



ACN

MIRROR

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Sale items p.3

***“Prayer, charity, fasting:
three investments for a
treasure that endures.”***

Pope Francis,
Homily, Ash Wednesday 2019.

*She even prays for her
husband's murderers:
a victim of Boko Haram
in Nigeria.*

Dear Friends,

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, and this year ACN is launching a Lenten campaign focusing on the suffering Church in Nigeria. The campaign aims to draw attention to the terrible plight of Christians in Nigeria. After years suffering at the hands of Islamist terror group Boko Haram, they are now facing a new wave of brutal attacks by extremist and criminal groups. Churches are being burned down, priests, religious and faithful assaulted, abducted and murdered and hundreds of thousands forced to flee their homes and live in savage conditions. Needless to say, we hope to raise as much as we can so that we can help the Church in Nigeria through concrete projects – but at the same time there is something much bigger at stake here.

By his sufferings on the cross, Jesus paid for all our sins with his blood, thereby meriting an unfathomable treasury of grace for us. By doing good to others we can “add” to this infinitely precious treasury of graces that Jesus provides, our good acts themselves being the fruit of his grace. Yet how few there are who truly bother to seek out and take hold of this

hidden treasure, this pearl of infinite price, preferring instead to rely on their own merits and their own wealth.

Suffering and persecuted Christians teach us how to acquire real merits, whose inestimable value derives from the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. They are willing to pay the price so that this treasury, obtained on the Cross, by the infinite love of God, can



***“With every prayer... every
loving renunciation... we
are accumulating a
treasure”.***

dwelt in every human heart and enrich them with all the gifts of heaven. This was reaffirmed by Auxiliary Bishop John Bakeni of the suffering diocese of Maiduguri in northern Nigeria, who told us, “We draw strength from the power of the Cross. Of course we sometimes ask ourselves, why all this suffering? At times we feel abandoned by God, by our government, by everyone. But in the end we are united in the sufferings of the Cross. If our witness can help others to grow in faith and love, then it gives us strength.”

We can all contribute to this treasury of graces, so that the world can be healed by the power of the Cross and all things be made new in Jesus. As Saint Paul says, writing from prison: “I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of his body, which is the Church” (Colossians 1:24). For indeed, what is lacking is that so many people have still not yet recognised the power and riches of the love that Jesus has for us but remain instead in the slavery of sin and death. With every prayer, every worthy reception of Holy Communion, every act of forgiveness, every sincere resolve to amend our lives, every loving renunciation, every act of service, every donation, we are contributing to the great, divine “campaign of the Cross” and together with Jesus, accumulating a treasure that guarantees us a sure future and true life.

With my grateful blessing on you all,

P. Martin M. Barta

Father Martin M. Barta
Ecclesiastical Assistant



Sister Jihanne Attalah.

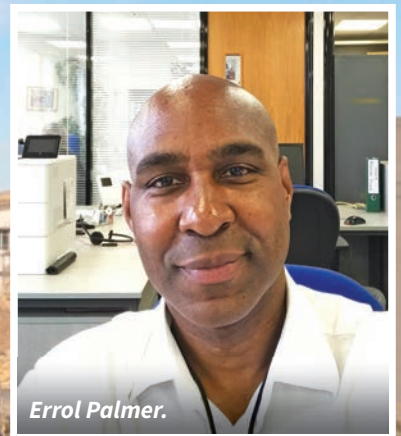


Hope despite the darkness

“Amidst all this darkness there has always been room for hope that guided us and helped us lift our eyes, overcome our desire for vengeance and transform ourselves.”

Sister Jihanne Attalah in Damascus described how the area around the congregation’s Al-Riaya School became a war zone when the civil war in **Syria** began. “We lost a young teacher and a student, not to mention all those who were injured.” But the Sisters returned to rebuild and reopen their school and, thanks to your love, ACN helped with new classroom furniture and other essentials. Sister Jihanne tells us they were strengthened by the example of Our Lady: “It was our faith in God and in the presence of the Virgin Mary, who remained close to the Cross. She held firm, and drew strength from her Son”.

Fr Dominic Robinson SJ at a Christian graveyard, destroyed by fighting in Batnaya, Iraq.



Errol Palmer.



Bridget Teasdale.

Meet our first-ever Chaplaincy team!

ACN is delighted to introduce our new Lay Chaplaincy team. As part of the wider Community Team, Errol Palmer and Bridget Teasdale, who have been with ACN for a number of years, will help create prayer opportunities for our ACN (UK) family, including retreats and podcasts, as well as supporting ACN’s National Ecclesiastical Assistant, Fr Dominic Robinson SJ, in arranging regular Masses for ACN benefactors – living and deceased.

Errol says “I look forward to meeting, speaking to, and connecting over social media with as many benefactors – whether long-standing or new supporters – as I can.”

Bridget says “Like Errol I am looking forward to meeting more of our benefactors and providing them with opportunities to connect with ACN and their own faith in meaningful ways.”

Coming soon in The Mirror... meet our Community Team!

ACN Shop



Hurry! Fantastic offers whilst stocks last!

Easter Blessings Card

£3.99 (Pack of six)

Send your Easter blessings to your friends and family with this bright and colourful Easter card which has been designed exclusively this year for ACN. Greeting inside: "Wishing you a Blessed Easter".



PRODUCT CODE: CE23EB

Order online:

www.acnuk.org/easter-card

or call us on 0345 241 6068

Holy Family Picture

Was £14.99 now **£9.99**

PRODUCT CODE: GHFLP



Large-Print Day Brightener

Was £9.99 now **£7.99**

PRODUCT CODE: BLPDB



Eagle Notebook

Was £5.99 now **£4.49**

PRODUCT CODE: GENB



Come Follow Me Daily Devotional

Was £16.99 now **£12.99**

PRODUCT CODE: GCFMJ



To purchase visit the SALE section at www.acnuk.org/shop or call us on **0345 241 6068**

#RedWednesday 2022

Schools, parishes, families and communities around the country came together in November to help Break the Silence on global Christian persecution. Thank you for all of your prayers and actions, as well as for joining ACN in calling for justice.

Our Nigerian guest Bishop Jude Arogundade had a packed schedule with the launch of our *Persecuted and Forgotten?* report, radio interviews, meeting key figures, benefactors, creating films, culminating in Rosary, prayers and talks at the Ukrainian Cathedral on #RedWednesday.

See more highlights on our website www.acnuk.org/rw23e

Please mark 22nd November 2023 in your calendar as #RedWednesday.



Any donation you kindly give will go to support these, or similar projects, and enable the pastoral work of Aid to the Church in Need.



“Despite violence and poverty there is a sense of joy everywhere”

ACN's Kinga von Schierstaedt visited Nigeria in November 2022.



Kinga von Schierstaedt in the major seminary of Abuja.

Were you anxious about the security situation in Nigeria?

When, just a few days before our trip the United States withdrew aid workers from the Nigerian capital Abuja, we briefly had second thoughts. Nonetheless, we decided to press ahead with the trip. In fact, the Archbishop of Abuja told us that it had been a great comfort for him that ACN had come to visit, just when others were pulling out. So it's not just about helping financially, but also about being close to the local church.

What are the main trials and difficulties facing Christians in Nigeria?

For decades now, the Christians in the north have faced persecution from the Islamist terror group Boko Haram. And although the situation here has improved somewhat in recent years, Christians in other parts of the country are now also suffering violent attacks, mainly from the nomadic, and overwhelmingly

Muslim, Fulani herder community. Among the herders there are many heavily armed and radicalised Islamist groups.

The priests and religious face a double danger: firstly, because of the extremists' hatred of Christians; and secondly, because bandits have found kidnapping to be a useful “business model”, as ransom demands can provide them with income.

What made the biggest impression on you?

The churches are packed, even on weekdays and even in areas where it is dangerous. The people say, “The terrorists can take everything from us, even our lives, but not our faith.” Amid all the violence and poverty their faith gives them great strength and there is a sense of great joy everywhere.

Save the date

• Lenten Service

29th March, 7pm

St Patrick's Church, 21A Soho Square, W1D 4NR

Book one of the few remaining seats for a wonderful Lenten service of devotion, sung by The Schola Cantorum of The London Oratory, conducted by Charles Cole.

To book your seat please visit:

www.acnuk.org/lent23e

• #RedWednesday

22nd November

On Wednesday, November 22nd, ACN's flagship event will take place in London.

A special Rosary, Mass, and talks are being planned. So, for the time being, please save the date. As November approaches, there will be a series of online talks for you and your community to enjoy.

For more information please visit:

www.acnuk.org/rw23e

• Christmas Carol Service

13th December, 7pm (TBC)

Farm Street Church, 114 Mount Street, Mayfair W1K 3AH

Celebrate Christ's coming with The Schola Cantorum of the London Oratory, directed

by Charles Cole. The event will be followed by a reception with ACN staff and supporters.

Tickets will be available soon.

• Will you raise ACN's Voice in 2023?

We seek advocates to give ACN a voice in your community. Together, ACN's voice can be heard louder, helping in breaking the silence on Christian persecution. If this is important to you, please consider how you might help in your own or wider community.

If you want help give a voice to the voiceless, please email us at: events@acnuk.org



A heavy cross – but they still want to become priests!

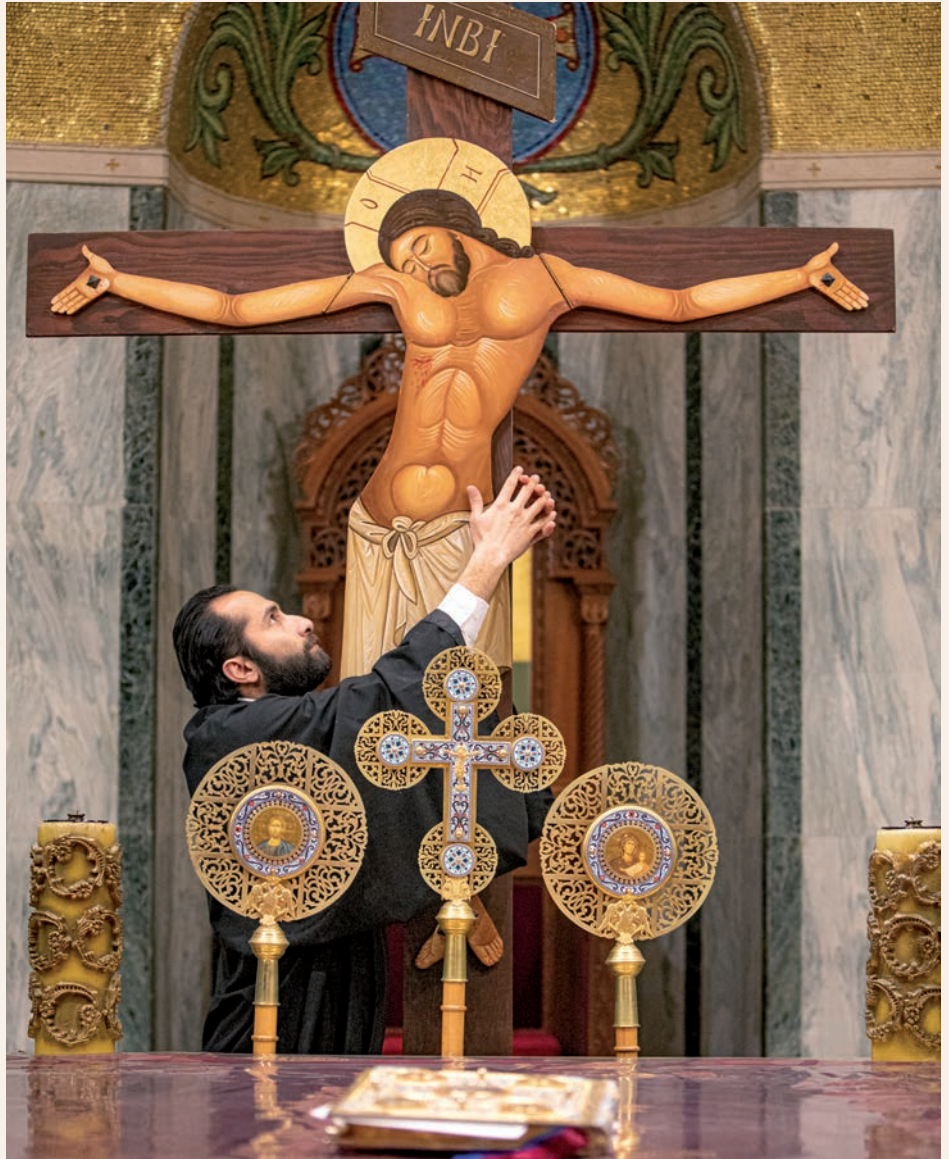
Following Christ means embracing the Cross.

For three years now, **Lebanon** has been going through a devastating crisis. This country, once called the “Switzerland of the Orient”, is now economically ruined. But there are still courageous young men, determined to stay on in their home country and follow God’s call.

“These days it is not easy to be training for the priesthood. There is widespread poverty, everyone is going hungry, and life gets more difficult every day,” admits Samer, who is studying at the Melkite Catholic seminary in Harissa, just north of the capital Beirut. “It’s a heavy cross, but I want to be a priest and, like Jesus, a good shepherd to the people.”

His fellow seminarian Pierre also wants to imitate the example of the Good Shepherd, who “lays down his life for his sheep”. A vocation is something that cannot really be explained, he tells us, rather it is “the story of a friendship that has grown up between us and Christ.” And he adds: “So finally I decided to become a priest in order to serve others and pray for them, for the priest is a servant and a man of prayer. Without a close and personal relationship with Jesus, the life of a priest cannot succeed under any circumstances.”

The eleven young seminarians here are already gaining valuable pastoral experience. Often they travel to the remote villages to work with the young people there. And in the holidays they also run youth groups in neigh-



© Immael Martínez Sánchez / ACN

The chapel is the heart of the seminary.

bouring Syria, which some 700 young people took part in last summer. Hanna, a seminarian of the Paulist order, has great faith in this mission. “In my opinion, the Church needs us at this time in particular. It needs the spirit of youth in order to attract young people once again. It is a wonderful experience for us these days, to bring the Word of God to people who are far from the Church. Our task is to bring these people back to her.”

For the current academic year we are proposing to help the seminary in Harissa with **£20,800**. Part of this aid will go for the installation of solar panels that should considerably reduce energy costs and also

secure their electricity supply. As it is, the national electricity supply functions at best for two hours a day, so that the seminarians either have to use an expensive generator at night or else study by candlelight.

We are also supporting other seminaries in Lebanon, whose survival is threatened by the massive increase in costs – for example the Maronite seminary in Ghazir, to which we have promised **£39,400** for the formation of the 75 seminarians studying there.

Would you be willing to help these young men to follow the call of the Good Shepherd, despite these difficult times?



God speaks to his Ukrainian children

For 43 years now ACN has published its Child's Bible "God speaks to his Children". ACN has now printed over 51.4 million copies in 193 languages, so it could be said to be an international best seller! A few months ago we were asked to provide 40,000 copies in Ukrainian, of which 30,000 were for children in Ukraine and 10,000 for refugee children who had fled to other European countries. We were also asked for 30,000 copies of Saint Mark's Gospel for adults. Who else could they turn to in their need but Jesus? Thanks to you, we were able to meet both requests – and so bring many people great joy and hope. May God reward you for all your love!



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

Dear Friends,

"I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt 28:20). The Lord strengthens us with this assurance, but at the same time he is entrusting his Church with a mission.

This is why thousands of priests and religious around the world feel it is their duty not to abandon those entrusted to their care, even when the situation becomes life-threatening. Again and again we hear from our project partners in Nigeria, the Sahel region and other crisis-torn areas of the world about how these Church institutions continue to fulfil their pastoral and social mission, even after the representatives of other international organisations and humanitarian NGOs have had to withdraw for safety reasons.

Only the international community has the legitimacy to prevent failing states and to enable their people to live in dignity. ACN must continually call for this, and so strive to give a voice to oppressed and persecuted Christians.

At the same time our mission is to help the Church wherever she stands by the people and seeks to ease their burden.

The fact that we are able, again and again, to fulfil both these missions is something we owe to your prayers, your loyalty and your generosity.

With my heartfelt thanks and greetings!

Thomas Heine-Geldern

Need, love and thanks – your letters

For scouts in Syria – with love

This year, instead of rushing around to choose a Christmas gift for each of my six children – one that they will hardly look at – I have chosen to offer uniforms for eight scouts in Syria. The choice of this gift is deliberate: all my six children are, or have been, scouts. We know several families and young people from Syria. This Christmas, "my" French scouts won't lack for anything, not even the non-essentials: I send you, dear young people from Syria, together with these uniforms, the assurance of our prayers, our loving thoughts, and our scouting salute! May you be happy in this movement, that truly helps young people to grow!

A mother in France

Thanks for our help in Israel

Three weeks ago we visited the town of Cana in Israel. While there we visited the Melkite Greek Catholic church. The parish priest, Father Simon Khoury, showed us around the

church and its associated buildings. He told us that the construction and renovation work had been mainly financed by ACN and he asked us to report back about how the money given has been used on the church and other buildings. We can confirm that they have been renovated in a very tasteful and appropriate manner.

A married couple in Germany

Help for Kikwit, DR Congo

Thank you for your valuable help for our diocesan radio station. May God continue to send you generous benefactors, so that you can help others in need.

A priest in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Respect and gratitude

Please be assured of my respect and gratitude towards Aid to the Church in Need.

The Mother Superior of a religious congregation in the UK

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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