



Aid to the
Church in Need
ACN CANADA

MIRROR



Ukraine—"Let light shine out of darkness!" (2 Cor. 4:6)

Dear Friends,

When those in Jerusalem on that first Pentecost heard the preaching of Peter and the other apostles, they asked, "*Brethren, what shall we do?*" Peter replied, "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*" Peter also "*testified with many other words and exhorted them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this crooked generation.'*" (Acts 2:37-38, 40)

Repentance, a change of heart, rediscovering baptism as the source of joy, turning away from sin, growing as a new creation, fleeing the culture of death and worldliness in all its aspects—this must be our program for the season of Lent and in our preparation for the approaching "Holy Year."

"*What shall we do?*" We, too, must ask ourselves the same question, as faith in the Gospel cannot be reduced to mere intellectual assent to doctrine. It is much more than that: it involves transforming our conduct and our lives. Saint Peter's answer applies to us, too. It is an answer

that exhorts us to do three things: repent, draw on sacramental grace, and distance ourselves from this "*crooked generation.*"

First of all, "Repent!" We are not told to debate, dispute, or discuss. Instead we are told to change ourselves from within,



"Faith in the Gospel involves transforming our conduct and our lives."

so that our life and our actions may gradually come to conform with the Easter mystery.

Then there is the second exhortation: Make of your own baptism—which is a living reality in each of you—the inexhaustible source of your life of faith. By a faithful and ever more perfect participation in the Sacred Mysteries, banish all sin from your interior life, drive out the spirit of contradiction, and allow the "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17) to grow within you. The risen Lord is tending the new life within you through the constant Pentecostal outpouring of His Spirit.

Finally, Saint Peter urges us, "*Save yourselves from this crooked generation.*" By "crooked generation," he surely does not mean humanity as a whole, to whom we must rather turn with charity, but rather everything within humanity that contradicts the eternal plan of the Father—the spirit of rebellion against God and His laws.

So understood, this "world" must not intimidate us with its bullying, nor entice us with its sordid glamour, nor indeed discourage us with its fleeting triumphs. Our Lord has already overcome the world of this "crooked generation" through His pascal triumph (Jn. 16:33), and if we remain in Him, then we, too, will overcome it.

May the Blessed Virgin help us to repent and truly believe in the Gospel!

Cardinal Mauro Piacenza,
President of ACN



Filling the darkness with light and love

At the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic seminary of the Three Holy Hierarchs in the village of Kniazhychi, near Kyiv, 55 young men are currently training for the priesthood. Four of them have written to us, describing their experience.

Oleg, who is in his second year, writes: “The war has added an extra dimension to my vocation. I feel a growing need to serve the people, not only as a priest, but already now as a seminarian.” Taras, who is in his fourth year, agrees: “They say that children grow up faster in wartime, and as seminarians, we feel all the more responsible for our priesthood and for the people who have been entrusted to us by the Church.” He has faced many life-threatening situations during the war. “My vocation has been redefined and has grown as a result. War always means suffering and fear, but it also provides us with the opportunity to fill this darkness with light and love.”

Explosions, aerial attacks, and bombs falling have all become “normal,” he says. “Last winter, the seminary was left for a long time without electricity, water, and contact with the outside world. But we were together. We got through it all together and so it didn’t get us down.”

25-year-old Ruslan sorely misses his hometown of Melitopol, but he cannot go back as it is occupied. He particularly misses his home parish, but technology has allowed him to bridge the distance to some extent: “We pray the Rosary together every day

via the Internet. Not only with our parishioners in Melitopol, but also with other people who have become refugees and are now living in other parts of Ukraine, or even abroad.”

Brother Meletij is a seminarian in the sixth year of his monastic training. He has long cherished the desire to become a priest. During the war, he experienced moments of fear, but of one thing he is quite certain: “Praying in the monastery is the best thing I can do daily, for the salvation of my soul and for all those people who cannot do so themselves.” When he becomes a priest, he hopes to be there for all those who need spiritual support.

All of them are ready and willing to go wherever they are needed—including the areas where the war is raging most fiercely. But they must first complete their formation.

We have promised to support the seminary again this year with close to \$62,000, so that the 55 young men here can be given a thorough preparation for their future priestly ministry. Will you help Oleg, Taras, Ruslan, Brother Meletij, and the other seminarians bring light and love into the darkness around them?



“A cappuccino with the Capuchins”—and a miracle

In early December 2023, an ACN delegation traveled to Ukraine. The Capuchins of Kyiv shared everything they had experienced since the beginning of the war, including how they supported the population, together with the Nazareth Sisters, and the threats they still face today.

“As early as February 22, 2022, we saw streams of people fleeing toward the northwest, and not long after that, empty and deserted streets. And then the refugees arrived...” Brother Błażej says of the beginning of the invasion. For three days, none of the friars could leave the house. “But what we didn’t realize was that the Russian soldiers had already reached the nearest bridge on the Dnieper River...”

The Nazareth Sisters, living on the grounds of the Capuchin friary, were in a

similar situation. They took refuge in the undercroft beneath the church and were soon joined by 20 evacuees from Chernihiv.

In March 2022, Russian troops withdrew from Kyiv Oblast (province), but the accommodation of the internally displaced continued right through to November. In fact, to help them with this task, ACN helped fund emergency generators.

Today, some degree of normality has returned. Regular religious services and

catechetical sessions in the Church of Mary, Mother of the Church have resumed, and the sisters’ kindergarten is also up and running again. Furthermore, each month—thanks to the Capuchins and Psychologist Lyudmila Serhijivna—a group of 16 women whose sons have perished in the war or have been reported missing can take part in a comprehensive rehabilitation program, for body, mind, and spirit. In addition to the counseling and therapy sessions offered, the shared prayer, followed by “a cappuccino with the Capuchins” is equally important and is “an opportunity to ask the difficult questions, such as ‘How can God allow such things to happen?’, and they want straight answers, too,” say the friars.

But the impression of normality is deceptive. Just two days after our departure, Brother Serhiy wrote to us: “Today at 3 a.m., we had the most massive bombings so far. Everyone is alive, but the doors and windows were shattered. The street next to us was flooded, as was the subway. We prayed for the Lord to hold back the water, because the church and kindergarten were in real danger, despite the piled-up sandbags. And the water stopped—miraculously—at the very last step!”

Today, the Capuchins need your help to continue this mission. Entrust your Mass intentions to them and foster a deep spiritual bond between those who provide solace to victims of war and yourself, who prays for peace. Thank you!



Forgetting the war for a few days



Children in Kyiv being children again, away from the war.

For the past two years, children and young people in Ukraine have been living with constant tension and fear. Many have fled with their mothers to Western or Central Ukraine, leaving behind all that was familiar and dear to them.

Most of their fathers are fighting on the frontlines, and a number of them have already been killed. Their mothers are under immense emotional stress. That’s why the Church is responding with “Holidays with God,” so that children can forget the horrors of war for a few days and experience some moments of joy and fellowship, finding spiritual strength through prayer and Mass. There are also

retreats for teenagers, for example at the Marian shrine in Berdychiv.

Since the beginning of the war, we have helped over 3,000 children and teens take part in these activities. They need your help again this year! For \$225, a child can spend ten days of rest and joy in the Lord. Thank you for your support!



“A real help!”

The Parish of Saharsa lies right on the border with Nepal in one of the poorest regions of India. The majority of the Catholic faithful here belong to the Santal tribe.

Father Suraj Mathew, the parish priest, tells us: “They are very religious and look forward eagerly to Holy Mass.



Sundays and feast days are occasions of great joy, and celebrated with real festivity.” There are many villages for the priests to visit, and given the poor roads, monsoons, and the thick fog in winter, traveling by moped can be dangerous. Now, thanks to your generous help of \$17,500, the parish has a car. Father Suraj is grateful to you all. “This car is a real help,” he writes. “Thank you for the love you have shown for the poor in this region! We are praying for you all.”



Regina Lynch
Executive President,
ACN (International)

Dear Friends,

In this Mirror, we are writing about war-torn Ukraine. Sadly, it is one of many countries or regions in the world currently experiencing war or conflict. As a Christian, an important question for me is how do we manage in such situations to find the truth and a way forward?

Humanly speaking, it is not easy, but I find that the following words can help us. They come from Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the head of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. In the middle of the conflict in the Holy Land in November 2023, he said, “The truth is complete when it finds forgiveness. Truth without forgiveness becomes a pretext for revenge. Truth must encounter forgiveness to have a complete and free perspective on this situation. This is the mission of our Church: to seek encounter at all costs, to overcome barriers, which does not mean erasing identities. The brother is not the enemy but is indeed my brother. Don’t get caught up in the game of determining who is right or wrong.”

Let us pray that all the victims of conflict throughout the world, with God’s help, may find a way to forgive and to pull down barriers.

Regina Lynch

Need, love, and thanks—your letters

Praying with the children for the Church in need

Thank you for your reports from countries where Christians are suffering. In our catechism classes, we pray with the children for your mission and for these persecuted Christians. May the Lord continue to send you help, and bless you and all those for whom you sacrificially offer your hard work and your time!

A schoolteacher in Slovakia

They are part of us

I support Aid to the Church in Need because it is such a vital charity for Christians. Our brothers and sisters throughout the world are not separate from us; they are part of us. As such, we share their sufferings and joys and try to support each other when and where it is needed. “We, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Romans 12:5). Recently I have been deeply affected by the plight of the young girls in Pakistan who have been kidnapped, raped, and

forced to marry and convert to Islam. ACN does vital work in many different countries, but for me the situation of these young children has highlighted the crucial work of ACN. It is thanks to your supporters that you can reach out and do this, so please allow me to thank you on behalf of those who cannot at present thank you themselves.

A Benedictine sister in the UK

The best birthday present

Thank you so much for your kind birthday wishes! Praying for my family and me is the best gift you could have given. Thank you, ACN, for the works of love that you are empowering all over the world!

A benefactor in Switzerland

Brave missionary spirit

It is a wonderful and indescribably rewarding experience (and our Heavenly Father knows just how much!) to share in the courageous missionary spirit of ACN! May the Holy Spirit guide you onwards!

A friend of ACN in Brazil

Send your donation to: **Aid to the Church in Need (Canada) Inc.**

P.O. Box 670, Stn. H, Montreal, QC H3G 2M6
(514) 932-0552 – 1-800-585-6333

Website: www.acn-canada.org – email: info@acn-canada.org
Registration number 13036 2593 RR0001

Editor:

ACN International,
Postfach 1209, D-61452 Königstein, Germany

Responsible publisher:

Marie-Claude Lalonde, Aid to the Church in Need (Canada) Inc. (See address – opposite).

De licentia competentis auctoritatis ecclesiasticae – Printed in Canada –

www.acn-canada.org



Please indicate your benefactor number in your correspondence.

