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Aid to the
Church in Need

ACN CANADA

Young people encountering God



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Loving youth means supporting their future

Dear readers,

As an adolescent, I was lucky enough to be a summer camp leader. It gave me great joy and developed my sense of selfless service. I also remember that at the end of the camp, the young people would leave with a twinge of sadness. I think they took away with them happy memories, where joy, laughter, camaraderie and pride in having successfully met new challenges played an important role. I could also see new friendships being made.

The youth ministry activities organized during the summer are absolutely essential opportunities to recharge the batteries of tens of thousands of young people affected by war, conflict and the destructive economic crisis. They are like an oasis, enabling young people to build their hope on solid foundations rooted in the values of the Gospel.

For this Fall 2023 edition of the Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) Magazine, we thought we'd offer you a few stories and photos related to youth activities. A camp, of course, but also other types of activities in which surpassing oneself and creating a more fraternal world are rooted in a welcoming, educated and profound Christian faith.

Pope Francis himself calls on young people to become "sentinels of peace" and "prophets." Be the benefactors who will give wings to inspiring pastoral projects, reconciling time for faith formation, prayer, leisure activities and fraternal encounters.

Be part of the youth of tomorrow and help us to form young Christians who will commit themselves to transforming and loving the world through the values of the Gospel.

Wishing you a wonderful fall.

Marie-Claude Lalonde
National Director



A FEW PROJECTS WE SUPPORTED IN 2022

ASIA

- Construction of a church building in **Kamda, India, Khunti district**
- Maintenance of 91 students at the Holy Spirit Major Seminary, **Bangladesh, Dhaka**

AFRICA

- Construction of a new chapel for the Sisters of Mary of Ingelmunster, **Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kinshasa**
- Completion of the formation house for the Sisters of Our Lady Queen of Africa in Isoka, **Zambia, Mpika**
- Vehicle for the pastoral ministry of the bishop, **Sierra Leone, Bo**

LATIN AMERICA

- Copies of the Child's Bible (God Speaks to His Children) for all dioceses of the country for Christmas 2022, **Cuba**



- Construction of a new church in San Marcos, parish of San Francisco de Asis, due to a storm that damaged the previous church, **Honduras, Juticalpa**



Visit our website:
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Young people can count on you!

During the summer of 2023, Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) gave more support than ever to the organization of pastoral camps for young people and youth ministry activities. «At the last meeting of ROACO, the committee that brings together the aid agencies for the Eastern Churches, the Holy Father thanked us for supporting the young people of the Eastern Churches,» points out Marco Mencaglia, our new International Project Director.

«The Pope has asked that young people be sentinels of peace for everyone; prophets who dream and announce a different world, a world that is no longer divided. This is why we have massively increased our commitment to young people in these countries. We want to be part of that future.»

Marco Mencaglia, our new International Project Director.

Last summer, we supported nearly 400 camps and gatherings for young people. More than half of these camps took place in Syria. Between June and September, 273 camps brought together 45,574 participants, mainly young people and children.

Through these summer camps, local churches hope to strengthen the minds, bodies and souls of tens of thousands of young people and children who have suffered most from the consequences of violence and war.

The second country with the highest number of participants and camps is Lebanon. Since the explosions in the port of Beirut on August 4, 2020, ACN has considerably stepped up its support. It has funded 106 summer camps were supported across the country, bringing together more than 18,000 Lebanese children and young people. Camps for Christians in the Holy Land, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, and Israel are traditionally part of the programs supported by ACN.

These summer sessions are essential for many children and young people, and not just in the Middle East. ACN-supported courses and camps have also been organized in Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Cuba, Lithuania and Armenia.

Lastly, in Ukraine called Holidays with God, as well as summer camps for young Ukrainian refugees in Hungary and Estonia.

Support for these camps represents over 1.3 million dollars allocated to 66 projects in 13 countries, which corresponds to over 400 summer courses and camps underway between June and September. You can already contribute to the well-being of young people, as many camps are planned for next year!



United we stand, in Syria

Your charity helps young people stay in Syria

«I'm very happy to attend this meeting because we need to strengthen the role of youth in the community.»

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Before the war, Syria had one of the most dynamic and stable Christian communities in the Middle East, with a flourishing socio-economic life. Twelve years of conflict, economic crisis and international sanctions have forced many people to leave the country for good, where, according to experts, a veritable catastrophe is raging. Among them are young people discouraged by the fact that they cannot start a family there.

Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) is aware that Syria can only return to what it was before the war if young people are part of the solution. Finding innovative ideas with them so that a viable and happy future is possible is absolutely fundamental.


Burning with the fire of hope

In October 2022, more than a hundred young Christians gathered in Damascus to take part in a historic event: the very first gathering of young Christians in Syria. The meeting, organized by The *Christian Hope Centre*, an initiative supported by ACN, was attended by distinguished guests including the Apostolic Nuncio of Syria and the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch, and represented the wide variety of Christian rites found there.

Rafik Abboud, a young man from Homs, summed up the common sentiment of young Christians. «I am a Syrian Christian living in Syria and I want to stay in my country and contribute my experience and skills to society.»

Another key moment of the event was the presentation of concrete proposals arising from the discussions between young people, included the creation of training centres, employment platforms and support for young couples and families. The participants left the conference full of energy and enthusiastic about launching new projects in their governorates.

Without your generous support, will these young people have a future? You have the power to change things.



Ukraine

The search for meaning in the midst of war

Since February 24, 2022, in Ukraine, the Church has rolled up its sleeves and decided to help the people fleeing the violence of war. It continues to reach out to young people in search of meaning as well, and to those who wish to follow Christ. This support is nothing new for the Church.

Thus, in 2021, a little less than a year before the fighting broke out, Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) supported the purchase of technical equipment for the 19th ecumenical youth meeting organized by the Franciscans.

This youth reconciliation activity took place at the Marian shrine of Bilshivtsi, which is run by the Franciscans.

Material aid and spiritual support

Youth ministry activities are of paramount importance in the Church, especially today in a country like Ukraine. Of course, there is the war that broke out in February 2022 and the fighting that has been raging in the east since 2014. However, long before these tragic episodes, corruption, the lack of prospects and the economic crisis drove millions of young people to leave the country. Added to this, is the long period of official atheism under the former communist regime that fell in 1990, which remains a fundamental aspect to be taken into account.

Father Ignatius Moskalyuk, at the service of those fleeing the violence of war.

In an interview broadcast this summer, Father Ignatius Moskalyuk, OSBM, rector of the Basilian monastery of Saint Volodymyr the Great in Kherson, told us that the respect and love shown to people who come asking for help makes a big difference, because they "know that we love them".

Father Ignatius continues: "People are asking these (meaningful) questions and looking for answers. Today, a large number of people come to our monastery and ask us for the sacraments of baptism, marriage and forgiveness. Every day, 25 or even 30 people attend mass and receive communion. Among them are children, young people... It fills us with joy."

Since war began in February 2022, you have helped raise more than \$13 million worldwide in support of the Churches – the Latin Rite and Ukrainian Greek Catholic Rite. These Churches are helping the population both materially and spiritually whether by providing food, housing displaced people or offering the sacraments. Young people traumatized by the sound of bombs and constant insecurity need your faithful kindness to heal. They are our priority. Thank you for being there!

The joy of being liberated, even in prison!

In some countries, young offenders who are still minors are imprisoned without even considering the idea of rehabilitating them. Yet very often they come from family homes shattered by misery and poverty. Faithful to its mission of reaching out to the periphery, the Church plays a vital role in restoring dignity and a sense of self-esteem to young people in desperate need.

This short story from 2018 perfectly illustrates the work that Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) supports in several countries around the world. We can certainly say that you are responding in your own way to Jesus' invitation: "I was in prison and you came to visit me!" (Matthew 25:36). That's why you helped Father Gregorio in Venezuela.

"He arrived like an angel from heaven," told us Alejandro, a 15-year-old boy who is behind bars for robbery. "It changed us completely."

"This is God's Word of love. Father Gregorio brought it in the form of the Bible and of the YouCat, the catechism for young people. The bishop had asked ACN for copies and given them to Father Gregorio. Many other dioceses are also waiting for this help. "The Father gave me this Bible and the catechism," recalls Alejandro. "Before, I knew a few stories, but I'd blocked them out." He takes a deep breath and looks into my eyes, filled with hope.

"Thanks to these visits, I was able to make my First Communion, and in a few days I will be confirmed."

A heart-to-heart with Christ!

As mentioned by a prison guard, Father Gregorio talks to these youths from the heart, "bringing them the love they have never known in their lives." At first, all I did was listen to them," says Father Gregorio. "They were lonely, abandoned inside, but they longed to give meaning to their lives, to love, to friendship with God. In the YouCat, they were able to read what we gradually discussed."

Alejandro adds: "Now we see life differently. Father Gregorio's words, the Bible and the YouCat have made us think a lot. We're going to live differently." His cellmate, who will also soon be confirmed, adds: "All this has shown us the path of truth, the path to goodness, to God. I'm very happy that Father Gregorio has shown us this way." It is the joy of truth that inspires and liberates these boys.

These imprisoned boys have not forgotten those who made it possible to distribute this intellectual and spiritual nourishment. "We are very grateful to you, the benefactors of Aid to the Church in Need. With the YouCat, we feel connected to them, it's like they're visiting us. Thank you!"



*Let us pray for these countries where
religious persecution is raging.
Thank you!*

Two hands are shown from the wrist up, with fingers interlaced to form a heart shape. The hands are positioned centrally, with the heart opening facing the viewer. The background is a soft-focus image of a person's face, with the hands in the foreground.

Burkina Faso
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