



Pope Leo XIV called for peace at his first Regina Caeli prayer on the Sunday after his election. ACN was present in St Peter's Square.

Dear Friends,

I would like to share with you the great joy and profound gratitude that many of us have felt seeing the workings of Divine Providence in both the election of the new successor of St Peter, Pope Leo XIV and our recent Jubilee pilgrimage to Rome.

Around a year ago we began the planning and preparations for our pilgrimage. There was a detailed programme, including a private audience with Pope Francis, a procession around the Vatican gardens and many other activities for the thousand or more pilgrims we expected. However, the illness and death of Pope Francis, and the conclave that followed forced us to revise our plans and find new solutions on the hoof. Our planning team, who were directly affected by these changes, were only too well-advised to trust in that popular saying: "Man proposes, God disposes!"

It quickly became clear to us that no one could have planned this pilgrimage better than the events which we constantly had to adapt to. For many of us

the Jubilee pilgrimage began with our participation in the special *Missa pro Eligendo Romano Pontifice* (Mass for the election of the Roman pontiff), with which the cardinals began the Conclave. And it concluded with the first *Regina Caeli* of the new Pope Leo XIV and his apostolic blessing. Thus we were privileged to spend these historic days where events were unfolding, praying and singing in eager anticipation, and finally



"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you."

celebrating in joyful gratitude. Everything came together wonderfully. It was as though God had wanted to show and remind us of Saint Peter's words: "*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you. Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares for you.*" (1 Pt 5:6-7 (RSV-CE)). Filled with joy by the Jubilee graces we received, the wonderfully enriching experience we shared in this holy place, and by the new successor of Peter, Pope Leo XIV, we set off home.

These beautiful moments we experienced in Rome now flow seamlessly into the celebration of the great solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, when we in ACN, in a special way, remember you: our friends and benefactors, your families and all your concerns, and entrust them to the loving care of the Heart of Jesus, and so to God Himself. It is our great privilege to be able to pass on your prayers and gifts, as an expression of God's love, to those who need them most. This is at once our joy, our honour and our sacred mission. Thank you all for your generosity!

Recalling our pilgrimage to Rome, I would like to leave you with the words of that privileged messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, who urges us to have great confidence in the loving providence of God: "*We must never be discouraged or give way to anxiety. ... but ever have recourse to the adorable Heart of Jesus.*"

With my warmest wishes and blessing,

Father Anton Lässer CP
Ecclesiastical Assistant



Charity in action: visiting an elderly man.



Singing for God: the choir rehearsing.

DEPRIVATION in the Caribbean

The month of June is dedicated in a special way to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a devotion Pope Pius XII described by “the most effective school of the love of God”. The devotion is widespread in the **Dominican Republic**.

Images of the Sacred Heart of Jesus hang at the entrances of many houses, bearing the inscription: “Here reigns the most Sacred Heart of Jesus”. During his reign, from 1930 to 1961, the dictator Trujillo did not dare to have these images removed, but instead demanded that the inscription be changed to “Here reign the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Trujillo”. Thanks to God, those days are now past.

Many people in the Dominican Republic, which is located on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, are still profoundly pious and to this day still consecrate themselves to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Their national coat of arms includes the Cross, the Bible and the word “Dios” (God) although some groups are campaigning to change this.

The Dominican Republic is widely known as a holiday paradise, but what is less well known is that here, as in neighbouring

Haiti on the west side of the same island, there is widespread poverty. As a result some 200,000 people across the country still live in destitution in the so-called “bateyes”, shacks originally built as temporary shelters for the seasonal workers on the sugar plantations. In the parish of Saint Martin of Porres in Barahona Diocese, three religious sisters are now living in the middle of one of these slums. Their primary mission is to care for children and young people, and also for the elderly many of whom have been completely abandoned. The sisters themselves live in the most spartan conditions, often going for hours without electricity. We want to help them, and other religious sisters working in some of the poorest parts of the country, with financial support for their selfless life and ministry.

The youth apostolate is particularly important for the Church in this Caribbean nation, where there are so many broken families, aggressive fundamentalist sects and growing violence, with many young people drawn into criminal gangs or prostitution. Others are simply moving away, while at the same time many immigrants from Haiti are flooding into the country. Sadly, the Dominican Republic has also become a transit land for drug trafficking. To combat this the Diocese of Mao-Monte Cristi, though extremely poor, has estab-



“Let us live like Jesus and love our brothers, so we can witness to his Kingdom of love.”

lished a programme of youth activities and workshops for 2025, involving around 20,000 young people. “Through this project we are hoping to be able to help young people by providing them with the necessary tools to find their way in today’s society”, explains Father Carlos José Rodríguez. The aim is to help them grow and mature, spiritually and humanly, and acquire a healthy grounding in Christian values for the path that God has planned for them in life – for example, in living a stable family life.

Will you help us to support the sisters, and to provide the €10,800 required for the above programme?



Many families are living in deep poverty in the notorious rundown “bateyes”.



MIRACLES of repentance and conversion

In **Papua New Guinea** many people are profoundly torn by the clash between their traditional tribal culture and the modern world. The crime rate is high, and drug and alcohol abuse is everywhere, including the widespread chewing of the narcotic betel nut. Children are often mistreated, even abused, and sometimes abandoned or even killed. The culture of violence and revenge is also widespread. Love, compassion and mercy are virtues that still need to be transmitted by the Church. But, with great patience the witness of God's mercy is beginning to bear fruit.

Samuel (30) had already spent time in prison for stealing cars. He also drank heavily and beat his wife. One day he confided in one of the religious sisters for whom he worked. This was his first step on the way to the Sacraments. Finally, he confessed to a priest and decided to put his life and his marriage in order. On the



"Our Father, who art in heaven..." Young people praying together to God.

day of their church wedding his wife wore a white bridal dress. Overnight, Samuel managed to give up alcohol and never again beat his wife.

Richard (21) had always been brazen and rebellious. His father died when he was just nine and his older brothers had already fallen foul of the law. Richard himself began to go further and further off the rails. But then one day he took part in a day retreat, during which the young people read the parable of the prodigal son. Then they were invited to approach the priest, as representing the Father, in a gesture of personal repentance. For the priest had previously told them: "The Merciful Father wants you to return to him." When Richard's turn came, he clung to the

priest, weeping, and after a little while had to be gently taken to one side, since he could not stop sobbing. He continued to weep for another three hours and then finally made his confession. "His face seemed to have simply blossomed", remarked Sister Catherine, who had witnessed everything. From that day onwards he confessed every month and totally turned his life around.

A few months later, Richard was gravely injured in a bicycle accident and died a few hours later in hospital. Sister Catherine recalls, "He was just 21 years old, but he was ready, he was well prepared. As he was dying, we prayed the Rosary. The atmosphere seemed to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We all felt a deep sense of inner peace and had the feeling that Richard was already in Paradise."

To make conversions like these possible, we are once again supporting the family outreach programme of the bishops' conference – with **€24,900**. We want to make it possible for men and women throughout the country to be helped to free themselves from the grip of violence, to learn mutual respect and be able to bring up their children in love.

Will you help us, so that in Papua New Guinea Jesus can once more say, "Today salvation has come to this house" (cf Lk 19:9)?



The Eucharist – healing remedy for wounded souls.



Gathered together in prayer – and opening their hearts to the Gospel of Love.



Viva il Papa!

Throughout the world there is rejoicing: *Habemus Papam* – we have a Pope! Even in the remotest villages of Africa, Asia and Latin America the Catholic faithful had been praying fervently for a worthy successor to the apostle Peter.

The crowds were excited to learn his name and see his face for the first time – including staff and benefactors of ACN who just happened to be in Rome on pilgrimage at that time. There was rejoicing especially in Peru, where Pope Leo XIV worked for many years as a missionary in the Andes.



And indeed, Pope Leo XIV is no stranger to ACN either, since we supported a number of his projects in the Dioceses of Chiclayo and Callao, when Robert Francis Prevost was bishop and apostolic administrator respectively. At the time he sent us a letter warmly thanking us for our support on behalf of the people, “especially in the poorest parts of our dioceses” and prayed, “May God bless the work of ACN”. And even after Pope Francis had brought him to Rome and appointed him as president of the pontifical commission for Latin America, among other things, we were still able to continue working with him.

We warmly welcome Pope Leo XIV and wish him every blessing of the Lord in his arduous task as Pontiff and accompany and support him with our prayers.

Viva il Papa! Long live the Pope!

Need, love and thanks – your letters

Donations instead of birthday presents

Recently I had a milestone birthday. I made a little box and decorated it with photos from one of your information booklets. I had asked my guests to make donations instead of giving me birthday presents, and many of them were happy to oblige. And so I am delighted to be able to send you 550 Euros. I cannot commend your vital support for our sisters and brothers in the Faith too highly.

A friend and benefactor in Germany

Thanks for the good wishes

I was most grateful for the prayers and congratulations of all the ACN team on my birthday. In thanksgiving, I am sending you money for 20 Masses to be offered for persecuted Christians.

A friend and benefactor in Switzerland

Your support for priests

Thank you for all the wonderful Christian work you do, spreading the Gospel and enabling priests to do so!

A friend and supporter in Ireland



Regina Lynch

Executive President,
ACN (International)

Dear Friends,

Since the very beginning of ACN in 1947 we have relied completely on Divine Providence through the generosity of the widow of the Gospel, who gave the little she could afford. For some people this faith in the goodness of others could seem to be foolish, especially today in a world, where so much is minutely planned, and nothing is left to the whim of other people. However, ACN has constantly experienced the trust and loyalty of those people, who believe that in other parts of the world, there are Christians suffering more than them.

Through my column today I would like to thank each and every one who in some way has supported the mission of ACN to help our brothers and sisters in faith, in particular those who are persecuted for what they believe.

Those benefactors, who have already departed this life, have surely already received their reward in heaven. And our benefactors, who are still with us today, must know that all over the world Catholic communities are praying for them as a sign of gratitude for such selfless generosity.

There is still so much to be done but ACN's trust in Divine Providence and the widow's mite remains unshakeable.

Regina Lynch

Where to send your contribution for the Church in Need

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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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