



A C N

The Way of the Cross



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The parish priest of Our Lady of the Angels, Father Tony, carrying the wooden cross during the last station of the Way of the Cross in the streets of the Christian quarter of Badaro in Beirut, Lebanon.

Stations of the Cross for the Suffering Church

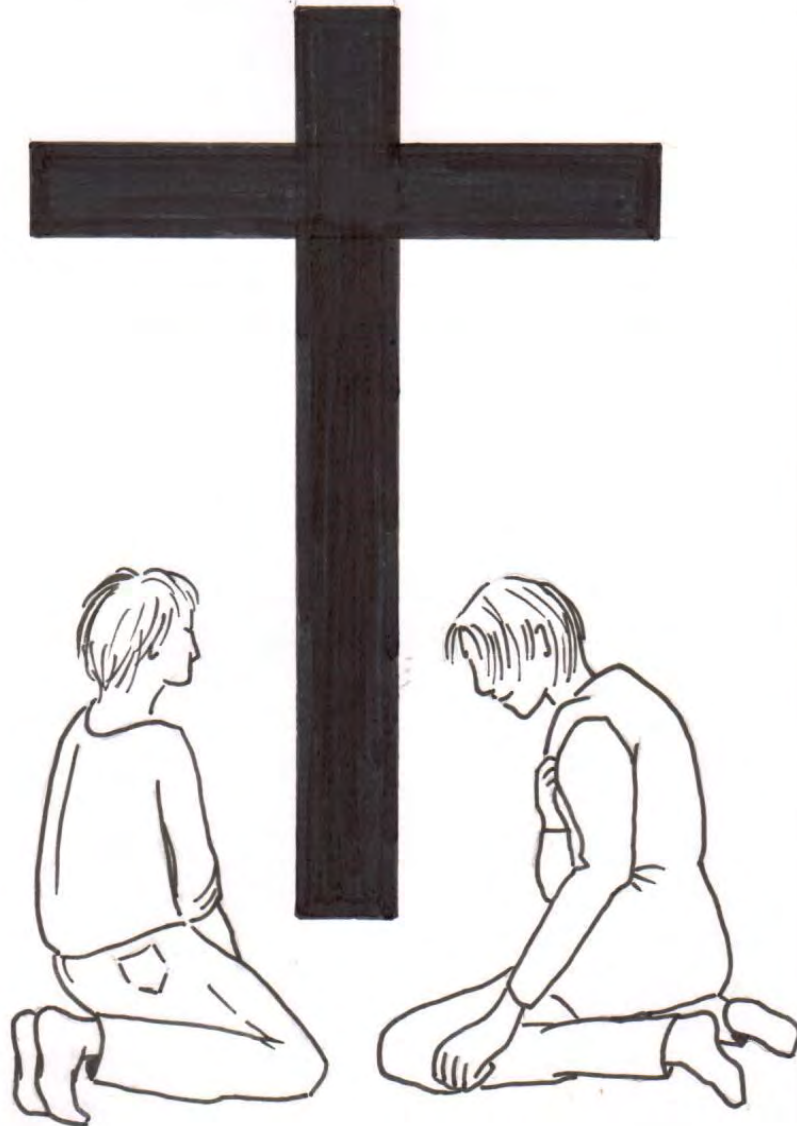
Introduction:

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

Every day millions of Christians around the world suffer for their Faith. Many are persecuted for their beliefs; their ordeals can include discrimination at home or in the workplace, fines, imprisonment, torture and even execution. Still others are living out their Christian Faith in extremely isolated communities or in the face of abject poverty.

Every story about suffering and persecuted Christians involves real people with names and hopes and dreams. It is often far too easy for us to think in terms of facts, figures and statistics rather than those who are suffering. St Paul the Apostle reminds us that, “just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body (...) If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together.” (1 Cor 12: 12-13, 26)

St Paul underlines our responsibility towards our brothers and sisters. So let us work together to end their suffering and persecution by offering our prayers, sharing their stories with others and, finally, through our actions.



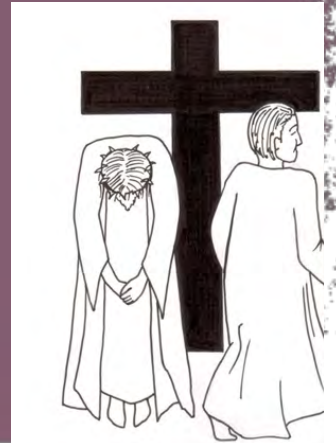
Just as we walk with Jesus whenever we pray before the Stations of the Cross, so we walk with all those who suffer for their faith. Let us pray for them, that their faith may continue to grow and that their suffering will ease through the mercy and compassion of Our Lord.

1st Station:

JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH



Bashir, an Afghan Christian living in Pakistan, fled from the Taliban who killed his father, brother, and uncle, who worked for the military. He is facing imminent deportation from Pakistan back to Afghanistan after Pakistan authorities denied him an extension to his visa that had expired eight months previously.



**We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you
Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

Scripture

But he was silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” And Jesus said, “I am; and you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” And the high priest tore his mantle, and said, “Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?” And they all condemned him as deserving death. **Mark 14:61-64 (RSV-CE)**

Afghanistan

Bashir, an Afghan Christian living in Pakistan, fled from the Taliban who killed his father, brother, and uncle, who worked for the military. He is facing imminent deportation from Pakistan back to Afghanistan after Pakistan authorities denied him an extension to his visa that had expired eight previously. Afghanistan has been named by religious observers as the most dangerous country in the world to be a Christian. Bashir told ACN that “Pakistan [was] not a safe country for converted Christians...”.

Bashir is panic-stricken about the possibility of being discovered in Pakistan illegally, given both the fate of his family under the Taliban back in Afghanistan and his Christian convert status. Lacking money for food and rent, he has survived since arriving in Pakistan in December 2021 by begging for his basic needs.

ACN is calling on the UK Government to address Bashir’s situation and consider offering him asylum, or at least helping him extend his Pakistan visa or leave the country safely. [ACN News December 22 2022](#)

Let us pray:

Have mercy on us, Lord. We pray that you will strengthen the weary, console those in distress and protect all who are suffering from depression and lead them out of despair and darkness and into your wondrous light.

R: Lord, hear us.

A: Lord, graciously hear us.

All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.

Divine Mercy, greatest attribute of God, I trust in You.

2nd Station:

JESUS TAKES UP THE CROSS



Shafqat Emmanuel and Shagufta Kausar . They were arrested on false charges of blasphemy in July 2013 .



We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you

Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.

Ephesians 6: 14-18 (RSV-CE)

Pakistan

Shagufta Kausar, a Catholic woman held for eight years on death row in Pakistan after she was falsely accused of blasphemy refused to deny her Christian beliefs – despite torture and blackmail. Shagufta was arrested in July 2013 with her wheel-chair bound husband, Shafqat Masih, for allegedly sending offensive texts about the Muslim Prophet Mohammad.

She said: “In jail, we were tortured. The officers told my husband that if he did not confess, they would rape me in front of him, and so he confessed, even though we were both innocent. We were in jail for eight months before a judge found us guilty and sentenced us to death.”

She said: “[V]ery strong voices were raised against our unfair trial and sentence...as well as by the **Catholic Church, and Aid to the Church in Need.**” Despite attempts to blackmail her into converting to Islam whilst imprisoned, Shagufta – who was released with her husband last July – refused. “Jesus Christ sacrificed his life for me though I am a sinner. I will never, ever change my religion and convert to Islam. I would rather be hanged than deny Jesus Christ.” [ACN News May 5 2022](#)

Let us pray

Dear Lord, we pray for all, who have been falsely accused or imprisoned, abducted, mistreated or denied justice. We pray that the Holy Spirit will bring lasting healing.

R: Lord, hear us.

A: Lord, graciously hear us.

All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.

Divine Mercy, encompassing the whole universe, I trust in You.

3rd Station:

JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME



A burnt car at Chipene Mission in the Diocese of Nacala, in the northeast of Mozambique.



**We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you
Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

Scripture

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” **Matthew 2: 13 (RSV-CE)**

Mozambique

An 83-year-old nun, Sister Maria de Coppi, was shot dead by terrorists during an attack on a Catholic mission in Chipene in the Diocese of Nacala, in the northeast of Mozambique last September. Sister Maria, an Italian Comboni religious Sister, had been ministering in Mozambique for 59 years. The mission, which included a church, a school, and a health centre, was gutted. The terrorists also burned the library, not to mention the boys’ and girls’ boarding schools, the mission’s vehicles, and the priests’ and nuns’ houses. 35 boys and 45 girls living in the boarding school had mercifully been evacuated before it was set ablaze.

Since 2017 Al-Shabab have waged an Islamist insurgency in Mozambique. A missionary from Pemba told ACN: “Since July this year (2022) it appears that the ‘Islamic State’ has taken control of the group. Christians are beginning to be targeted and the war is taking on a more religious dimension.” **ACN has been supporting the Church’s programme of pastoral, material and psycho-social support for IDPs (internally displaced persons) – as well as projects to build houses to shelter the displaced and vehicles for missionaries caring for them.** [ACN News September 8 2022](#) See also [Persecuted and Forgotten? A report on Christians oppressed for their faith 2020-2022, p72; ACN News June 24 2022](#)

Let us pray:

O Prince of Peace, you guaranteed we would find you if we persisted in prayer and searched for you in your Word and glorified your name by doing your will. In your Holy Name we ask for your perfect peace to reign over Mozambique.

R: Lord, hear us.

A: Lord, graciously hear us.

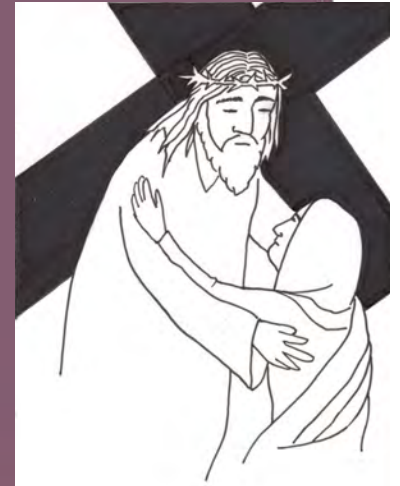
All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.

Divine Mercy, unfathomed by any intellect, human or angelic, I trust in You.

4th Station: JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER



With image of the late Sister Marie-Sylvie Kavuke Vakatsuraki and the burnt-out hospital where she died.



We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you

Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. [John 19:25 \(RSV-CE\)](#)

Democratic Republic of the Congo

For years now, the provinces of the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have been terrorised by rebel militias. Ethnic conflicts, population movements and the desire for access to valuable mineral resources have been important contributing factors in the ongoing terrorist activity. In recent years radical Islamism has been growing among the rebels. Ugandan jihadist group Islamic State – Central African Province, also known as the Allied Democratic Forces, set fire to the hospital in Maboya village, near Butembo city in the east of the DRC. Sister Marie-Sylvie Kavuke Vakatsuraki, who worked there as a doctor, and a patient were killed.

Besides the two victims, there were many others still unaccounted for and who had been forced by the jihadists to carry the looted goods, taken from hospitals, pharmacies, and shops. Fr Marcelo Oliveira, head of the Comboni Missionaries in the DR Congo, said the attack was the latest act in a “hidden” and “silent” war, which the media are not reporting. **Amid growing Islamist violence, Mass stipends for persecuted priests are a priority for ACN. ACN also prioritises training of priests, construction of and repairs to churches, presbyteries, convents and other religious buildings as well as mopeds and other vehicles for clergy ministering to remote communities.** [ACN News October 27 2022](#). See also [ACN News International January 26 2023](#)

Let us pray:

O Word made flesh! Guide us in your truth so that through prayer, fasting and almsgiving we may become missionary disciples learning to grow, think, see, act and pray as you do.

R: Lord, hear us.

A: Lord, graciously hear us.

All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.

Divine Mercy, repose of hearts, peace amidst fear, I trust in You.



ACN

5th Station:

SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS JESUS TO CARRY THE CROSS



With image of Polish ACN volunteers.



We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you

Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. **Ephesians 5:1-2 (RSV-CE)**

Ukraine

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Exarchate of Donetsk demanded the immediate release of two Catholic priests, Fr Ivan Levitsky and Fr Bohdan Geleta, who were arrested by Russian operatives on 16th November last year and charged with illegally possessing weapons. Church authorities fear the priests have been tortured.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, ACN has provided £1.15million in emergency aid to the Church in Ukraine. Volunteers, working from the ACN (Poland) office in Wrocław, have been providing food and support to Ukrainian refugees fleeing the conflict.

Fr Andrzej Paś, of ACN (Poland), said: "It was an act of God's providence that we should have our office right next to the Wrocław train station.

"When the Ukrainian refugees arrived, terrorised and exhausted in a place unfamiliar to them, we were already there to help." [ACN News December 2 2022](#). See also [ACN News March 17 2022](#)

Let us pray:

God of inexhaustible compassion, through your Son you reconciled us to yourself. We trust in you. Fill us with your light, your wisdom, your peace, your grace and your joy, and make us ambassadors of your love and mercy.

R: Lord, hear us.

A: Lord, graciously hear us.

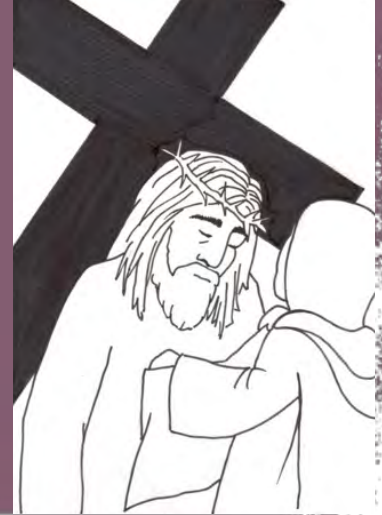
All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.

Divine Mercy, lifting us out of every misery, I trust in You.

6th Station: VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS



With image of Sister Annie Demerjian (Congregation of the Religious of Jesus and Mary) .



We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you

Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

If I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing... **1 Corinthians 13: 2 (RSV-CE)**

Syria

Spiralling poverty, rising inflation and a stagnant job market have left ordinary Syrians living in desperate need.

Sister Annie Demerjian of Aleppo, Syria, who ministers to persecuted Christians said: “The big bomb now is the hunger. The money we are giving families is not enough. The income of the family does not equal what they need to live on a daily basis.” Sister Annie continued: “Last winter, we met a family with three children. They had nothing in their house. No mattress, no fridge, no lights. Nothing. We asked them, ‘How are you managing with this cold winter?’ And they said that someone gave them a blanket and they put it on the floor and tried to manage. We tried to get a mattress for them, and we put a small battery as a generator so they can charge it and use it.”

Sister Annie thanked ACN for its support of Christians in Syria. She said, “When part of your body is suffering then the whole part feels it... Our brothers and sisters put Syria in their hearts and took action.” [ACN News July 8 2022](#)

Let us pray:

Jesus, our Saviour and Redeemer, enlighten our mind and our heart so that in fulfilling your will we will discover and understand our mission and your plan for our lives.

R: Lord, hear us.

A: Lord, graciously hear us.

All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.

Divine Mercy, sweet relief for anguished hearts, I trust in You.

7th Station:

JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME



Sisters of the Missionary of Jesus Word and Victim in the Diocese of Santa Clara visiting the needy.



A Sister of the Handmaids of Mary in the Archdiocese of Camaguey helping the needy.



We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you

Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

Out of the depths I cry to thee, O Lord! Lord, hear my voice! Let thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications! **Psalm 129 (130): 1 -2 (RSV-CE)**

Cuba

A new social, economic, and humanitarian crisis in Cuba has forced many people to emigrate from the country.

Fr Bladimir Navarro, a Cuban priest now living in Spain, told ACN about the situation in Cuba. “The people of Cuba suffer from the worst form of poverty, which is lack of freedom. Besides economic misery, we are experiencing the misery of fear, of emigration, of lack of values. Another urgent matter is lack of medication, people can’t even get paracetamol or ibuprofen, let alone antibiotics.”

He said, “[t]here are many people, religious, priests, bishops and laypeople who are committed to accompanying those who are suffering, lifting their spirits and giving them hope at such a sad time.”

[O]rganisations such as ACN, are helping so much. The Church is also accompanying, listening, standing beside those who suffer and giving them spiritual and material support.” [ACN International July 13 2022](#)

Let us pray:

O Lord, our rock and our refuge! Restore and renew us in your mercy. Stay with us, Lord, and help us to abide in you so that filled with your courage we may strive to do your will.

R: Lord, hear us.

A: Lord, graciously hear us.

All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.

Divine Mercy, accompanying us through our whole life, I trust in You.

8th Station: JESUS CONSOLES THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM



Nevin Sobhi and the perpetrator (first man right in the front wearing a suit jacket) during the forced reconciliation session.



We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you

Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Scripture

Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you. **1 Peter 5: 7 (RSV-CE)**

Egypt

Nevin Sobhi was twice slapped hard in the face by a local pharmacist, Mr Ali Abu-Soaud, a Muslim, while buying medication for her sick son in a nearby village in Ashmon-Monofyia governorate, 250 miles south of Cairo. Ali Abu-Soaud objected to Mrs Sobhi, a Coptic Christian, not being veiled during Ramadan.

Mrs Sobhi's family took her to the police station to file a complaint however the police refused to do so and forced her into signing a false report which exonerated Mr Abu-Soaud. The matter ended with her being pressured to attend a reconciliation session with the perpetrator; these sessions usually see the aggressor let off lightly and the victim denied all justice.

This is not an isolated incident. The report *Hear Her Cries: The kidnapping, forced conversion and sexual victimisation of Christian women and girls* investigates the problems Christian women face in societies where they are second class citizens. [Persecuted and Forgotten? A report on Christians oppressed for their faith 2020-22. p33](#)

Let us pray:

Lord of everlasting tenderness and mercy, our hope is in you. We pray for an end to people trafficking, forced labour and exploitation. We ask that you shelter and protect women and girls against all forms of exploitation, mistreatment, violence, aggression and hateful and controlling behaviour.

R: Lord, hear us.

A: Lord, graciously hear us.

All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.

Divine Mercy, inspiring hope against hope, I trust in You.

9th Station: JESUS FALLS FOR THE THIRD TIME



With image of
Bishop Valence
Mendis of Kandy



Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith distributing relief supplies to the
needy.



**We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you
Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

Scripture

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. **Ephesians 2: 10 (RSV-CE)**

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is in a deep and unprecedented financial crisis.

Bishop Valence Mendis of Kandy, who is also Apostolic Administrator of Chilaw, told ACN that the local Church is struggling to cover its own costs – and finding it hard to relieve the suffering of everyone turning to it for help. He said: “People can afford virtually nothing. Our priests and religious are badly affected by the crisis. There are very long queues, miles and miles of people trying to buy fuel, gas, powdered milk, sugar, rice, medicine...and many people have lost their jobs, and prices have risen astronomically.”

Sri Lanka’s financial crisis has been deepened by corruption, lack of fuel, and the loss of tourist income caused by the coronavirus pandemic. **Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) has provided thousands of pounds in the form of Mass stipends – which provide priests with a basic income – and subsistence aid for catechists, Sisters and others carrying out essential pastoral work.** [ACN News July 18 2022](#)

Let us pray:

Christ Jesus the Good Shepherd, we pray for peace, justice, unity, and economic stability in Sri Lanka.

R: Lord, hear us.

A: Lord, graciously hear us.

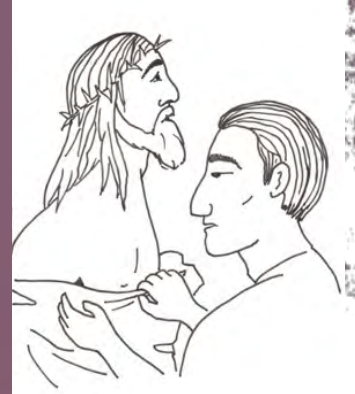
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Divine Mercy, accompanying us every moment of our life, I trust in You.

10th Station: JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS



Salim Assaf, with his family, outside the one-bedroom flat he lives in with his wife, four daughters and his father.



**We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you
Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

Scripture

Yea, dogs are round about me; a company of evildoers encircle me; they have pierced my hands and feet—I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my raiment they cast lots. **Psalm 21(22): 16-19 (RSV-CE)**

Lebanon

The crisis in Lebanon is dire. The country has suffered months of hyperinflation and an outbreak of cholera, leaving families in Lebanon in extreme poverty. And there are fresh concerns over Daesh (ISIS) recruitment.

Every two months ACN is providing food packages to the poorest 1,500 families in the Diocese of Tyre.

Today, Christians form less than 30 percent of Tyre's residents. Salim Assaf, who used to be a taxi driver and receives ACN food packages, lost his livelihood and his house after Lebanon's economic collapse. He, his wife, and his five daughters, one of whom is living with mental health disabilities, moved into a one-bed flat owned by his father, who now lives with them. The flat is in desperate need of repairs, but they cannot afford them. His wife cares for their daughters. They can no longer afford their children's bus fare to school.

Father Yacoub Saab, a local priest, said: "People are constantly asking the church for help. They have become very dependent on the food packages. They were always poor, but the crisis has driven them to below zero." [ACN News December 7 2022](#)

Let us pray

Merciful Lord Jesus, we know we are precious in your eyes. All things were created through you and for you. We place into your care families separated by war, conflict, violence, famine, sickness and corruption.

R: Lord, hear us.

A: Lord, graciously hear us.

All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.

Divine Mercy, only hope for despairing souls, I trust in You.

11th Station:

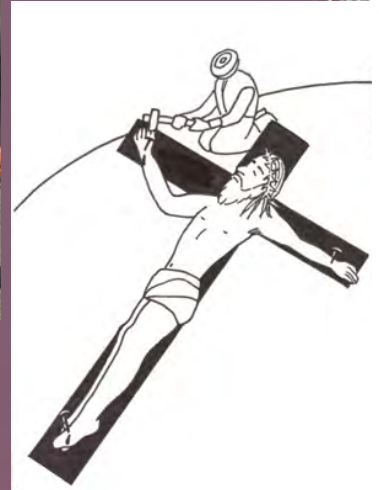
JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS



Sister Marcela Catozza (©
Fondazione Via Lattea)



Violent protests in Haiti after general elections in 2010
© Digital Democracy.



**We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you
Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

Scripture

Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked. **Psalm 81 (82): 3-4 (RSV-CE)**

Haiti

Haiti is considered one of the poorest countries in the western hemisphere. Earthquakes have repeatedly hit Haiti hard — destroying homes, infrastructure, amenities, and church buildings alike — pushing the country into even more extreme poverty. Growing insecurity and violence are causing serious problems in the country. For the last two to three years, various gangs have been controlling the cities and streets.

Problems in the country and spiralling out of control. Sister Luisa Dell'Orto, a Little Sister of the Gospel of Charles de Foucauld, who worked with Haiti's street children for more than 20 years, was shot dead in June last year. The Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption in was torched in July last year. The offices of Caritas were looted, and a Franciscan orphanage was attacked. A Franciscan Sister Marcela Catozza, who had spent 15 years ministering in Haiti, told ACN she had been unable to go to Mass for a year because the gangs who control the slum area would not allow access to anybody. In August last year, Sister Marcela was recalled to Italy for her own safety.

Following the earthquake in 2021, ACN provided emergency aid. [ACN News October 13 2022](#). See also [ACN International news July 2022](#)

Let us pray:

Lord our God, you are gentle and humble of heart. We ask that you watch over and strengthen the peoples of Haiti and fill them with your wonder, so that peace may flourish.

R: Lord, hear us.

A: Lord, graciously hear us.

All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. ever permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.

Divine Mercy, source of our happiness and joy, I trust in You.



ACN

12th Station: JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS



Father Isaac Achi, of St Peter and St Paul parish,
Kafin Koro, Minna Diocese, Nigeria



**We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you
Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

Scripture

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. **Isaiah 53: 5-6 (RSV-CE)**

Nigeria

Fr Isaac Achi died after attackers burnt the presbytery where he was staying to the ground. Striking in the early hours of the morning, the armed men targeted the priests' house attached to St Peter and St Paul Church, Kafin Koro, Minna Diocese in Nigeria.

According to local sources the attackers' motive was probably to kidnap Fr Achi, who had previously survived a bomb attack in 2011. The Catholic Diocese of Minna said Fr Achi died as the fire took hold, but added assistant parish priest Fr Collins Omeh was "responding to treatment" after being shot by the gunmen while trying to escape.

More than 7,600 Christians were killed in Nigeria between January 2021 and June 2022. **Addressing the UK Houses of Parliament in November 2022, Bishop Jude Arogundade of the Diocese of Ondo in Nigeria urged members: "to compel the Nigerian government to stop the genocide."** [ACN News January 16 2023](#)

Let us pray:

O Lamb of God, with your stripes you have taken away the sins of the world. May your kingdom come! May your will be done!

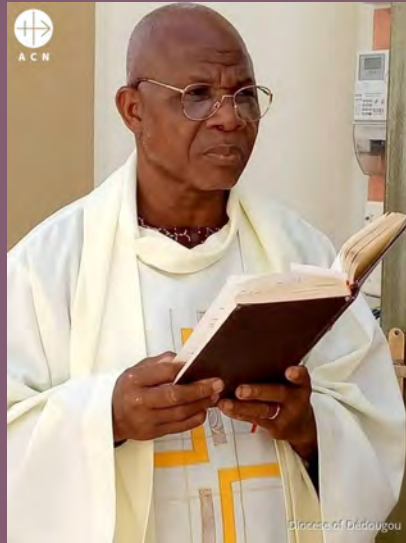
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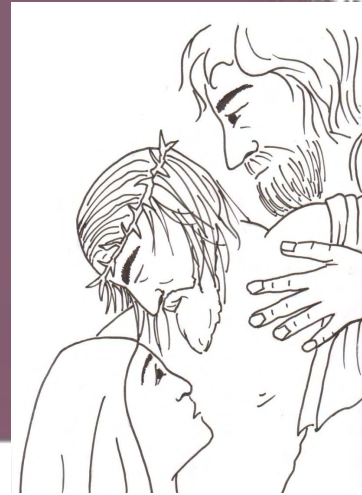
All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.

Divine Mercy, which flowed out from the open wound of the Heart of Jesus, I trust in You.

13th Station: JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN



With image of Father Jacques Yaro Zerbo
© Diocese of Dédougou.



**We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you
Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

Scripture

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth.

1 John 3: 16-18 (RSV-CE)

Burkina Faso

Fr Jacques Yaro Zerbo, a 66-year-old priest, who taught in seminaries and formation centres throughout Burkina Faso, was murdered by "unidentified armed men".

According to local sources Fr Zerbo was killed on the Dédougou-Gassan road after being by detained by the armed men. Bishop Prosper Bonaventure Ky of Dédougou said the killing took place in Soro village in Gassan commune, which is in the north-western region of Boucle du Mouhoun. His murderers also took his vehicle.

Over the past decade armed insurgents from neighbouring Mali have destabilised Boucle du Mouhoun where a state of emergency had been in place until last month. About 50 percent of the country is occupied by terrorist groups resulting in 1.7 million internally displaced persons with no access to schools or the financial means to pay for their children to attend. Priests can no longer travel freely around the country except to the provincial capitals. **In 2021, ACN supported 75 projects in Burkina Faso including emergency aid, the training of seminarians, and scholarships for displaced children.** [ACN News January 6 2023](#). See also [ACN International news report January 10 2023](#) and [ACN News July 22 2022](#)

Let us pray:

O God, come to my assistance. O Lord, make haste to help me. Psalm 69 (70): 1-2

R: Lord, hear us.

A: Lord, graciously hear us.

All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.

Divine Mercy, source of miracles and wonders, I trust in You.



ACN

14th Station:

JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB



Mass for Fr Joaquín Mora and Fr Javier Campos, murdered in the village of Cerocahui, Mexico.



**We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you
Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

Scripture

Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. **Philippians 4: 6-7 (RSV-CE)**

Mexico

Seven priests have been murdered in Mexico since 2019. According to Fr Omar Sotelo, director of the Centro Católico Multimedial, which tracks these crimes, Mexico is one of the most dangerous countries in the world in which to be a priest.

Two Mexican Jesuit priests, Fr Joaquín Mora, 78, and Fr Javier Campos, 80, were murdered last June by armed men inside the church of the village of Cerocahui, in the Tarahumara mountain range, Chihuahua state, Mexico, while providing refuge to Pedro Palma, 60, a tour guide who was fleeing drug traffickers, and who was also murdered.

Mexico continues to see a rash of murders and kidnappings of priests. The worst religious freedom violations in Latin America continue to take place in countries with a history of human rights abuses.

ACN has prioritised supporting both the training and daily living costs of priests, seminarians, and religious to enable them to continue their ministries. See [ACN International June 24 2022](#)

Let us pray:

Trust in the Lord, and do good; so you will dwell in the land, and enjoy security. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. *Psalms 37: 3-4*

R: Lord, hear us.

A: Lord, graciously hear us.

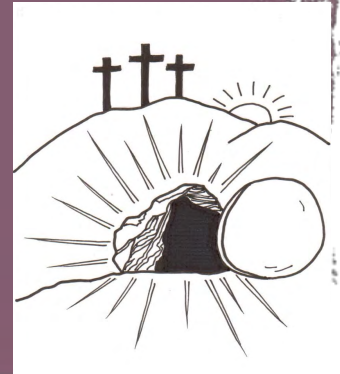
All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.

Divine Mercy, in our justification through Jesus Christ, I trust in You.

RISEN JESUS, WE PRAISE YOU!



The celebration of Holy Mass in St. Kyriakos's Church in Batnaya, Iraq during Easter 2022 .



Risen Jesus, we praise you! You have triumphed over sin and death and your victory is evident in your Church today. No evil can withstand the power of your love.

Iraq

St Kyriakos's Chaldean Catholic Church, in Batnaya, northeastern Iraq, opened during Easter 2022 to celebrate the Mass for the first time since the building was desecrated by Daesh (ISIS) militants just over eight years ago.

In 2014, militant extremists entered the church and decapitated statues, smashed up the altar, used the sacred images above the altar for target practice, wrote anti-Christian graffiti on the walls, and broke gravestones of the nearby cemetery into pieces.

Iraq is a priority country for ACN. 20 years ago, Christians in the country numbered 20 million, today there are barely 150,000. ACN, has helped towards repairs to two kindergartens in Batnaya, as well as St Oraha's Dominican convent, parish hall, library and presbytery.

After receiving funding from ACN, St Kyriakos's Church and the nearby chapel were restored. More than 500 people attended the Easter Vigil last year, the first since August 2014, celebrating Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead. [ACN News April 21 2022](#)

Let us pray

Christ Jesus, our Redeemer, through your Resurrection we know that your "...power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think". We pray that we may follow the instruction given by your Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, to the servants during the Wedding at Cana to "Do whatever he tells you".

R: Lord, hear us.

A: Lord, graciously hear us.

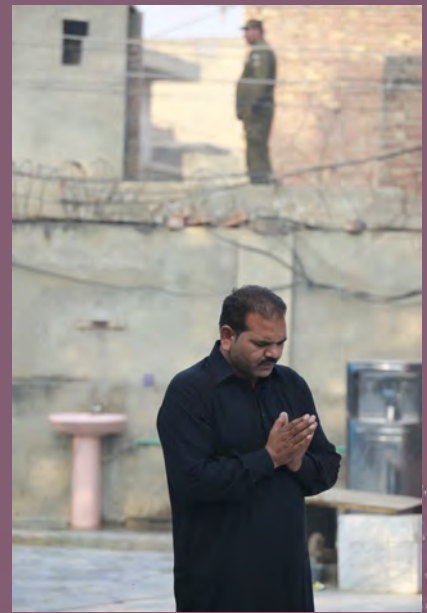
All: I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart for having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.

Divine Mercy, fount gushing forth from the mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity, I trust in You.

A PRAYER FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS



Children in the Diocese of Dedza, Malawi taking part in the ACN prayer initiative 'One Million Children Praying the Rosary'. ©ACN



A man prays in Pakistan while a police officer guards the church ©ACN/Magdalena Wolnik

We pray together in solidarity with the millions of Christian people around the world who are persecuted because of their beliefs.

Loving Father, we pray that each of your precious children across the world may know of your love for them.

We pray that, where life has become very difficult, you may make a clear path for them.

We pray for their protection, and for them to know that “...under His wings you will find refuge”. (*Psalm 90(91):4 RSV-CE*)

May persecuted Christians know that with your grace, Lord God, they can do anything. We offer our prayers for their strength and safety.

We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.



The ONE NIGHT Icon commissioned after One Night for Religious Freedom at the Church of the Holy Name of Jesus, Manchester. March 2015. ©ACN

“My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Corinthians 12:9 RSV-CE)

“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe” **John 20:29** (RSV-CE)



Children from the Diocese of Dori in Burkino Faso on an annual retreat funded by ACN ©ACN

ACN, its project partners and thousands of suffering Christians around the world are deeply grateful for the part you are playing to care and pray for God’s people everywhere. We pray especially for those who are faithful, even under the threat of persecution or death.

Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) is a Pontifical Foundation of the Catholic Church, supporting the Catholic faithful and other Christians where they are persecuted, oppressed or in pastoral need.

Founded on Christmas Day 1947, ACN supports around 5,000 projects across the world each year.

For regular updates from the suffering Church around the world or to find out more information, please visit

www.acnuk.org

Thank you for your prayers and support for our brothers and sisters in Christ across the world.

All images are Aid to the Church in Need copyright, unless otherwise stated. The line drawings have been produced for us by Wendy Moore, for use with ACN materials.

Please keep in touch with your local office. Details are listed below.



Volunteers working to support Christians in Aleppo, Syria ©ACN

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