

South Sudan: at last, the parish of Thon-Aduel has a proper church of its own!

Nothing is too beautiful for God

An African bishop once put it very succinctly: “If we want to build a pigsty for our pigs, there are many charities willing to help. But if we need a space where we can worship God, it is very hard to get any help at all.”

There is a widespread assumption that it is better to build something “useful”. The sense of the holy and the mysterious has been widely lost in the Western world. But in Africa the faithful have a deep yearning to adore God in a sacred space. Unlike most other organisations, ACN is happy to help with the construction of churches and chapels. It is a moving sight to witness the community attending Holy Mass beneath a tree, or making great sacrifices to build a

temporary house or shelter, even if only of mud, straw and woven branches. But not infrequently such rudimentary and unstable structures are quickly destroyed by termites, rodents, wind and rain.

On one occasion in Thon-Aduel in **South Sudan**, the people fled screaming from their little chapel of woven branches and thatched straw, refusing to return even to celebrate Mass. Trying to bail out the rainwater that had come in through the roof, they found a snake hanging from the thatched roof. In the attempt to remove it, it fell down and hid, leaving the people terrified that it might emerge again and bite someone. But now, thanks to your generous help, the community has a fitting church of its own.

Meanwhile, in a number of African countries, mosques are springing up, even in tiny villages, funded by oil money from Saudi Arabia. The Christians are mocked and made to feel inferior for having only a mud hut to worship their God in. And many of the sects also seem to find the money to build their own “temples”. Hence, for the Catholic communities in many places, having a worthy chapel is a symbol of their own distinctive identity.



Benin: The Bishop of Djougou in front of a decrepit chapel.

As Father Aurelio Gazzera, a missionary in the **Central African Republic**, observes, “Everyone should be able to pray and worship God in a beautiful space. Such beauty is a reflection of the beauty of God. And nothing is too beautiful for God.” Which is not to suggest he wants to build places of opulent splendour, but rather simple, but appropriate, sacred spaces where the African faithful can celebrate the Eucharist and come singing and praying before the Lord so as to fittingly praise his Name.

With your support we will continue to help build churches and chapels wherever needed.

We rebuilt their devastated convent

In early August 2014 more than 100,000 Christians in **Iraq** were forced to flee their homes on the Niniveh Plains before the advancing troops of Daesh (ISIS). Among them were the Dominican Sisters of Saint Catherine of Siena. Their convent in Batnaya was almost totally destroyed by the invading rebels. You have helped these Sisters repeatedly since then – first of all after they fled and subsequently again after their return, for the rebuilding of their convent – which has now been re-consecrated. Sister Huda Shito has written to thank us:

“We want to express our deep gratitude to you for your generous help over the past years. You have been a blessing for us and for the people your generosity enables us to serve.”



Need, love and thanks – your letters

Wonderful what ACN has achieved Reading the annual report, it is wonderful to see what ACN has achieved and is achieving, especially for poor priests and in assistance to the religious orders.

A friend in Australia

For the victims of the earthquake May the Lord bless you and help you to ease the suffering of all those people who have been affected by the terrible earthquake in Syria! Like you we were devastated by the sheer scale of the tragedy. Thank you for everything you are doing at ACN, a charity that is dear to our hearts! My fraternal greetings.

A supporter in France

Looking back in gratitude... During his active years as a priest my brother benefited greatly from the help of ACN. He spent his entire priestly life in the

former (communist) German Democratic Republic, constantly moving from place to place. His pastoral areas sometimes included as many as 15 Mass centres, and given the appalling road conditions – such as we can hardly imagine now – no vehicle lasted very long. Today he looks back in gratitude and follows current events with his prayers and blessings. Once again we wish to thank you, with all our hearts, for all the help received.

A friend in Germany

It's I who benefit the most...

Dear brothers and sisters, I'd like to express my thanks for being able to be a part of this wonderful work of love. Every month my heart rejoices to read the news from ACN about how the Gospel is spreading through the world. It's I who benefit the most in being faithful to this work of love!

A benefactor in Brazil

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 Yeomans, Kent TN12 5HF
ISSN 0252-2535 De licentia competentis auctoritatis ecclesiasticae



Regina Lynch
Executive President,
ACN (International)

Dear Friends,

Today you see a new name and a new face writing to you. I have the privilege of following in the great footsteps of Thomas Heine-Geldern, who during his term as Executive President has devoted so much of his life to leading ACN. More than half of his term has been marked by two crises that have affected the whole world: the COVID pandemic and the war in Ukraine. With a steady hand and complete trust in God, he has led us through these challenging times and for this we will always be grateful.

For more than 40 years with ACN I have been fortunate to serve the many bishops, priests, religious and laity, who have been the recipients of your great generosity. Now, as the new Executive President, I have the chance to thank you for your selflessness and devotion towards our persecuted brothers and sisters through your prayers and donations. I can testify how much difference your support has made. Just yesterday a visiting archbishop from northern Nigeria told us that being persecuted, his faithful feel they are not forgotten and all thanks to ACN.

God bless,

Regina Lynch



Aid to the
Church in Need

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No 6 • August 2023

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Tanzania: Called to be disciples of Christ.

Dear Friends,

“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you... Receive the Holy Spirit” (Jn 20:21-22). With these words the risen Christ makes clear to the assembled disciples that he intends to include them in his own mission for the redemption of the human race and the restoration of creation, and will empower them for this purpose with the heavenly support of the Holy Spirit. In St Matthew's Gospel their mission is described still more clearly: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Mt 28:19-20).

This command of Jesus belongs to the very essence of Christianity. Only if we bear witness to the new life in Christ that we received in baptism, and convey this to others, will we experience the action of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in our lives. Then we will grow in the knowledge and strength of our faith, in hope and in

love. This is impressively borne out for us in the Acts of the Apostles and in the history of the Church. And experience shows that, in neglecting this missionary command of Jesus, the faith of the individual Christian, or community, soon withers.



“The missionary command of Jesus belongs to the very essence of Christianity.”

So now the crucial question is this: What does it actually mean to be a disciple of Jesus?

A disciple is someone who follows Jesus (cf Mk 2:14). Someone who knows and trusts his teacher, who wishes to learn from him and imitate him (cf 1 Cor 11:1).
The disciple listens to Jesus: “This is my beloved Son... Listen to him” (Mt 17:5).
The disciple learns from Jesus: “Learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Mt 11:29).

“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn 6:68).

The disciple obeys Jesus: “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:5). “He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me” (Jn 14:21).

A disciple does the works of Jesus: “You are my friends if you do what I command you” (Jn 15:14). “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 7:21).

For ACN, the mission given by Jesus to make disciples from every nation is a key imperative which, with your help, we seek to carry out to the ends of the earth, particularly where the faithful are in need and lacking resources.


With thanks for your help and solidarity, I send you my heartfelt good wishes and blessings,

F. Anton Lässer CP

Father Anton Lässer CP
Ecclesiastical Assistant

Meet our ACN Community Outreach Team

Our ACN Community Team is dedicated to building connections with parishes, schools, individuals, Churches Together and Catholic groups. Below we introduce two of its members:




Jerry Lohan
ACN Community Fundraiser for Southwark, Arundel & Brighton and Portsmouth Dioceses.


As a longstanding supporter of ACN, I am delighted to work for this charity. Prior to my appointment, I worked in education, specifically chaplaincy and RE.

I enjoyed supporting pupils, their families and staff on their faith journeys, providing a wide range of opportunities for spiritual growth and development. Thank you so much to all those who support the work of ACN. Please keep our work in your prayers.

To book Jerry for a parish appeal, talk, school assembly or event, please email jerry.lohan@acnuk.org or call **07939 362 478**.

To watch Jerry's introduction video scan the QR code or visit: www.acnuk.org/jerry-cf






Steve Riedlinger
ACN Community Fundraiser for the Dioceses of Plymouth, Clifton, Cardiff and Menevia.

Working for ACN is a bit like coming home. I have stories to tell and experiences to draw on and I am keen to hear about the experiences and views of those I meet through my work.

I enjoyed my previous career in teaching for its shared experiences, raising awareness of others and promoting cooperation and empathy. Whether in a parish, sharing Mass, or in schools witnessing the compassionate responses of young people, I find immense joy and fulfilment.

To book Steve for a parish appeal, talk, school assembly or event, please email steve.riedlinger@acnuk.org or call **07939 362 479**.

To watch Steve's introduction video scan the QR code or visit: www.acnuk.org/steve-cf



To learn more about the entire ACN Community Outreach Team, please visit: www.acnuk.org/community

The nightmare presbytery



This is the dilapidated building where Father Allie lives, works and prays.

Father Emmanuel Allie, in Freetown, Sierra Leone, has the patience of a saint. The crumbling building he lives in suffers constant flooding. He never complains, but we want to help him as soon as possible.

The house is essentially a nightmare: the roof leaks and when it rains, the ground floor becomes a lake; the state of the plumbing and electrical wiring is beyond repair and the decaying wooden stair treads threaten to collapse at any moment. And it is very noisy as well. "I can never find the silence so necessary for the spiritual life", he tells us. And on top of all this, the whole site is open and anyone can gain access to the property, which is a real danger, given the high crime rate.

Originally, the detached house was used to accommodate victims of the civil war. The Catholic faithful have helped their



Father Allie, standing in front of his crumbling presbytery.

priest, but he believed it was more important to build a church first – and now they have run out of money. Meanwhile, the house continues to decay because of the heavy rainfall and salty ocean air.

And so, to put an end to this nightmare, we have promised £38,600 to build a new presbytery.



An island of hope in an ocean of green

When enjoying a cup of tea, how often do we think of the people who actually picked those tea leaves? There are quite a few Christians among the tea pickers.

The Diocese of Sylhet in the northeast of **Bangladesh** lies in a vast tea producing region, where a shining green ocean of tea plantations stretches as far as the eye can see. Almost lost among them, an army of plantation workers toils tirelessly, picking tea leaf by leaf.

That their work is hard and their wages barely enough to live on, is already widely known. But the fact that the Catholic Church is often the only source of support for these people is rarely mentioned.

Most of the inhabitants of Sylhet are members of the indigenous ethnic groups. The Church helps all of them, without distinction. Some still adhere to traditional tribal religions, and many others are Hindus, but not a few are Christians. All of them live on the margins of society, because Bangladesh as a whole is an overwhelmingly Muslim country.

St Michael's Mission in Kamudpur is an island of hope in this ocean of green. Two priests from Ecuador currently minister

here to those who "labour and are heavy laden" (Mt 11:28). The mission serves some 2,500 Catholic faithful, but there are also Catholics in other villages further afield who wish to be part of this thriving community. So shortly the mission will be raised to the status of a full parish. Father Rizzo is hoping this will give a "powerful boost" to his work of evangelisation and in the longer term lead also to more home-grown vocations. But for now they still lack a parish church and presbytery.

We want to give £63,500 so they can lay the foundations for this new parish. Will you help us to build it?

Save the date

To book your place or for more details visit www.acnuk.org/events

#RedWednesday Event, London
Wednesday 22nd November, 5:45pm
Join us for Mass at 6pm, in person or online, followed by a reception and talks on our *Africa Update* report. Stand in solidarity with Christians facing persecution.
Location: St George's Cathedral, Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HR
Tube: Lambeth North, Waterloo, Southwark, and Elephant & Castle (10 mins walk)
For further details visit: www.acnuk.org/redwednesday

#RedWednesday Event, Scotland
Wednesday 22nd November, 5:30pm
Join us for our Scottish Parliament event hosted by Clare Adamson MSP. You will have the opportunity to hear case studies from ACN's latest report. Use your voice to call for change.
Location: The Scottish Parliament, The Royal Mile, Edinburgh EH99 1SP



Christmas Carol Service
Wednesday 13th December, 7:00pm
Celebrate Christ's coming with uplifting traditional music by the Schola Cantorum of the London Oratory School, conducted by Charles Cole.
Location: The Oratory, Brompton Road, London, SW7 2RP

Lenten Service
Wednesday 27th March 2024, 7:00pm
Compliment your Lenten journey by joining us for a wonderful service of devotion sung by the Schola Cantorum of the London Oratory.
Location: St Patrick's Catholic Church, Soho Square, London W1D 4NR

ACN shop



This summer we have some beautiful jewellery for you.

Heart and Cross Pendant
Heart 2cm x 1.5cm
Chain 46cm
£19.99



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Blue Miraculous Medal
Medal 1.5cm
Chain 46cm
£35.00



Product code GBMM

To purchase, please visit the jewellery section of the shop at www.acnuk.org/shop or call us on 0345 241 6068.



#RedWednesday 22nd November
Will you pledge your prayer and action this November?

Will you help ACN **Break the Silence on Christian Persecution**? Could you light your parish or a community venue in red? Can your school, parish, community help raise awareness?

Request your **#RedWednesday** prayer and promotional materials. Be part of **#RedTeam** fundraising challenge. Your support will help suffering families and communities in Africa.

Together, Catholic parishes, Churches Together groups and other Christian churches can help give a voice to Christian persecution and injustice worldwide.

Details coming soon at: www.acnuk.org/redwednesday

Your Catholic Legacy... of love



A remembrance tree

On 10th June, Bishop Paul Mason, Bishop of the Forces, was the main celebrant at a thanksgiving Mass at Our Lady of Victories, Kensington organised by **Your Catholic Legacy**.

Your Catholic Legacy is a consortium of Catholic charities who promote the practical and spiritual benefits of making a Will to provide for the people – and Catholic causes – close to your heart. With others, ACN placed names of deceased legators and friends on 'remembrance trees' near the altar. We are truly grateful to all who make provision for the suffering Church in their Will. **They and their families are always in our prayers.**

If you want to leave a gift in your Will to ACN, please email legacy@acnuk.org