



Aid to the
Church in Need

ACN CANADA

MIRROR



Iraq—“For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from Him.”
(Psalm 62:5)



Dear Friends,

Recently, I spoke with a supporter of ACN. She said to me, “We’ve been helping Africa for decades, but what good does it do? Your reports seem to show that, despite all the aid, there are still problems ... and they seem to be growing. Isn’t Africa just a bottomless pit? Isn’t our help there pointless?” She obviously thought that all the help had been in vain and that it would be better to just give up.

In response, I told her what we see and witness at ACN every day, and in a matter of minutes, her viewpoint was completely changed. I was only too happy to pass on what I hear from staff and project partners—about the joy and hope felt by thousands of people, for example, when a new church is finally blessed, a new parish center is opened where they can share their faith and lives, or a longed-for vehicle allows a priest to visit even more people. Other examples include when, despite persecution, expulsion, and homelessness, children and young people can still attend

school and gain an education, or when we can help religious sisters care for the displaced and the homeless. Again and



“The gift of love holds a most precious hope, which is ultimately an expression of God’s love.”

again, we are privileged to witness how your generosity is bringing new joy, hope, and life, even in the most terrible situations.

Of course, we also have to face the reality that in many regions, things are getting worse, despite our efforts. But it is in these situations that your kind help is bringing new courage and hope to those who have lost almost all hope. What great consolation and encouragement it is for them to know they are not forgotten—that there are people thinking of them, praying for them, and sending them real, practical help! The gift of love holds a most precious hope for those who receive it because it transcends material help and is ultimately an expression of God’s own love.

In *Spe Salvi*, Pope Benedict XVI speaks of hope as a healing force that leads the believer beyond suffering. He stresses that true hope lies not in avoiding suffering or in the world’s promises of security but in transforming suffering through faith in Christ. This hope is not assessed by earthly standards but is viewed from the perspective of eternal life, which is founded on Christ’s resurrection.

In his Bull of Indiction for the Jubilee Year, which began on Christmas Eve, Pope Francis chose the words *Spes non confundit*, or “Hope does not disappoint” (Rom 5:5). It is a message for us all: In our world, with all its uncertainty and need, Christian hope is the unshakable foundation that sustains believers, throughout all suffering, unto eternal life.

With all my prayers and good wishes for a truly blessed Jubilee Year 2025,

Father Anton Lässer CP
Ecclesiastical Assistant



A boat to spread the Gospel

The Parish of Noanamito lies in the Apostolic Vicariate of Guapi, in one of the poorest regions of Colombia. It is divided by two rivers, and the 44 villages of the parish are accessible only by water.

The first time Father Jairo Palomino Montaña had to steer the boat, he was scared he might capsize, but his faith and trust in God helped him to overcome his fear.

The river journey from one village to the next can take several hours, and the tropical rainfall, high waters, mosquitos, and venomous snakes are just some of the challenges he has to contend with. Even more dangerous, however, are the armed groups that terrorize the region. Father Jairo risks his life every time he travels to minister to these people.

His parishioners are mainly Indigenous or of African descent. Poverty has driven many of them into growing drugs, which in turn has led to an increase in violence.

For 10 years, the parish was deprived of a priest. “Starting up again from scratch was not easy,” says Father Jairo, who has only been here since March 2024. “For many years, there was no Holy Eucharist and no other sacraments either. When someone finally came and proclaimed the Gospel, the people were deeply moved, after suffering so much neglect and such violence.”

The arrival of a priest has brought new hope and the strength of faith. They tell me, ‘Father, we thought the Church had forgotten us,’ and they also say, ‘Since we’ve been able to come to Mass again, the village has changed.’”

But life is still hard. Even the parish center has only a couple of hours of electricity

a day. But for all that, this 44-year-old priest tells us, “I love my work because every day I feel anew that I am giving my life for the spread of the Gospel. I want to serve these people like Jesus did. So many of them are overjoyed that I am here, and I rejoice to be permitted to be an instrument of Christ so that others may have life. I draw my strength and courage from prayer and from the mysterious power of love—but also from the fact that I can see the faith growing.”

To date, Father Jairo has had to rent a boat to visit the villages. But this is proving too costly for the long term.

In many other vicariates and dioceses around the world, your generosity is enabling the purchase of boats and outboard motors for pastoral work. In this case, the motorboat would cost \$15,000. Thank you for choosing to help!

We would also like to help parishes—especially in hard-to-reach areas—receive more frequent visits by a priest. The Parish of Noanamito shows just how important priests are, and ACN is supporting their training in many of the Colombian seminaries, so that the faithful don’t feel “forgotten by the Church.”

A riverside settlement—Father Jairo is expected any moment.



Selfless service of the poor



Religious sisters go where without them, there would be no help or hope.

In Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital city, armed gangs regularly terrorize the population, causing misery and chaos. Many people are hungry, and malnourished children are often just abandoned and left to die.

The Camillian Sisters have taken in almost 100 of these children, many of them physically or mentally disabled. At the same time, the sisters are also supporting the sick, and families in dire need.

Sister E. is not afraid, although her work is dangerous, taking her as it does to various different quarters of the capital as well as the surrounding villages. A number of religious have been abducted,

but the 48-year-old Brazilian sister assures us, "The lack of security hasn't made me lose my trust in God; in fact, it has even grown stronger. I am more than ever certain that the Lord will never abandon those who follow Him with a generous heart. Every day I say a joyful YES to my vocation and thank God for it."

As a new instructor, Sister E. conveys her rock-like faith to the six young Haitian

women who have joined the community. The Camillian Sisters entrust themselves completely to Divine Providence, and this helps them fulfill their mission in the midst of all Haiti's difficulties and dangers.

But they also know that God can often work through other people, and so they are asking our help for the training of these young sisters, as well as for certain basic necessities for the community.

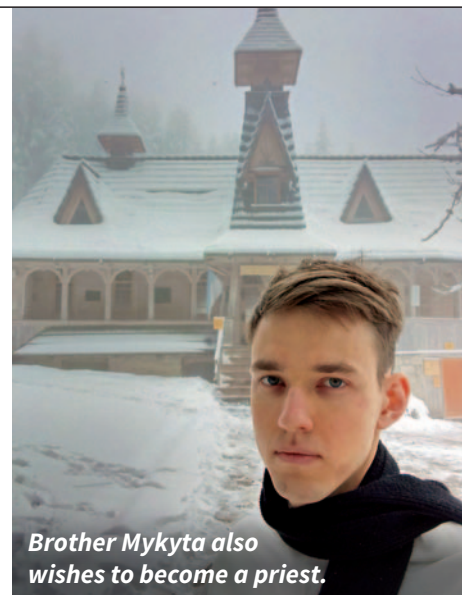
The cost to support one religious sister is \$740. Help us train these courageous young women!

The "examination of love"

Artjom is Russian and Mykyta is Ukrainian. Both live in the same Dominican monastery in Krakow, where young men from different Eastern European countries pursue their training together. Both have the same goal in life: to follow Christ.

Brother Mykyta has already taken his temporary vows and has been studying philosophy for a year now, which he greatly enjoys. He is particularly fond of Latin. He is from the city of Kharkiv, which has suffered heavily from the war. Aged 27, he previously studied software programming before entering the Dominican Order. Father Artjom is already ordained as a priest. But because of the war he cannot return to Russia at present, and so he wants to deepen his studies. "This will help me to better preach the word of God, the word of love and peace, when I return home," he says. At Artjom's ordination, auxiliary

Bishop Damian Muskus said as seminarians they had been studying to pass the "examination of love" they would undertake as priests. He impressed on the young ordinands: "Do not fear the dark, even when it appears to be impenetrable. For we know that every night ends in dawn and that the light always triumphs over darkness." He emphasized that their task was to go forward, despite the darkness, to meet Jesus. These two young Dominicans show us that within the Church there are no enemies, but only brothers, and the darkness of these times can be overcome through the love of Christ.

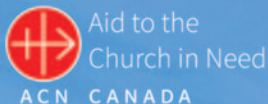


Brother Mykyta also wishes to become a priest.

Help them prepare for their "examination of love." Your donation will support their training this year, which costs \$2,370. Thank you!



Your amazing journey starts today.



Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) Canada, in collaboration with tour operator Spiritours, a Quebec license holder, invites you to take part in a special pilgrimage to Italy in the spring of 2025.

Accompaniment: Msgr. Christian Lépine, archbishop of Montreal.

What and When?

Jubilee of Martyrs Pilgrimage, May 6 to 15, 2025

- A Private Audience with Pope Francis
- A visit to Assisi
- And more!

***Limited spaces available. Take your first step today and become a pilgrim of hope!**

For more information, please visit:

<https://spiritours.com/en/product/italy-martyrs-jubilee/>

Or contact:

Frédérique Lafont (Spiritours): frederique.lafont@spiritours.com

Registration deadline: March 8, 2025



Regina Lynch
Executive President,
ACN (International)

Dear Friends,

Through my work with ACN, I have been very privileged to meet people of deep faith who have left a lasting impression on me. Most of them were not well known—you would not have picked them out from a crowd—but all of them had a common belief that despite whatever hardships they faced in this world, their hope was in the next world, when their suffering would come to an end and they would be united with God.

I met one of these witnesses of faith toward the end of the 1990s in China. Bishop John Han Dingxian of the underground Diocese of Yongnian was detained 11 times by the authorities for refusing to conform to the harsh constraints of the communist regime, and I was able to see him during one of his short breaks from house arrest or prison. I remember well his cheerfulness and humor and his lack of bitterness toward those who oppressed him. He was a living example of Christ's teaching of turning the other cheek. It is reported that Bishop John died from an illness while in police custody in September 2007. His body was cremated before his family and the faithful had a chance to say goodbye to him.

May the courage of Bishop John and other witnesses of faith be a source of hope for each one of us in times of suffering.

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

Please indicate your benefactor number in your correspondence.



PONTIFICAL
CHARITY



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