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MIRROR

Aid to the Church in Need

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Gift and Grace – with God at the heart of it all.

"We are called to know and show that God is able to fill our hearts to the brim with happiness; that we need not seek our happiness elsewhere."

Pope Francis,
for the Year of Consecrated Life
(November 2014 – February 2016)

Dear Friends,

"He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" – so Jesus concludes the difficult debate about marriage and virginity, showing us that human reasoning alone is not enough: these two states of life have a grandeur that can only be understood by faith. Every vocation is a question of wholehearted commitment, of undivided love. In marriage such love seems obvious at first. "No one and nothing can part us", is the credo of those in love. But daily life quickly reveals each other's limitations and failings. Married love also lives by grace. Through the power of God's love it can become something great, but it takes a great deal of sacrifice and self-mastery. This is where marriage and virginity have a great deal in common.



Every vocation is a question of undivided love.

A life lived in celibacy, poverty, and obedience is initially seen as difficult and not according to nature. The word "monk" or "nun" tends to conjure up an image of strict rules and high walls, designed to shut out the joys of life. Selfless service to the poorest of the poor, working in schools and hospitals for the love of God alone, praying for the world, hidden away in a convent enclosure – all this is praiseworthy, but for most young people today it no longer seems to hold any particular attraction. But what really draws people to the consecrated life? Is it living our lives in service of our neighbour? Going on mission to far distant lands? Finding silence in the contemplative life? Mother Teresa told her sisters quite clearly: "Your vocation is not a matter of caring for the sick in hospital, or teaching, or whatever… Our vocation is to belong to Jesus with the conviction that nothing and no one can separate us from the love of Christ. The work that we do is our love for Jesus, translated into living deeds."

And so, forsaking everything for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven does not mean serving our fellow men or fighting for Christian values. That would not be enough to move a person to renounce marriage, possessions and even his or her own will. No, as in marriage, the soul consecrated to God is first and foremost a soul in love, a soul who, by the power of God's grace, desires to live for Him alone, to belong to Him, to give everything to Him.

Dear Friends, in this, the Year of Consecrated Life, in each edition of the *Mirror* we will introduce you to selfless and courageous men and women of God who need your help to serve the Church. Their true mission and strength is their love for Jesus and their fidelity to his call to "follow Me". Those who understand this vocation are becoming fewer and fewer. So we need marriages where couples put the love of God at the centre of their life together. We need fathers and mothers who know how to pray and say, "Lord, our children belong to You. Give us the grace to be able to offer You a spiritual vocation."

With my grateful blessing on you all

P. Martin M. Barta

Father Martin M. Barta
Ecclesiastical Assistant

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Leading others to God



Catechist, sister, mother: Nune Titoyan, with one of her little charges.

Worldwide, some 900,000 Catholics belong to a religious order or institute of consecrated life. Almost four fifths are women. ACN helps these religious throughout the world, including Sister Nune Titoyan.

Her parents were teachers – her father, a headmaster – and both of them were communists. They lived in Georgia. Nune fled her home because her parents would not accept their daughter's religious vocation to the consecrated life. She went to Moscow, then on to Poland, where she saw the life of Catholic sisters and entered the congregation of the Missionaries of the Holy Family. Finally, she ended up in **Belarus**.

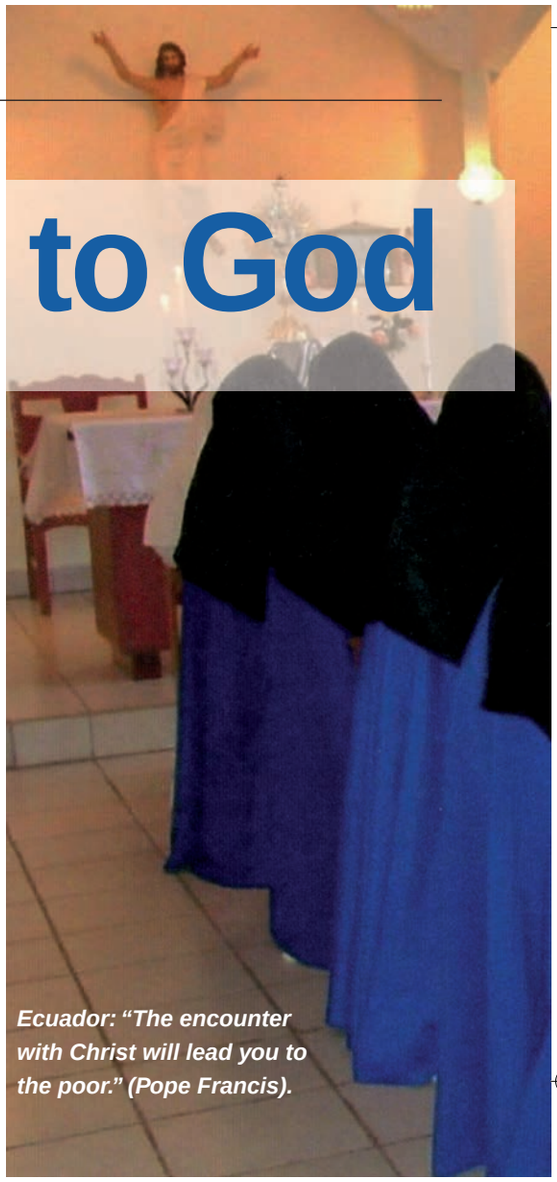
This is where she lives her vocation today, in Ashmyany, where she has found a new family in the spirit of Christ's words: "Whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother" (Mt 12:50). Together with three other sisters she cares for the 12,000 Catholic faithful in the parish of Ashmyany. Last year they had 600 Confirmations. Here in a country that is still very much overshadowed by a communist mindset, baptisms and confirmations continue to be a challenge; as Sister Nune knows well, simply administering the sacraments is not the end of the matter. Grace helps them to remain true to the Faith, but in daily life it is a struggle to live out their Christian calling. Everything depends on how well their preparation for the sacraments has been carried out. Sister Nune has also written catechetical books that she uses alongside the officially approved catechisms such as the Youcat and ACN's little catechism, *I Believe*.

For the sisters this work means many journeys into the various different towns and villages. If the people cannot come to them, they must go to the people… We have promised Sister Nune and her companions **€10,000** for a car, so that their mission can maintain its momentum.



"Leave your snug homes and go out into the margins, to the people of today." Pope Francis.

For these sisters in Egypt the Pope's appeal is daily life already. You are helping various congregations here, for example with training courses for their mission work.



Ecuador: "The encounter with Christ will lead you to the poor." (Pope Francis).

The Holy Eucharist Sisters in Sambir-Drohobych Diocese, **Ukraine**, were founded under communism, in 1957. At that time their charism was one of Perpetual Adoration; indeed the state would not let them to do anything else. Today the sisters – who now number around twenty – also run an orphanage, teach the catechism in Sunday schools, organise pilgrimages and retreats for young people and, during the school holidays, care for young people from East Ukraine.

But their work is growing, so they need more space. That is why, for the past six years, they have also been renovating their former Mother House near Sambir. But they don't have enough money for the roof. Roughly a third of the sisters survive on a meagre income of barely €100 a month. The diocese is too poor to support them. They pray, teach, console and care for others. They lead others to God and are surely earning a heavenly reward – but no earthly payment. We have promised them **€10,000** to finish roofing their convent.

Any donation you kindly give will go to support these, or similar pr



Joyful in the Lord: Sisters in Ecuador making wafers of unleavened bread for the Mass.

In the margins: The sisters care for everyone – the elderly, the sick, the children...

Serving God in the jungle

Over 120 years ago the first missionaries arrived in the Amazon region of Ecuador that today is the Apostolic Vicariate of Mendez. The nuns followed ten years later. Today there are 90 sisters working here, from nine different congregations.

It is a vast region, and there is no end to the work in this particular vineyard of the Lord's. Half of the inhabitants are indigenous people and many of them live in the mountains or in the rainforest. So the sisters bring the love of Christ to them. "For they too are children of God", says Mother Victoria. She comes from Italy and first came to the missions in Ecuador as a young sister of 21. That was back in 1956. Since then she has devoted her entire life to working among these children of God. She learned the language of the Shuar people, set up a boarding school for girls, and rode into the mountains on a mule – always with her rosary in her hand, "so that the Blessed Virgin would protect me from the wild beasts, the cloudbursts and the snakes". She brought them the Word of God and shared their food and living conditions.

These people have lost out as the modern age has borne down upon them. In the clash of cultures the young people quickly lose their old customs and traditions, and with them a part of their own identity. Often all that is left is an empty shell. Mother Victoria and her sisters are working so that the girls in particular can get an education and not fall into the hands of the drug dealers and people traffickers. "They must be allowed to experience the warmth of God's love", she explains. In this way their spiritual wounds can heal and the girls can regain their dignity. It is all part of the order's missionary work today.

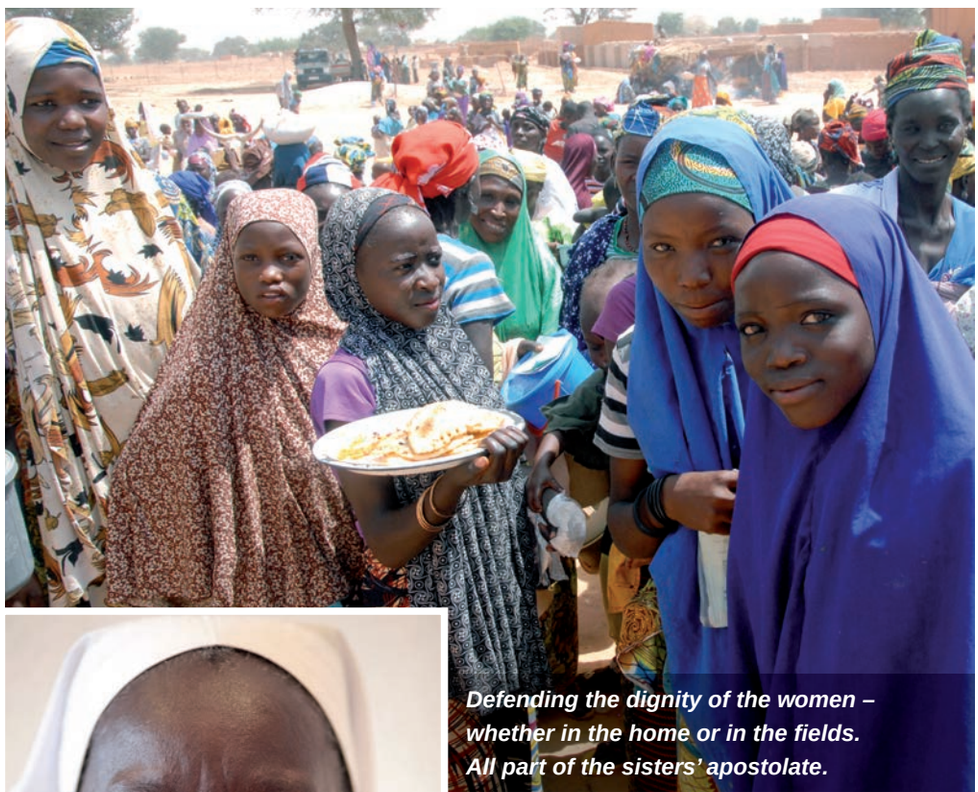
Only with ACN's help can this all-important work continue. The Sister's mission serving their fellow men and women – which includes catechesis as a natural and integral part – is supported by ACN, which provides subsistence aid for their life and ministry. Altogether we have given **€20,000** for the 90 sisters in Mendez. ●

Showing the face of Christ

"The Prayer of Jesus" – Our Father – "is my favourite prayer", says Mother Marie Catherine. "It unites us." And she also loves praying the Angelus. "For then I can see within my heart how God came to us as man."

Living in unity is part of the charism of the Servants of Christ. Their congregation was founded by Mother Marie Catherine nine years ago. Previously she had been the General Superior of the Daughters of the Blessed Heart of Mary for the whole of West Africa, an extremely demanding task that carried with it a great deal of responsibility. During an extended period of rest and recovery in France she attended a seminar on Islam. While praying she experienced the call of Christ: "Show my real face in the Islamic world". She pondered on what this might mean. She knew West Africa, as she lived in Senegal. But she sensed that God wished to entrust her with a mission elsewhere. "Build me a house, so that my love can take visible form among the Muslims." Then, again in prayer, she understood that it was to be in **Niger**. A pilgrimage to Lisieux to the shrine of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus, Doctor of the Church and Patroness of the Missions, confirmed her in her call. "Why it should be Niger, I do not know", she said. But she knew that this was the path to follow. And she remembered hearing about a bishop in the desert region of Maradi.

Bishop Ambroise had already been praying for some time for help. In his vast diocese there were scarcely any religious sisters. Here Christians do not make up even half a percent of the population, and grinding poverty and hunger are everyday realities. When they started, the Servants of Christ were just two women. Today there are ten of them – and eleven novices as well. They go into the villages, distributing food, particularly to mothers with malnourished children. They organise courses in hygiene, health and education; they teach the people to read and write and show them how to manage their homes – not to mention providing microcredit. They are now serving some 150 villages,



Defending the dignity of the women – whether in the home or in the fields. All part of the sisters' apostolate.



Called to Niger – Mother Marie Catherine Kingbo.

which have over 25,000 people. No one would have come here if God had not sent the Servants of Christ. "The people have confidence in us; they can see what we are doing", says Mother Marie Catherine. What she does not say is that in their work of love the people can see the real face of Christ.
For some time now people in some of the villages have wanted to learn more about Jesus. "The village elders organised a meeting and asked us how one could become a Christian." The bishop is taking care of this. The sisters continue to show the face of Christ through practical deeds. Where there is hunger, the sisters give food; where there is thirst, the sisters give drink. They visit young women, many of whom have fled from forced marriages – often as young an age as 11 – and into prostitution. They are fighting for the dignity of women; and they also visit people suffering from leprosy. Without the sisters, life would be bleak on the plains of Maradi

The emblem of the congregation is the washing of the feet. "We wish to serve in humility", Mother Marie explains. Relations with the Muslims are also good. "We also live in poverty; that is a bond between us", she adds. Nonetheless, even here the influence of fanaticism can be felt. "The cross that our girls wear around their necks disturbs some people". But the Sultan of the region and the village elders are all behind Mother Marie, and indeed are immensely grateful to her. Close to the church the sisters have built their mother house, with an annex for the novices. You have helped with **€30,000**. But more projects will be needed. The need is great in Maradi – but then so too is the Sister's love. ●



Engine of Providence

The challenge is to help the whole human person: mind, body, soul and spirit. Many political and ideological systems seek to subject the human person and dominate culture, but Faith in Christ sets us free.

Tunisia

The Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará – originally from Chile – strive to proclaim the love of the Gospel in a spirit of freedom and service to others. These sisters have been in Tunisia since 2005. They have seen for themselves the turmoil of revolution and the radicalisation of many among the population. Safety and security is a particular concern, as it is dangerous to use public transport as the vehicles are mostly occupied by men, just as it is dangerous to walk alone through Tunis and its suburbs, or even to travel by taxi. But the children in the parishes are waiting for the sisters to come and teach them the catechism, while the sick and elderly are expecting them to bring them consolation and joy. Such pastoral duties are difficult enough in themselves, but in a cultural climate so hostile to Christianity they can also be dangerous. We have promised the sisters **€11,400** so that they can buy a new car. Then they can serve the people in safety and bring the truth that sets them free.



The gift of hope – the sisters draw strength in prayer and pass it on with love.



Carthage (Tunis). Empires come and go; the Kingdom of Christ remains – thanks also to the sisters.

Lebanon

The Missionary Sisters of the Most Blessed Sacrament teach 1,200 girls from 30 villages in the surrounding country region in their school in Byblos. However, their biggest challenge is the orphanage, attached to the school, which accommodates 80 girls. “We depend on the providence of God”, writes the Superior, Mother Laura Trad. Were it not for the sisters, these girls would have no schooling, no education, no love. But the sisters themselves could not provide this service without the help of others. This is where providence has introduced ACN into the equation. We are, so to speak, providing the engine of providence, as in order to be able to fulfil their many-sided pastoral apostolate – for these girls, for the refugees, for the old people in the countryside and for the poor in Byblos – the sisters need to have a strong and reliable vehicle. It will cost **€19,000**.

ar projects, and enable the pastoral work of Aid to the Church in Need.

"Thanks to you, we can stay on"



In many parts of Syria the Christians are venturing to return to their villages and homes, as they say "it is our homeland". In Nebek, near Homs, they found nothing but ruins and burned out houses. Rebuilding "would have been impossible without your solidarity", writes Sister Huda Fadoul. Above all, they could not have survived the winter without heating oil, warm clothing and medicines. Instead, entire families were able to survive, thanks to the emergency aid provided by ACN. Your generous support has also enabled them to buy the essential materials they need to rebuild. And although shots are still fired here and there in the neighbourhood, never-the-less they are planning to stay. Sister Huda is filled with a sense of profound gratitude. She writes: "Thanks to your generosity we are also able to persuade others to stay on and to hope in a better future. You have given us back our dignity."

Need, love and thanks – your letters

A widow's mite

I am already over 90 years old and only have a small widow's pension to live on. So I'm dipping into my savings in order to be able to send you a donation, which is to be used for the Christians in Iraq.

A benefactress in France

Transfer of energy

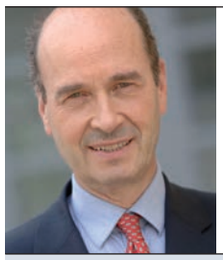
I am so happy to see the ways in which ACN has been an instrument of God in my life. I first heard about you through an appeal on the television, calling for help for the poor and neglected of this world. I began to get involved. I see your work as being like a power cable, which makes a connection from the socket – the person with living energy – to those who need it in order to do good in the world. But it doesn't just stop there; the energy received at the end of the cable comes back to the socket in the form of thanks and prayers and unites both ends together in a single body. My conclusion is that God moves in both directions providing his living energy, regardless of which end we stand at. You can count on my prayers, together with a modest contribution, in the name of Jesus Christ.

A benefactor in Brazil

Moved by the Mirror

I'm often moved by stories of people in the Mirror and I intend to keep the Sep/Oct issue for the rest of my life. The interview with Mgr. Jeanbart was deeply moving. I would like to think that the agony Christians and others are going through in Syria and Iraq will pass. I hope to pick the story up in 5 years time and reflect on how much things had improved for Christians in these lands. If things do improve it will be due to the courage and fidelity of people like Mgr. Jeanbart. Please find attached a donation for the Christians of Syria and Iraq.

A benefactor in Australia

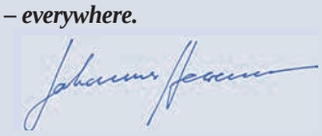


Johannes Freiherr Heereman,
Executive President, ACN (International)

Dear Friends,

In the diocese where I live there are 270 active priests today. By the year 2022 there are likely, on present trends, to be no more than 120. The number of seminarians is also falling. This disturbing trend is to be observed throughout Western Europe. And things are no different when it comes to vocations to the religious life. Yet in Africa and Asia the number of vocations is growing, and thanks to your donations we are able to help with the construction and extension of seminaries and convents. It is no longer possible to ignore these two contrasting developments. Certainly, God calls those in the wealthier countries, but fewer people heed his voice. Both parents and parishes find themselves increasingly overwhelmed as they struggle to pass on the Faith.

Some of ACN's national offices employ the slogan "Keeping the Faith Alive". This is also appropriate for our work in those places where the Church is in need because her message is no longer listened to and where spiritual poverty is spreading ever further. That is why we are supporting the promotion of modern catechetical materials, such as the Youcat, and before very long a new children's catechism as well. Thanks to your great generosity and to the growing number of our benefactors, we will be able to achieve this without cutting our existing aid for the Church in need around the world. The faith must be kept alive – everywhere.



Where to send your contribution for the Church in Need

Please use the envelope. Aid to the Church in Need, 39B Mdina Road, Attard ATD 9038; Tel: 21487818; Fax: 21586257

Bank of Valletta Plc, IBAN MT89 VALL 2201 3000 0000 4002 2153 500

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Pass this leaflet on to your neighbours, friends or leave it at the Parish Church for others to review.

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