands of others as Nigeria teeters on the brink of becoming a failed state.**

Margaret's bishop, Jude Arogundade, whom ACN recently invited to address the UK Houses of Parliament, called for action saying that **none of the Owo massacre victims should suffer "in vain"**.

Responding to the bishop's call, ACN is redoubling project work in a region which ACN's *Persecuted and Forgotten?* report found is experiencing "a sharp increase in genocidal violence".

The charity urgently needs your help to provide:

- Trauma counselling for persecution survivors;
- Repairs to bomb-damaged churches;
- Emergency help for displaced families.



Margaret lost both legs and an eye when extremists struck during Mass at her church.

Margaret (whose story we tell on page 2) told us: **"I thank God for what you are doing. I thank God I am alive. I have so many reasons to be thankful to God."**

Her courage and faith as she learns to live with life-changing injuries is an inspiration to all of us at ACN.

Inside, you will find details of the hope your charity is bringing to Margaret and thousands like her. ✝



# Margaret – ‘I thank God that I am alive’

**“We started hearing gunshots outside the church. The doors were immediately slammed shut and we hoped we would be safe. But suddenly, shots started to be fired inside the church too.”**

Margaret Attah, 47, will never forget that day when gunmen struck during Mass at St Francis Xavier’s Church, Owo, south-west Nigeria.

The ophthalmology nurse and mother of four was up in the church gallery singing in the choir when the shooting began.

She said: **“I ran down and went towards the altar, close to the Blessed Sacrament.”**

Margaret, like many others, was trying to make for the safety of the sacristy, which lay beyond.

But Margaret didn’t make it. She continued: **“Suddenly, there was an explosion and I was knocked unconscious.”**

Later, she would learn that she had lost both legs and her sight in one eye.

It would be nearly six months before she was able to leave hospital and return home to her husband, Dominic, and their

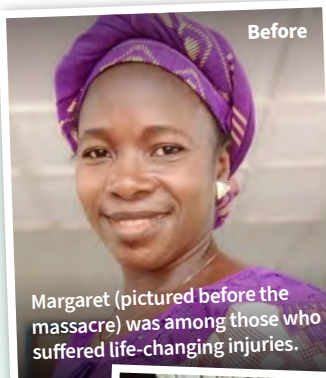
two boys and two girls, aged between 15 and seven.

With 41 dead in the Owo massacre, Margaret counts herself lucky to have survived.

She said: **“I know I will not be able to live quite as I did before but I thank God I am alive. I have so many reasons to be grateful to God.”**



The aftermath of the Islamist attack at St Francis Xavier’s Church, Owo.



Margaret (pictured before the massacre) was among those who suffered life-changing injuries.



After



In happier times: Margaret, with her husband and four children, before the attack which left her with life-changing injuries.

**Please sign our ACN Nigeria petition calling on the UK Government to demand the Nigerian authorities bring to justice those responsible for the Owo massacre.** Despite happening in broad daylight with hundreds of witnesses present, nobody has been charged in connection with the atrocity. **You can sign the petition using the reply form on your letter, or by this link or QR code: [www.acnuk.org/petition-ng](http://www.acnuk.org/petition-ng)**



## Food and medicine for flood victims

**When Nigeria was hit by one of the worst floods in modern times, the faithful in the Delta region were among the worst to suffer, with thousands on the breadline having lost their homes and livelihoods.**

People started to panic as the flood waters rose and the river banks began to disintegrate.

Cholera, diarrhoea and malaria spread fast and reports came in that mothers were becoming so sick they were unable to breast-feed their children.

Desperate to help his people, Bishop Hyacinth Egebo of Bomadi wrote to ACN.

He asked for funds **for basic foodstuffs such as rice, beans, tinned tomatoes and cooking oil, as well as soap, detergent, malaria tablets, mosquito nets and vitamin tablets.**

Submitting the request, the bishop said: **“You would be making a world**

**of difference with your kind acts of financial assistance to us.”**

**\*ACN quickly responded, offering £13,300 (€15,000) in emergency support.**



The basics for survival: When floods devastated the lives of so many families in the Delta region, ACN was able to provide emergency foodstuffs – thanks to you.



## Following Christ – despite the dangers

**It takes great courage to follow the path to priesthood in Nigeria, where priests and seminarians are increasingly kidnapped – and even murdered.**

18-year-old seminarian Michael Nnadi paid with his life for following Christ.

In January 2020 he was abducted

from the seminary in Kaduna.

Three weeks later, his dead body was discovered.

As a martyr for Christ, many are already asking his intercession.

Despite the danger, huge numbers are coming forward for seminary formation – and today 39 young men from Michael Nnadi’s

home diocese of Sokoto are training for the priesthood (pictured).

**ACN has supported the training of almost 3,000 seminarians over the past five years.**

Without your generous support, we could not continue helping these courageous men on their journey to the altar of God.



## Help for the survivors

**We need your help so that Margaret and other parishioners can begin to recover from the shoot-out and explosions that rocked St Francis Xavier’s Church to its foundations.**

At a time when school fees are urgently needed for nearly 50 children who lost parents in the massacre, ACN is working with the parish to help all the faithful.

Psychological and other medical treatment has been organised for widows, orphans, injured people and the bereaved.

The parish has turned to ACN for help to repair the church, which was badly damaged by the explosives set off by the militants.

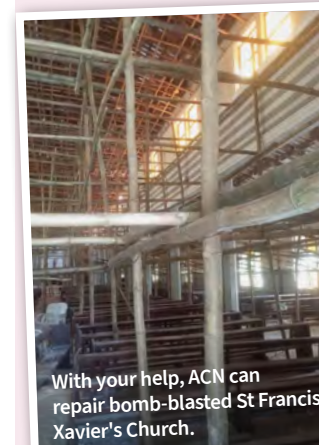
Bishop Jude Arogundade of Ondo said: **“The faithful eagerly await the re-opening of their church [which] has been closed for a long while.”**

Survivors suffering great poverty are also receiving a one-off payment and others are receiving payments to help with vocational skills training.

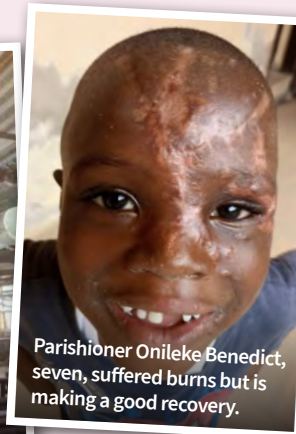
Those grieving have also requested ACN’s help to erect a memorial to honour the 41 dead.

Work is underway but more support is urgently needed. Bishop Jude added: **“I humbly plead for your consideration of these projects.”**

**\*Determined to help, ACN turns to you, our friends and benefactors, for your prayerful support.**



With your help, ACN can repair bomb-blasted St Francis Xavier’s Church.



Parishioner Onileke Benedict, seven, suffered burns but is making a good recovery.



# Janada's Story

**Janada was forced to watch helplessly as extremists hacked her father to death with machetes.**

Overwhelmed by her horrific experience, 22-year-old Janada sought help from Maiduguri Diocese's trauma centre.

The centre's director, Father Fidelis, told ACN that many of those receiving psychological aid "have watched horrible situations, [including] violent murder".

**Those assisted by the centre have suffered abduction, torture, rape, had their homes burned to the ground or, like Janada, seen family brutally murdered.**

After receiving help from the Church-run centre, Janada is ready to face the world again – and has even been able to pray for her father's murderers.

She said: **"It is difficult to forgive and forget. But I have forgiven them in my heart and I pray for the salvation of their souls."**

"The work we do is beautiful," said Father Fidelis. "In the midst of dark and gloom, there is light." ✚

In search of hope and healing: 22-year-old trauma victim Janada.

## Protecting churches under fire

**On a Sunday, in the early hours of the morning, parish priest Father Isaac Achi was burned alive when attackers set fire to his presbytery.**

Reports received by ACN showed that Father Achi had made repeated desperate calls to the police to come to his rescue – but to no avail.

Father Achi's story is not an isolated incident.

According to ACN research, over the course of 18 months, across the country more than 7,600 Christians were killed and 5,200 were abducted – and in just one year there have been attacks on more than 400 church buildings.

In response, Archbishop Matthew Man-Oso Ndagoso of worst-affected Kaduna Archdiocese, wrote to ACN requesting solar-panel alarm systems for churches, schools and convents in 45 of the most vulnerable parishes.

Begging ACN for help, he said: **"The last two years have been hellish for our people. Kidnappings for ransom have become the order of the day.**



Modern-day martyr: Father Isaac Achi was burned alive in January 2023 when extremists set fire to his home.

**"In the last few months, our priests in the rural districts have become prime targets."**

Thanks to you, the charity is responding quickly and has offered help.

ACN is also funding a security fence for a Dominican Sisters' convent in Malumfashi, a dangerous area of north-west Nigeria.

**\*So many other churches are at risk and alarm systems and security fences are vital to keep priests and others safe. Please help.** ✚



Burned alive: Father Isaac Achi.



Aid to the  
Church in Need

ACN [www.acnuk.org](http://www.acnuk.org)

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