



ACN

MIRROR

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Fr Chacko offering Mass in Kerala State, India. He was one of 18 priests teaching at St Joseph's Pontifical Seminary given Mass stipends to help support them - including 54 Gregorian Masses.

Dear Friends,

The final encyclical of Saint John Paul II begins with these words: "The Church draws her life from the Eucharist." This is a truth which "recapitulates the heart of the mystery of the Church", as the Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life" and "contains the Church's entire spiritual wealth".

So I would invite you to always entrust your intentions to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in which Christ's sublime act of redemption is powerfully present.

When you make a Mass offering, the priest celebrates the Holy Eucharist for your intentions. These may be very personal - such as for your marriage, your children, your departed loved ones, for help in a particular need or some other special intention. Or you may have Mass offered for more general intentions - for example, for peace, for the pastors of the Church or civil rulers, or in honour of the saints and angels.

Making Mass offerings is rooted in a very ancient tradition of the Church. The first Christians made offerings and brought gifts of food for the support of their priests and also the poor, when they gathered together for worship.



"It is a very special act of love and mercy to intercede for the Holy Souls through the Sacrifice of the Mass."

Similarly, Aid to the Church in Need is currently supporting more than 40,000 priests and their work in the world's poorest countries with your Mass stipends. Without your offerings many of them could not fulfil their pastoral duties, because both priests and people lack the most basic of necessities, and their dioceses are unable to give them regular support.

Dear Friends, we are only too happy to pass on your Mass stipends, as they do a great deal of good - whether you request single Masses, a Triduum (three Masses celebrated on successive days), a Novena (nine Masses) or what is known as a

Gregorian Mass (30 Masses). A Gregorian Mass, which is celebrated for the departed souls, dates back to the time of Pope St Gregory the Great, who had daily Masses celebrated for a monk who had died. At the end of 30 days, the monk appeared to him in a vision and assured him that he had been freed from the pains of Purgatory.

Our faith tells us that departed souls in Purgatory can no longer do anything for themselves and are entirely dependent on the intercession of the living and the mercy of God. There is nothing greater we can do for them than the celebration of Holy Mass, making it a very special act of love and mercy to intercede for them through the Sacrifice of the Mass.

So I cordially invite you to consider having Mass offered, and promise you my prayers and blessings.

Father Anton Lässer CP
Ecclesiastical Assistant



“Even if they kill me, I will not die!”

One village, after an attack.
An unexploded grenade is highlighted in the circle below.



Heavily armed rebels have attacked the villages.

Italian Carmelite Father Aurelio Gazzera became famous in the **Central African Republic** as “the man who turned aside the bandits’ guns”. The children sing songs about him, and he has been internationally recognised for his courage in conducting dangerous peace negotiations with the rebels. Now he has been appointed by Pope Francis as coadjutor bishop of the country’s Bangassou Diocese.

Life in his new diocese is far from easy. Large parts of this vast diocese in the southeast of the country are held by rebel groups and attacks still occur regularly. Due to the danger, two parishes had to be closed. It is also a very inaccessible region, covered with dense rainforest. So, although the capital Bangui is “only” 750 km (480 miles) away, in practice it can only be reached by aeroplane. Travelling by road takes a good two weeks, and in the rainy season the journey is quite impossible. Yet despite all these difficulties, this is a diocese with many vocations and a thriving Church.

Immediately after arriving in Bangassou, newly ordained Bishop Gazzera spent a few days in a parish where, only shortly before, the rebels had burned down numerous houses and murdered at least 12 people. “The people are deeply traumatised. I wanted to encourage them and their priests”, he explains. But simply

offering consolation is not enough for him. “A shepherd defends his sheep from danger. And so I will do everything possible to continue dialogue with the various rebel groups”, he says. “Within my limited capacities, I want to be a sign of peace.”

In the past he has managed to persuade the rebels to withdraw more than once, saving the lives of many people. Indeed, some of these rebels have repented of their crimes and begun to live law-abiding lives. Nevertheless, on several occasions, he has almost been killed. When his car was being pelted with stones and he was threatened with Kalashnikovs, he prayed the Rosary. “The rebels are always heavily armed”, he says, “but I went to them unarmed and without any armed escort. True strength lies in weakness and love. When you react to violence without



Bishop Aurelio Gazzera, after his ordination.

violence, you are strong. Besides, I have a trump card – prayer, and the presence of God.” He draws his courage from the Eucharist and his faith in the resurrection.

“Even if they kill me, I will not die”, he says, with the deepest conviction.



In many countries, brave priests and religious are risking their lives every day to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel. ACN is supporting them in this. Bishop Aurelio wants to thank all of you who are helping missionaries like himself. “The needs are immense; and your help is precious, since by your prayers and your practical help you encourage us to continue in our ministry.”

Witnessing to God's Mercy

The Shalom Catholic Community was founded in **Brazil** in 1982 and today is active in more than 20 countries. Its members include both priests and laity and are completely committed to evangelisation. We are supporting 30 priests of the Shalom Community in Brazil with Mass stipends.

One of these is 51-year-old Father Jairo, who has been wheelchair-bound ever since 2015, when he fell off scaffolding during repair work in his parish church. Yet he is still filled with joy: "Many people think you can only be happy when everything is going well. But I am happy and very conscious of God's grace... Even sitting paralysed in a wheelchair, I can see what blessings God draws from my service to him, through prayer, night vigils, celebrations of the Eucharist, confessions, and also the Faith courses that I give... How good it is, despite my weaknesses and my sins, to see the hand of God intervening in my life!"

Father Francisco tells us about a man "who had been lying at home for five years, in a deep coma. In the end they called me to anoint him with the Sacrament of the Sick. He died just two hours later. I saw in this just how great God's mercy is in reaching out to his children, for after this man had been fighting so long for life, he was waiting for the sacra-



"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world."

ment in order to depart in peace. And in this way I too experience the goodness of the Lord, who uses such inadequate instruments as the means of displaying his glory."

Father Michel agrees. "I would like to thank all your benefactors for supporting us in our mission. May God richly reward and bless you!"

Once again this year we intend to pass on your Mass offerings to the 30 priests of the Shalom community in Brazil, so that they can continue to bear witness for so many to the grace and mercy of God.



Now in a wheelchair, Father Jairo still ministers to the faithful.

"Gruelling" 4,400ft climb raises £1,800 for ACN

By Amy Balog

Two families with young children battled heavy rain and wind during their ascent to the top of the highest mountain in the British Isles, in order to raise funds for suffering Christians.

Eight members of the Do Rozario and Pampackal families – including a seven-year-old – raised more than £1,800 by climbing the 4,413ft summit in temperatures just three degrees above freezing. Aloma Pampackal said that they were "driven by a sense of purpose" despite the "harsh conditions".

Aloma said: "Knowing we were climbing for a cause greater than ourselves – to

support communities in need – gave us the strength to push forward." Adding: "After several gruelling hours, we reached the summit, feeling a mix of relief, pride, and awe, although the intense cold and fog meant we couldn't stay long. This climb tested our endurance and faith, and we are deeply grateful for the prayers and support that carried us through."

The group felt inspired to undertake the climbing challenge after hearing about the situation of persecuted Christians in Nigeria and India during an ACN Mass appeal.



The families at Ben Nevis.

You too can fundraise, visit: <https://acnuk.org/our-campaigns/redwednesday/>



More Help for families in Holy Land

As the war in Gaza shows no sign of stopping, the Church in the Holy Land is increasing aid, supporting hundreds of families who have lost their livelihoods.

Aid to the Church in Need has stepped up its support for the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem providing emergency help, food, housing, school fees and medical assistance to more than 600 Christian families in the Holy Land. Most Christians work in the tourism sector and have been hit badly because almost all pilgrimages have been cancelled.

Sami El-Yousef, chief executive officer at the patriarchate's Social Services Department said even though the present situation "is more difficult" than before, "the Christian presence will survive".



Shops silent and shuttered in Jerusalem.



Regina Lynch
Executive President,
ACN (International)

Dear Friends,

I grew up in Ireland with a wonderful tradition of having a Mass celebrated not only for the repose of the soul of the dead but also for the soul of the living. We would offer what we called "Mass bouquets" for wedding anniversaries, birthdays or for someone's success in exams. In other words, it was a way to celebrate something wonderful. The message of congratulations would be conveyed in a greeting card in which was written that a Mass was going to be celebrated for me. As the recipient of such a "bouquet" I was moved to know that a Mass somewhere – in my home parish or in a missionary country – was being celebrated for my intention. What a great gift that infinitely surpassed any beautiful flower bouquet.

Thankfully, this tradition continues in many countries today and brings not only joy to the recipient, but it also ensures that the celebrant has a small income. This is particularly important for the priests, who receive Mass stipends through ACN and who are totally reliant on the offerings of their faithful, who themselves often struggle to survive.

So, the next time when you wish to gift something precious to someone you love, remember the Mass bouquet!

Regina Lynch

Need, love and thanks – your letters

The gift of the Holy Eucharist on ACN Benefactors' Day

What a Gift you gave us on the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. What a grace! What joy, that Holy Masses are celebrated for us by priests in 140 countries. I pray every day for these priests, for you and for all our brothers and sisters around the world. Thank you for so much goodness! God's richest blessing be with you!

A religious Sister from the Netherlands

Help in hard times

I hope to be able to help you more in the future. Sadly, the Church is going through difficult times, yet hopefully the message of Jesus will continue to resonate and

the Church will recover. Anyway, I have not lost my faith – quite the contrary! Keep up the good work! God bless all that you do.

A friend and benefactor in Belgium

Thank you!

My warmest thanks to you for your good wishes on my birthday! It was my 90th in fact! I had a very good day. I'm only too willing to go on supporting you for as long as I can, particularly with Mass stipends. This is important to me. I am grateful that I can still manage to get to daily Mass, and can also help with various tasks in our parish. All this is a gift from God.

A friend and benefactor in Austria



Aid to the
Church in Need

ACN UNITED KINGDOM

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Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) is a Catholic charity bringing spiritual and practical help to Christians – especially those who are persecuted for their beliefs. We carry out our mission of reconciliation and love through local Church partners: supporting priests, Sisters and catechists, building churches, providing transport, training seminarians, and providing religious literature and media – as well as supplying emergency aid for Christians struggling to survive or fleeing persecution. ACN also advocates on behalf of suffering Christians denied a voice. Through prayer, information and action we are keeping the Faith alive in a troubled world.

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