MIRROR

Aid to the Church in Need

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A joyful "Yes" to God – for life. Candidates for the priesthood at the Good Shepherd Seminary in Nigeria.

"No vocation is born of itself or lives for itself. A vocation flows from the heart of God and blossoms in the good soil of faithful people, in the experience of fraternal love."

Pope Francis
Message to the 51st World Day of Prayer for Spiritual Vocations, 11 May 2014

Dear Friends,

Jesus says: "You did not choose me, but I choose you." So does God not respect our human freedom then? Certainly he does! It is an essential part of our freedom that we have the free will to be able to answer the call of God. This is how we arrive at our goal. God pours out his boundless grace and goodness over us. The sense of being altogether overwhelmed by this goodness, of being personally called by name, this is the most intimate mystery of every vocation. Each person is called by God in a unique manner, without having in any way merited this, and often indeed despite all our sinfulness. Just how true this is is shown most clearly in the vocation to the priesthood.



Each person is called by God in a unique manner

When people fall in love, it is often the external attraction that plays a great role, and we take for granted that we will have the necessary qualities for our chosen vocation. But with the vocation to the priesthood there are no preconditions. Even the subsequent fruitfulness of the priestly mission depends not upon human talents but utterly and entirely on the merits of Christ. To make the love of God available to all men, through the sacraments, is the very raison d'être of the priestly vocation. Through his ordination the priest is entrusted with the infinite treasure of the graces won for us by Jesus through his death on the Cross. In this treasure house of graces gained by our crucified Lord lies all blessing for the entire world. And yet, in the power of the Blessed Eucharist, the priest himself must also through his own personal sacrifice make a gift of his own life.

Whereas in many countries the fascination of becoming a priest appears to be becoming lost, in many other countries the seminaries are full, and new ones are even having to be built. Ultimately, however, it comes down not to the number, but to the holiness of the priest. In 1902 Jesus spoke to the French mystic and Servant of God Sister Louise M. Claret de la Touche: *"Nineteen centuries ago, twelve men changed the world; they were not merely men, but they were priests. Now, once more twelve priests could change the world… but they must be holy."*

Yet who would dare to say "Yes" to God's call when the seemingly impossible is being demanded of him? For despite the noble dignity of his calling, the priest remains merely a weak man. That is why he needs help – as the Pallottine Father, Blessed Franz Reinisch humbly acknowledges: *"Precisely as a priest, I am conscious of my utter helplessness and poverty. Before the all too human side can be entirely stripped away and the true priestly essence come through in crystal clarity, a great deal of struggle and sacrifice is needed – but what is needed still more is many helpers in the background, who will pray and make sacrifices for the sake of holy priests."*

Dear Friends, I urge you with all my heart to be these helpers, who pray and make sacrifices for the sanctification of priests throughout the world. You may be certain that God will thank you by pouring a rich flood of graces over you and your families!

My grateful blessing upon you all

P. Martin M. Barta

Father Martin M. Barta
Ecclesiastical Assistant



Called to spread God's Love

God is calling, many respond: A blessing on the new seminarians in Oradea.

At the Monsignor Cleire Seminary in Kasongo, Democratic Republic of Congo, the timetable is rigorous, they even work a full day on Saturdays. But they do so willingly, as the 29 seminarians here have been called to spread God's love.

But that is not a reason for pride. And the rector and spiritual director keep watch to ensure that the love for Christ is filled with understanding and humility. In this way the seminarians are being trained to spread God's love. Their syllabus is onerus and includes psychology, ethics and moral theology. They are expected to acquire a good knowledge of African and classical philosophy, languages, methods of communication and pedagogy as well as a basic grounding in Islam, comparative cultural analyses, sociology and media studies. Their days may be full – but first place is always given to adoration and their relationship to God, the Source of all love. And as for practical brotherly love, each one has his own duties within the community. Vincent Mateso and Michel Mulamba look after the garden. Theophile Mukaseba and André Kabobo are responsible for the electricity and water supply. Other responsibilities include sport, the library, clean sanitary facilities, music and singing, the organisation of the work in the fields and the fish farm, liturgy and the sacristy, hair cutting and reception. Good shepherds need good training in every field. In the seminary in Kasongo they get just that – thanks in part to you (**€7,700**).

God calls men to spread his love regardless of their age. God calls whoever he wills whenever he wills. In the Greek Catholic seminary of Oradea in **Romania** among the students are a number of late vocations, including a psychologist, a musician and an economist. Many already have "a whole life behind them", as the rector Anton Cioba writes. But they have all come "to God's school in order to become his disciples". They are all highly motivated and preparing themselves "humbly and diligently for the priesthood". In all there are 104 men here who have "said yes to God". They will help confront the "acute and growing secularisation in our society", and so they will need plenty of knowledge, faith and hope. Perhaps these mature men, with years of experience behind them, will particularly be able to find new approaches to their pastoral and missionary work. Knowledge, training and the spiritual formation of the heart are things that Father Anton and his fellow academics can certainly empart. But the cost of training so many students soon leaves them financially empty-handed. We have promised him **€52,000** for the current academic year.

Education is expensive, but it is an investment that repays its expense. In the major seminary in **Haiti** there are no fewer than 282 seminarians (**€98,700**) who will later be called to preach and live love in this, one of the poorest countries in the world. In Hyderabad, in **India**, where the training of priests lasts a total of 13 years altogether, you are supporting 106 seminarians (**€20,000**), while in the **Central African Republic** – where the recent civil war left deep wounds and saw churches and convents destroyed – we have promised **€40,000** so that the Saint Mark's seminary in Bangui can make a new start. There is nothing this country needs more than true shepherds who can preach forgiveness and live Christian charity. In showing mercy and helping here, and elsewhere where these future pastors are being trained, you too will help to spread God's love. ●

285 seminarians – that's how many you are supporting, here in Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine.



India, land of vocations. These seminarians in Hyderabad live on just €70 a month.

Visible signs of love

Demographically speaking, Africa is the continent of the future. Here will be decided which religion will dominate the world. For in the next 40 years the population of Africa is predicted to double.



A solid future for the Church: foundations of the cathedral in Maroua-Mokolo.

Pointing the way to heaven: Bishop Bruno Ateba, and the beauty of northern Cameroon.

The number of Christians will also double (according to the demographers' calculations), however, the Muslims will increase by 170%. Of course, all these are merely human estimations. But what is undoubtedly true is the fact that the pagan peoples of the continent are also yearning for God, the creator of all life. This is where the Church can point the way – with visible signs. A year ago, when Father Bruno Ateba was appointed as Bishop of the diocese of Maroua-Mokolo in **Cameroon**, a Muslim friend said to him, "We have many large mosques to pray in, but you Catholics do not even have a cathedral in your diocese." His words struck home, and they set Bishop Bruno thinking. He thought immediately of the 75,000 Catholics in his diocese, and also of the 300,000 or so others, who are well disposed and willing to embrace Christianity, but they need to see a visible sign that will point them to Heaven. Ever since then everywhere he has gone he has begged for support to build this sign. The Catholics of his diocese have already done a great deal themselves to raise funds, and have begun to build. Now they are halfway there, but they still need around **€46,000** in order to complete the basic structure. The diocese lies right on the frontier with Nigeria, and the threat from the Islamic extremists is hampering the missionary work. The people need a visible sign to show that God is there. Your solidarity and generosity will help them to see this sign of love, not just in bricks and mortar, but in your kind hearts. ●

A worthy house, close to Heaven



Nothing but the sky above: waiting for their chapel in the mountains.

The Doctor of the Church Saint Teresa of Avila, who was born 500 years ago, once said: "We should not build towers without foundations, for the Lord looks not so much on the magnitude of the work but rather on the love with which it was done."

You can't get much higher than the little community of Our Lady of the Incarnation in the diocese of El Alto in **Bolivia**, which stands at an altitude of 12,500 feet (3800 m). Yet their "tower" project is certainly built on a solid foundation, for this little community in the Andes has been longing and praying for years now for a chapel to serve the local mountain people, a place where the Sacrament of Love can find a worthy home, close to heaven and where the other sacraments can also be received. Life is hard, here in the mountains; it is no place for great and showy works. But their dearest wish is to be able to share in Holy Mass each Sunday, to be able to confess, celebrate baptisms and weddings here, instead of having to make the laborious journey once a month, down to the church in the valley there. For the old people in particular, it is not even possible at times. There are 80 families here, with over 240 children. They need our help. We have promised them **€22,700**. ●



In the heart of Rwanda – the 'Land of a Thousand Hills' – lies the Carmelite convent of Nyamirambo. The 20 Rwandan sisters who returned here after the genocide and civil war of 1994 now live "in constant prayer with and for the Church and all mankind". The convent's spiritual radiance has shone out drawing in the people of the region. Very quickly the chapel and the convent became too small and a pastoral centre became necessary, in order to sustain and accompany this "new Pentecost". Over the years, thanks to your generosity and despite many difficulties, this centre has now at last become a reality. The abbess, Sister Françoise Marie Aimée, and her fellow religious are delighted. "We thank you for the fidelity with which you have accompanied us over these years, for your patience and your support which have made it possible for us to move forward, trusting in the goodness of our Lord Jesus. May He reward you a hundredfold for what we owe to you – to all of you, the witnesses to His Kingdom of Love."

Need, love and thanks – your letters

Signs of divine Providence

I am 80 years old. I have four children and 13 grandchildren. I enclose a donation for you and ask you to pray for their faith. When I read the Mirror, *I suffer on account of the catastrophes in the world. Fortunately, the religious sisters are a sign of God's loving providence for all these unfortunate ones. My father always used to say, "Whoever gives to the poor is lending to God."*

A benefactress from Canada

Moved by the story of Sister Arousiag

Maybe because it is Easter time but I found this latest edition of the Mirror *to be quite moving. Just a little note to say how touched I was to read the story about Sr. Arousiag in Armenia. I donated money earlier in the year but felt compelled to send further moneys for her projects.*

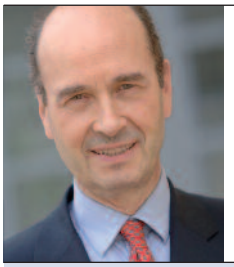
A benefactress from Australia

Thanks be to God for all His gifts

What am I doing for such a marvellous charity as yours? Donating a few miserable Euros from time to time? Saying a few feeble prayers – and sometimes distracted ones at that? Where would we be without the infinite mercy of our loving God and the generosity of so many of our brothers and sisters…!

Whenever I read your reports, I feel sorry that I cannot give more. But there are so many needs around us – in the family, in the parish, in the helpless people all around us… And however much we love everyone, there are limits to what we can do. I give thanks to God for everything he sends me, regardless of whether it is something I like or something that I'm not so keen on. But I am also conscious that I sometimes tend to forget your needs. Please forgive me! I will try to remember and respond according to the priorities around me.

A benefactress from Portugal



Johannes Freiherr Heereman,
Executive President, ACN (International)

Dear Friends,

I am writing these lines to you from Irkutsk in Siberia, the largest diocese in the world and one of the poorest. There are just 39 priests and 63 religious here, in a region 30 times the size of Poland, working, step by little step, to heal the souls so gravely wounded by communism. Sometimes their work involves travelling distances of over 300 km, two or three times a year along dirt tracks, simply in order to bring the Sacraments to a couple of elderly babushkas. Bishop Klimowicz tells us, "Without your benefactors we could not survive here. Our priests and sisters pray for them daily." And he continues, "When I arrived here, 12 years ago, there was scarcely a single family that was not a broken family. Today it is often the children who bring their parents to us, so that they too can come to know God as the source of true love."

Many people seek their idols among football players, Hollywood celebrities, or those in show business – stars whose main goal in life is to use their talents to become rich and famous. Among the faithful in Irkutsk you can find people whose goal in life is to renounce everything in order to satisfy the hunger of the faithful and soothe the thirst of those who long for something to put their hope in. These heroes and heroines of the faith deserve our prayers and our support. Thanks to your generosity, I was able to assure them of ACN's help.



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

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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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