



## Standing with the courageous at this time

Nuns from the Diocese of San Josè in the Philippines repack relief goods for the affected residents amidst the lockdown due to COVID-19

**As the world battles with the Coronavirus pandemic and the rising tide of human suffering makes itself felt around the world, countless Priests and Religious Sisters are on the frontline, administering the Sacraments, caring for the sick and elderly, helping the poor and teaching the Faith.**

“We, at ACN (Malta), are united with the brave and dedicated Priests and Nuns who give their all – day after day – to serve the world’s most vulnerable communities, and with all who are suffering around the world” says Dr. Thomas Heine-Geldern, ACN’s Executive President.

To support these clergy who are serving those badly hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) has pledged €5 million in emergency funding.

This vital initiative will assist Priests and Sisters who lost their basic subsistence, so that they may be able to continue to carry out their spiritual and social ministries.

ACN’s help will come in the form of subsistence aid for religious communities and Mass stipends for Priests across the Middle East, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa.

The Foundation already provides assistance of this sort, but the new initiative will see this help massively

stepped up.

Dr. Heine-Geldern said: “It is our wish that this aid, made possible by the constant generosity of our benefactors, will help ease the burden on our courageous Priests and Sisters, who stand on the front lines, bringing God’s love and compassion to our suffering brothers and sisters, many times in very difficult conditions. This is a drop in the bucket in terms of what is and will be needed. We will do our part to the full and then God, seeing the good that we have done, will do the rest.”

ACN is thankful to you, our donors, who, often despite your own pain and hardship, are reaching out to your fellow human beings in love and compassion. ✚

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Aid to the  
Church in Need

ACN MALTA

# Broadcasting hope in an atmosphere of fear

**“In these days of social distancing and confinement measures, radio stations have become an area of life necessary to many people,” says Father Apollinaire Cibaka Cikongo describing the current situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo.**

As churches are closed due to health concerns, the Catholic Radio Station, Radio Ditunga with a broadcasting range over an area having about five million inhabitants, has adapted its programme to allocate more air time to the celebration of the Eucharist, prayer and spiritual exercises held by Priests.

Funded by ACN, this station is one of the many radio stations in Africa supported by the Pontifical Foundation.

Another Catholic Radio Station, Radio Sol Mansi in Guinea-Bissau, has also extended its broadcasting programming not only to raise awareness among the population of the measures being taken against the

Coronavirus pandemic, but also to increase their evangelisation efforts, now more than ever, by broadcasting divine services, catechesis and the various hours of prayer,” explains Sister Alessandra Bonfanti, assistant manager of this radio station broadcasting in the local Portuguese language.

“In the current times, it is our mission to act as ambassadors of hope for a society that fears the pandemic. We have to help keep their faith in hope – the hope that the world will return to normal if everyone does his or her part,” she said.

In the last year, ACN helped produce 390 TV and radio broadcasts to spread the faith worldwide, particularly in places a Priest or catechist cannot easily reach.

This project is of great importance now more than ever especially in Africa where many do not have access to the internet or to television, and radio remains the best instrument for the Church to reach and support its faithful. 📻



Holy Mass on Radio Ditunga, Congo

## A spiritual bouquet of Masses for your intentions



A Priest celebrating Holy Mass in an empty church in the times of COVID-19 in the Diocese of Ivano Frankivsk

**During this most uncertain time, with many of us unable to attend Mass, Aid to the Church in Need is arranging a spiritual bouquet of Masses for your intentions including the protection of you and your loved ones from the Coronavirus as well as for the multitude of needs you may have. The Mass offerings will be sent to poor Priests in need who will offer Mass/es for your intentions. This is a beautiful way to participate in a Eucharistic celebration.**

Many Priests around the world are as poor as the people they serve and they survive from the kindness and generosity of their parishioners. With churches now closed due to the spread of the Coronavirus, and the faithful struggling

# The restaurant of Love moves to homes

**The Saint John the Merciful table project supported by Aid to the Church in Need at the Syrian border in Zahlé, Lebanon, also known as “A Restaurant of Love” where over 300 refugee families are fed daily, continues to operate despite the limitations posed by measures taken to contain and prevent the spread of the Coronavirus in Lebanon.**

Adjusting to the current situation and to prevent gatherings of people, a new strategy has been devised with the help of a team of volunteers and workers.

The Saint John the Merciful table now provides and delivers hot meals to 400 needy people in their homes in Zahlé and its neighborhood. The restaurant’s administration had previously sterilized the restaurant halls and the equipment in it, and the workers adopted all means of protection and food safety according to the standards of the Ministry of Public Health and the World Health Organization.

Archbishop of Furzol, Zahlé and the Bekaa of the Greek Melkite Catholics Archbishop Issam John Darwish thanked the workers and volunteers working at the Saint John the Merciful table, for their commitment to do good and help the needy people in these exceptional circumstances.

St. John the Merciful table has been up and running since December 2015 and is a place of welcome for all those who cannot afford a hot meal every day – including many Syrian refugees, but at the same time a growing number of Lebanese also.

The project represents an important contribution to the effort to prevent the emigration of Christians from the region, since otherwise many of these people would likely be forced to try and move abroad in order to feed themselves and their families.

ACN is supporting this excellent project once again this year, and your kind donation can help provide the next hot meal for a needy family. ✚



Maria in the studio of Radio Mansi, Guinea Bissau

to cope with the situation, Bishops and Priests ministering in regions that already suffer persecution and poverty are particularly vulnerable and are now left wondering how they will survive and take care of the faithful who rely on them for help. As Catholics we know that the Mass is the most perfect prayer possible as every Mass renews the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and brings about unfathomable graces.

When you make a Mass Offering through Aid to the Church in Need, you are supporting a Priest in need in one of the more than 150 countries in which we work, while at the same time, a Mass is being celebrated for your special intentions.

A Mass has infinite value. Prayer is the basis of change! ✚



Humanitarian feeding programme - Saint John the Merciful Table for Syrian refugees and others in Zahlé area and Bekaa Valley

# United in a chain of Prayer for the World

**As a pastoral response to the Coronavirus pandemic, Aid to the Church in Need has embarked on a massive prayer action involving 50 contemplative religious orders around the world.**

Within one week, these contemplative monasteries and convents accepted the invitation of ACN to pray, not only for all those affected by the virus, but also for ACN's project partners, benefactors and employees. Among them are Carmelite sisters, Benedictine sisters, Dominican sisters, Poor Clares as well as five communities of monks from over 30 countries.

"We want to let loose a prayer storm. According to our founding charisma, one of the mainstays of our work at ACN is prayer. We always have faith in the prayers of all of our project partners, but in these

extraordinary times, we also would like to find comfort and support in the "praying heart" of the Church – the contemplative orders," Dr Thomas Heine-Geldern, Executive President of ACN (International), explained.

All participating monasteries and convents are long-standing project partners of ACN and are themselves currently experiencing difficult situations. The Religious Sisters and Brothers live in countries in which Christians are suffering from discrimination or violence, such as Nigeria, Chad, Morocco, Sri Lanka or Burkina Faso, or in which the Coronavirus pandemic has made the prevailing economic difficulties even more acute, such as Ecuador, Venezuela or Ukraine.

From the onset of this crisis, messages have been pouring in, expressing fear and concerns for the future – both

from benefactors who are experiencing sickness and loss in their families or are suffering economic worries, and from many of ACN's 150 project countries.

Some of the messages are sent by Priests who have not been able to earn their livelihoods for weeks, others by Religious Sisters who do not even have enough money to buy soap or hygiene products because these are expensive luxury items in their countries.

"We firmly believe that prayer will be the first to bring forth fruits of mercy. Prayer forms the basis for the aid and support that we would like and are required to provide", says Dr Heine-Geldern.

We invite all our readers, friends and benefactors to continue to join us in prayer and help in supporting those in need. ✝

## Words of Comfort and Solidarity:

“ We know that many of the benefactors are older and living alone. We are therefore saying a special prayer for all benefactors. May God keep them well and safe and be with them always! ”  
*(Poor Clares, Indonesia)*

“ We pray together with you for the end of this terrible pandemic and for the return of the people to God. We will not lose courage, because Christ is our hope. We believe in Him who said, ‘In the world ye shall have tribulations: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.’ ”  
*(Carmelite monks, Cameroon)*

“ In these times of global trials, we never stop asking the Lord to help His people, as He once did for His people in the desert. Our thoughts are with all benefactors who are sick and require assistance, as well as with all those who are affected by COVID-19. ”  
*(Carmelite sisters, Madagascar)*



ACN Philippines President Archbishop Socrates Villegas gives Palm Sunday blessing amidst COVID-19

