



Dear Friends,

Every year on the solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus we pray for all our benefactors and entrust you gratefully to the wellspring of Divine Love. Pope Francis' last encyclical *Dilexit nos* or "He loved us" (cf. 1 Jn 4:10) is devoted entirely to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. It reminds us of the promise: "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Is 12:3) – in other words from the pierced Heart of Christ, the inexhaustible wellspring of Divine Love.

It also makes clear that the veneration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is no mere pious devotion, but a profound expression of faith in the redemptive love of God. For in the Heart of Jesus is revealed all the depth of God's infinite love for mankind – even to the Cross. In the Heart of Jesus we revere the infinite love of Christ, who in His Incarnation and His Passion has loved us to the end.

In a time of spiritual confusion and increasing alienation from God, the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is a reminder for us all of the enduring promise of Divine Mercy.

The Heart of Jesus, pierced by the lance, is a symbol of that Divine Love that could never and can never in any way be destroyed – not even by death and sin. Pope Francis encourages us not merely to contemplate, but also approach the Sacred Heart of Jesus with the profoundest trust.

This trust-filled encounter leads us to those depths of love that bring us to intimate union with Jesus Christ and His redeeming

healing, forgiving, comforting and bringing us peace.

In his final encyclical, Pope Francis reminds us that man is created above all for love – that we find our fullest and final identity only when love reigns in our hearts. "In the deepest fibre of our being, we were made to love and be loved." He urges us, in contemplating the Heart of Jesus, to ask ourselves this question: "Do I have a heart? A loved and loving heart?"

We are profoundly grateful to be able to serve within this dynamic of the love of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, in conveying your gifts of love to the very ends of the earth, to our

brothers and sisters in the Faith. May our Lord Jesus Christ bless you all for this love and hold you always in the Love of His most Sacred Heart.

With these thoughts I bless and salute you all,

Father Anton Lässer CP
Ecclesiastical Assistant



"In the Heart of Jesus is revealed all the depth of God's infinite love for mankind – even to the Cross."

love for mankind. Hence, the devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is also profoundly missionary. Whoever allows himself to be touched by the Redeemer's love will himself become a redemptive instrument of peace and hope. In the midst of this world, which often seems so cold and alien, the Heart of Jesus remains forever open – ready to embrace all of us who entrust themselves to him. The love of the Heart of Jesus knows no limits. It is at once human and divine – close to us, suffering with us, warming,

“PRIESTS need the spiritual heart muscles of a Rambo”

Papua New Guinea: 25 priests finding new spiritual strength.



“To His open Heart the Saviour invites all to draw water in joy from the springs of salvation.” So runs the Preface for the solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which is on the same day as the World Day of Prayer for the Sanctification of Priests. The many seminarians we are supporting dream to become holy priests. To preserve this holy longing from becoming dulled by the trials of everyday life, we need to strengthen priests in their connection with the “springs of salvation”. And so, retreats and spiritual exercises are a vital means to this end.

Priests, to be able to muster all the love and spiritual strength required for their vocation, need to have “the spiritual heart muscles of a Rambo”, said the then Fr Mauro Piacenza, now Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, back in 2009, during the Year of the Priest. Indeed, the challenges and demands that priests often have to face – sometimes in the most challenging of conditions – can often lead to exhaustion and occasionally even genuine spiritual crisis. Retreats and days of reflection can help them to regenerate their inner strength, in prayer and silence, and find spiritual accompaniment in shared fraternal communion with other priests.

Thanks to your generous support we are able to help priests every year in many

countries around the world to take part in such retreats – not least in countries like **Pakistan**, where they live in a state of constant tension. At every moment they face the threat of terrorism, violence and false accusations. In a country where Christians are regularly persecuted and discriminated against, the priest often stands alone in the face of immense challenges, while the Catholic faithful, overwhelmingly from the lowest rungs of society and defenceless in these situations, turn to him during every need. “In the seminary we are prepared spiritually for the priesthood,” one priest explains. “But the real ‘training’ of the priest happens outside the seminary.” For just **€130** or so you can help a priest in Pakistan to draw strength from this vital source of spiritual renewal.

We have also received an appeal from **Rwanda** in central Africa. During the Rwandan genocide of 1994 at least 10 priests from the Diocese of Gikongoro were murdered, while the rest were forced to flee. Churches and church facilities were looted and destroyed, and

Please help us to help these and many other priests like them, so that with renewed joy they can once again “draw water from the springs of salvation”. Then they will be able to bear daily witness powerfully to the grace they have received from the Lord. Help them to recapture their youthful longing to become holy priests!



Enjoying a few days of fraternal communion.



“Sing to the Lord a new song” (Psalm 98:1).

afterwards Church life had to be completely rebuilt. At first it was very hard to attract young men to serve God in the priesthood, since the young people were generally profoundly traumatised. But now the diocese once again has 54 priests in active ministry. Their bishop has asked us for **€110** for each priest, so that they can take part in a series of six-day retreats.



Shared happiness – strength for everyday life.



WILL YOU HELP ease their heavy burden?

The Poor Clare Sisters in Libreville, the capital of **Gabon**, are nothing if not resourceful... When the ancient mixing machine they rely on for their host baking enterprise breaks down yet again, they make do with a paint mixing machine instead. But other problems are not so easy to resolve. So, they are counting on your help.

The 40-year-old iron griddles of their baking machinery are heavy and hard to manipulate, and over half the sisters are already suffering from shoulder and back pain as a result of this. Some of them in fact can no longer manage this hard work. And besides, the hosts often break up when they are removed from the forms,

thereby wasting the precious flour that is so expensive in this African country. And cutting out the hosts by hand is also difficult and time-consuming.

In short, the convent needs new equipment, since the demand for hosts is growing steadily and the Poor Clares can



Careful concentration required!



Checking for damaged hosts.



Can the Poor Clare Sisters count on your help?

scarcely keep up as it is. But not all the available equipment is suitable for their particular situation. Given the frequent power cuts, they need to be able to heat the baking plates rapidly, so that the baking process is not interrupted. And additionally the machinery needs to use as little power as possible to keep the cost as low as possible, so that the parishes can still afford them while at the same time enabling the sisters to support themselves at least partially through their work.

It will cost approximately €20,000 to provide them with the efficient host baking equipment they need. Anything you can give will make life easier for these hardworking sisters.

SOS Lebanon

As a result of the renewed fighting in the Middle East, almost 20% of Lebanon's population have been left as refugees. The Church has opened her doors to all those seeking refuge, but she herself is also poor and struggling. So ACN has stepped in at once with an extensive emergency support package.

"We are all clinging firmly to the hope that the cross we bear will become a bridge to the Resurrection at some unknown future time."

Father Maroun Youssef Ghafari, from Alma Sha'b in the profoundly war-torn south of the country.



Praying together for peace.

The refugees need support of every kind – food, medicines and basic hygiene goods. Fuel is also urgently needed for the generators, in order to provide electricity. And as far as possible, the children still need to attend school if they are to have any hope of a better future. And all the harassed and struggling people who were already suffering from years of crisis, likewise need spiritual and psychological

support. "This war has pushed us to our very limits and thrown us right back to square one. The Church is truly a rock in the storm here," says Marielle Boutros from Beirut, who coordinates our aid projects on the ground.

Please help us to help the people of Lebanon not to collapse under the weight of their cross!



Praying every day for all our benefactors!

Thanks to your help and support, 23 young Sacred Heart seminarians from various different countries in central Africa are currently able to study theology in Cameroon as they train for the priesthood. Brother Guillaume has written this letter to all of you on behalf of his fellow seminarians:

"I would like to express my deep gratitude to you for everything you are quietly doing for us. Your support for our formation is of decisive importance, since it is thanks to this generosity that we are able to study here in Yaoundé. And so we are preparing to serve the Lord as His priests."



Every morning begins with our encounter with the Lord in the Eucharistic celebration. We hold all your personal intentions in our hearts and implore the Lord to grant you His grace and His love each day. And at the end of every day we pray Vespers to thank Him for everything He has done for us. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts and ask the Lord to reward you a hundredfold."

Need, love and thanks – your letters

Support in time of need

During the time of the totalitarian regime, I received financial support from ACN and therefore know well just what good such support brings in times of need. At the same time, I feel for our persecuted brothers and sisters who suffer so greatly today. For the love of God I want to help you as well as I possibly can.

A friend and benefactress in Slovakia

A letter to a religious brother in Burkina Faso

We are a French family with six children. At the end of February, we sent a donation to ACN to help with food parcels for refugees and others uprooted by terrorism. We often think about your country and the trials and tribulations you have to endure. Three of our children, aged eight, seven and six,

have put together their savings – they saved up for so long to buy toys with – to support your aid campaign. Together they were able to give €21 and we, their parents, have topped it up to €250. We promise to pray for you and continue supporting you. Thank you for your courage and faith!

A family in France

Thanks for the loving difference

May God bless you! You all are truly making a loving difference in this precious world and life.

A friend and benefactress in Australia

In solidarity

In solidarity with persecuted Christians and displaced families – may this help restore dignity, safety, and hope.

A friend and benefactor from the USA



Regina Lynch

Executive President,
ACN (International)

Dear Friends,

We are forever grateful to all our benefactors. You not only support the persecuted and suffering Church with your prayers and generous donations; you also testify to a great trust in God in a world that is changing rapidly and in which we are confronted by so many challenges.

Some of you live in countries which have been traditionally Christian but today are increasingly secularised. We could ask ourselves how this will end? However, I am happy to say that we at ACN are discovering that a lot of young people in donor countries are really interested in knowing more about faith. They want to listen to the testimonies of our brothers and sisters in the suffering Church and they are moved. As a result, some of them have now joined you as benefactors of ACN and some have become volunteers, helping to spread our mission.

So, if you ever encounter any of these young ACN benefactors, please encourage them to persevere on their faith journey and their desire to show solidarity with those Christians, who pay the ultimate price for daring to keep the faith alive.

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