



Dear Friends,

The Book of Nehemiah is a jewel among the writings of the Old Testament and is very much of relevance to us today. During the difficult time of rebuilding, following the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity, Nehemiah proclaims to the people, “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (8:10).

And so let us raise our hearts and minds this Paschal season and rejoice mightily in the Lord. In this way we prepare ourselves, in the Marian month of May, for Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit, who brings redemption and healing, and who enfolds us in the goodness, beauty and holiness of God. Jesus says of Him: “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things” (Jn 14:26). “He will glorify me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you” (Jn 16:14). The Holy Spirit is the self-giving and self-communicating God, who desires to “dwell in us”, to fill our whole being, our thoughts, words and actions, with His grace and make us like to God.

“God is love, and he who lives in love, lives in God and God in him” (1 Jn 4:16). It is

then – and only then – that the promises of Jesus become reality: “The one who hears you hears me...” (Lk 10:16). “Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me” (Mt 10:40). Whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works ... Because I am going to the Father (cf. Jn 14:12). “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Mt 28:20).

Without the working of the Holy Spirit all this is quite impossible – indeed there can

some, or fruitful within us. When He raises us up, empowers us, makes us beautiful and pleasant, or renders us creative and attentive, strong and clear, efficient and fruitful.

Again and again, it is my privilege – as it is of all of us at ACN – to experience and savour in our daily encounters the workings of this divine Bridegroom of the soul. Sometimes in the meeting of hearts and minds, sometimes in the beauty and perfectly fitting quality of projects and initiatives.



“The Holy Spirit enfolds us in the goodness, beauty and holiness of God.”

Openness to the Holy Spirit, to His gifts and ways of working, and savouring His fruits is like an elixir of life, leading us to the joy in the Lord which is our strength.

be no Christian life. To see the hidden working of the Holy Spirit in those around us is always something joyful and uplifting. For example, when He brings about a respectful attentiveness that fosters an atmosphere of goodwill and love. When He inspires a sense of confidence and patient tolerance that makes space for peaceful growth and maturing. When He inspires creativity and moves us to action. When He brings about something new, whole-

With these thoughts I extend to you my heartfelt wishes for a grace-filled Feast of Pentecost

Father Anton Lässer CP
Ecclesiastical Assistant



Their most cherished **DESIRE**: a church!



"Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us!"

Throughout Latin America, Our Lady of Guadalupe is revered with great devotion. Often the love that people hold for her is the one thing that prevents them from wandering away to the sects, who are everywhere. In **Guatemala**, in the municipality of Tierra Nueva Dos, the local community is building a new church dedicated to her.

The number of Catholics is actually growing in this small municipality, which is plagued by unemployment, violence and crime. Almost 600 people regularly attend Sunday Mass, and more are preparing for Baptism. Up till now, however, they have been gathering in a makeshift hall, ram-

shackled and far too small. The faithful have organised tombola sessions and prepared homemade snacks for sale to raise money for their new church. And some have also donated building materials, such as steel and cement. In fact, the community has already started building – but without

"We are hoping very soon to have a fitting church for our liturgical celebrations..."

Father Freddie Justo Lucena

outside support they will not manage to complete the chapel.

For this reason, their parish priest, Father Freddie Justo Lucena, has turned to ACN for help. He writes: "We are hoping very soon to have a proper church for our liturgical celebrations, so that the people can feel at peace in a fitting House of the Lord and we can continue our work of evangelisation."

Meanwhile, the faithful are asking Our Lady of Guadalupe for help. Will you help the Blessed Virgin to fulfil their request? We have already promised them €80,000 so that the people of Tierra Nueva Dos can soon have a proper church of their own. Every little helps!

Where they can find the meaning of **LIFE**



At last, a place where they can meet: young people in Bathore.

Our Lady's month of May is also the month of the birth of Pope St John Paul II, who had a profound devotion to the Mother of God. In **Bathore, Albania**, there is a parish dedicated to this great pope and saint.

"Your help is vitally important for our mission..."

Archbishop Arjan Dodaj

Most of the 35,000 people who live in Bathore have migrated here from the mountainous northern regions of the country. Traditionally, the girls marry young and become homemakers, while many of the young men tend to drop out of school early, sitting around in the streets and drinking alcohol. Not infrequently the parents are overwhelmed and cannot cope, and so their children are all too often left to their own devices.

The Catholic parish in the town is the one place where these young people can

spend their time meaningfully. There is a building next to the church where children and young people can meet together in youth groups. And there are various other organised social and spiritual activities they can join. Unfortunately, however, the top floor of the building cannot be used at present, since it is in such a poor state of repair and is dangerous. And yet they urgently need the space.

We are planning to give **€40,000** for the repair and extension of the building. There will be guest accommodation so Catholics from other areas can also come and take part in retreats and exercises. "Your help is vitally important for our mission," writes Archbishop Arjan Dodaj of Tirana-Durres.

Will you help to bring light to Bathore, as Pope John Paul II hoped and prayed?



The sisters also need a **BREAK** at times...

On the eastern side of the **Indonesian** island of Sumba the 56 Sisters of Charity of the Precious Blood work tirelessly – caring for orphans, teaching children who otherwise couldn't go to school, visiting families in the outlying villages and helping them with practical and spiritual advice. They work very hard, and in very difficult conditions. And so the community has asked for our help so they can offer retreats and spiritual exercises and give the sisters the chance to recharge their spiritual batteries.



Drawing strength from Jesus, the "Source of Life".

"The hectic pace of life can sometimes make the sound of God's voice fade a little..."

Sister Louisa Martina Karere

Sister Louisa Martina Karere explains: "The hectic pace of everyday life can often cause the sound of God's voice to fade a little in our hearts. These retreats can help the sisters to take a break and draw new strength from the Source of Life. Just as Jesus often withdrew to a quiet place to



Finding fresh inner strength, so to serve more joyfully.

pray, so too these sisters need to find space so that they can renew their initial fervour for their work of service and for their religious vows."

The aim is to help the sisters find new inner strength so they can continue their work of service with fresh joy and at the same time avoid exhaustion and discouragement.

The retreat will cost €116 per sister. Would you be willing to give one or more of these 56 sisters the chance to refresh her strength for this work of service?

Help them to give their very **BEST!**

It all began with eight young women in 1942. The Bishop of Shillong at the time was aware that many families in the north and northeast of **India** – most of whom belong to the disadvantaged ethnic minorities – were living in deep poverty. In order to help them he founded a religious community, the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians.

Today the more than 1,460 sisters of this congregation belong to some 68 different indigenous ethnic groups. This ethnic background helps them to be close to the local people and understand them better.



A novice solemnly receives the habit.

"The fact that they live in harmony and mutual love is a powerful witness in a society marked by ethnic conflicts and violent clashes," says Sister Jessy Mathew.

The sisters have plenty of work on their hands. The young people in particular need guidance, since they can see little future for themselves and often take refuge in drugs, which in turn leads to a high rate of HIV/AIDS. Equally, the social media they have access to, and which they follow uncritically, portray a false lifestyle, which further confuses and frustrates them. So, the sisters feel they have to step in and teach them true values. They also support the women and care for the street children, and on top of this they actively help in the parishes by teaching catechism.



Young sisters taking their first vows.

"The fact that they live in harmony and mutual love is a powerful witness in our society..."

Sister Jessy Mathew

Consequently, the sisters themselves also need a solid formation – that will enable them to give "the best of what they have in them" as Sister Jessy explains. But they lack the resources to do this, and so we are proposing to help, with a total of €9,100, for the training of 26 of these young religious sisters.



This is called a "road" in the Diocese of Bangassou, Central African Republic...

Travelling with the ROSARY, where only a jeep can make it

"Hail, Mary ..."

... The Rosary beads slip gently through the fingers as the jeep bounces over the deep potholes. Every now and then it threatens to overturn. "... Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death..." The voices rise, pleading more insistently, especially as night begins to fall. Suddenly, the wheels begin to spin; the vehicle is stuck fast in the mud. A daily experience in so many countries around the world, where priests and religious have to travel long journeys on rough and lonely dirt tracks.

"The Rosary is a beautiful prayer when you're travelling on the road – and not least on roads where only a jeep can get through," says Bishop Aurelio Gazzera, who has to deal with some particularly awful road conditions as part of his ministry in the Diocese of Bangassou in the **Central African Republic**. His old vehicle simply couldn't cope in the end and was constantly breaking down – sometimes just as night was falling, and in the middle of the rain-forest, where gangs of armed rebels often hide. He is therefore extremely grateful to you all for helping him with a new jeep... So now he has more of a chance of reaching his destination safely.

A breakdown on a lonely road can make priests and religious easy prey for robbers and kidnappers. It's a situation especially concerning for religious sisters, who in many countries – notably Pakistan – face

the additional danger of being sexually assaulted if they find themselves stranded and helpless on the road. In fact, even when using public transport – in the few cases when it is even available – they face a real risk of being victims of sexual assault and harassment. So, for religious sisters especially, a reliable vehicle is the best protection.

Sadly, we sometimes get tragic news even then. Last year, for example, the rector of the pre-seminary in the Diocese of Lwena in **Angola** lost his life when a front wheel came off and his vehicle crashed head-on into a tree. His Bishop, Martin Lasarte, was profoundly shaken by this tragedy. He wrote to us: "There is no project, and no money in the world that can replace such an outstanding priest as Father Loureiro. He gave a shining witness of joyful fidelity and total dedication. Need-



Angola: This was the vehicle in which Father Loureiro lost his life.



A jeep – suitably decorated in honour of Our Lady.

less to say, I can't ask you for a new rector, but I can at least ask you to help us with the new vehicle that our seminary so urgently needs." His appeal did not go unheard, and we were able to offer the €33,500 he needed for a new jeep.

Unfortunately, such all-terrain vehicles are expensive, but in many regions of the world they are an essential requirement for the Church to minister to the faithful in the first place. In providing priests and religious with a secure means of transport you are in a certain sense also acting as their Guardian Angels... So, can we count on your support for them?

Our Lady is working **MIRACLES** in Nigeria

“Persecution has even strengthened our faith,”

says Bishop Oliver Dashe Doeme of the Diocese of Maiduguri, northeast Nigeria, which has suffered greatly from the terrorism of Boko Haram. They have an especially strong devotion to the Mother of God here. **“Mary has worked many miracles among us,” the bishop assures us.**

Last year, when a priest was kidnapped by the terrorists, the Catholic faithful of the diocese prayed a novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, and 51 days later he was set free. “He had openly told the men of Boko Haram that he was a Catholic priest and after that they began to treat him better. They wanted to convert him to their own religion, but he told them, ‘There is only one truth: Jesus is the Saviour of the world!’ They were clearly impressed by this and began to



Under persecution more people are living according to their faith.

treat him well. When they set him free, he was even able to bring ten kidnapped women to freedom with him,” Bishop Oliver tells us.

Sometime before that, another priest had been abducted, and the terrorists in fact had intended to kill him the next day, as they told him. On that occasion too, the faithful prayed a novena to Our Lady. “That night he managed to escape together with some of the other prisoners. They had to walk for 19 hours, but the men of Boko Haram didn’t attempt to chase after him or capture him again. We

also attribute his rescue to Our Lady’s intercession – just as we do the general improvement in the situation in our diocese. I am quite sure that the Mother of God will continue to work miracles among us, her children,” he says.

And indeed, his auxiliary, Bishop John Bogna Bakani tells of yet more miracles: “Before, many people were somewhat lukewarm in their faith, but now the churches are fuller than ever. And the number of vocations is also rising. More young men than before want to become priests and many young women are becoming religious sisters. So however hard this persecution may be, this is the witness we can give to the world: the testimony of a faith that is being tested.”

Thanks to your generous help we have been able to support the Diocese of Maiduguri over many years. Again and again, thanks to your kind gifts, we have been able to help with the training of seminarians and catechists, support priests with Mass stipends, provide emergency aid for refugees and even fund various construction projects and vehicles for pastoral work.

“ACN is our backbone,” says Bishop Dashe Doeme. “Not just financially, but also spiritually. Without your help the Church in Maiduguri would have foundered long ago. You have always been a moral support for us. Your help is playing a vital role in people’s lives and encouraging their spiritual growth. Please keep on helping us as before!”

Thousands of the faithful, praying together for peace.





Cardinal Parolin pays tribute to ACN

In December 2025, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican's Secretary of State and so-called "Foreign Minister", travelled to Mozambique, also visiting the turbulent and war-torn region of Cabo Delgado, to assure the suffering and displaced victims there of the Holy Father's concern and closeness.

The cardinal especially praised the "heroic witnesses of faith of so many of our brothers and sisters, who remained faithful to Christ in these times of pain and strife, and also of those who were killed without denying the name of Jesus."



He also paid tribute to ACN, and thus also to all our friends and supporters. "I now see the role that *Aid to the Church in Need* is playing here, and it is very good! Please continue to support and help these communities, who are in such need. We really have to show them the solidarity of the universal Church in a very concrete way, and that is what you are doing."

Need, love and thanks – your letters

She knows what it is to face persecution
I came from a country where Christians are persecuted, I feel for those going through this because of their Christian faith. God bless your work efforts in this programme.

A friend and benefactress in Australia

Use it well!

I don't have much, as I'm only 17 years old and my mom gave me this money a few days ago on my cashapp, but it's better to give it to others than be tempted to spend it uselessly on videogames!! Use it well!

A friend and benefactor from the US

Prayer to St Joseph

Many thanks for your newsletters throughout the year. And may God reward your wonderful and vital work! I am often moved to tears by the sufferings you describe and

I wish I could give so much more to help. I always pray to Saint Joseph to help you and send to you wealthy and generous benefactors.

A friend and benefactress in Germany

Gratitude and a gift

Thank you so much for your birthday wishes! I was delighted. I'll be sending 50 Swiss francs to you in the next few days. Please use this for the Latin Catholic Church in Ukraine.

A friend and supporter in Switzerland

The long arm of God's love

I support ACN because you are helping those who are persecuted, who suffer war, poverty and destitution – and because I cannot do so myself. You are the long arm of God's merciful love in today's world.

A benefactress in Slovakia



Regina Lynch

Executive President,
ACN (International)

Dear Friends,

When on 9 August 1945, the atomic bomb was dropped on the Japanese city of Nagasaki, some 40,000 people died instantly with tens of thousands dying in the following months from the effects of radiation. 8,500 of the city's small Catholic community of 12,000 faithful were killed immediately. The survivors were marked by the mental and physical effects of the bomb. As well as their homes, they lost their Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception but miraculously one of the two bells survived. It became a symbol of hope for them. In 1959, the new cathedral was inaugurated with the surviving bell and in 2025, a second bell was finally installed.

What can we learn from the Catholics of Nagasaki? Well before the atomic bomb fell, the ancestors of these devoted Catholics had kept the Faith alive despite being persecuted for their faith. For two centuries, there was no Catholic priest in Japan but the laity baptised their children, taught catechism and prayed the rosary. They knew then and after August 1945 that Our Lady would intercede for them to God Our Father. Let us not forget the power of the rosary in particular during this month of May.

Regina Lynch

Where to send your contribution for the Church in Need

Please use the envelope. Aid to the Church in Need, 35/3, Mdina Road, Attard, ATD 9038; Tel: 21487818; Fax: 21586257

APS Bank, IBAN: MT72 APSB 7705 7008 5772 2000 1771 733, BIC: APSBMTMT

Email: info@acnmalta.org – facebook//Aid to the Church in Need Malta

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



Editor: Stephen Axisa

Publisher: Aid to the Church in Need, 35/3, Mdina Road, Attard, ATD 9038

Printed in Malta

De licentia competentis auctoritatis ecclesiasticae

www.acnmalta.org