



MIRROR



Dear Friends,

I am constantly amazed by the wisdom and great wealth of experience that our beloved Church possesses about human nature. During my trip to Turkey to commemorate the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, I encountered this wisdom once more, as we meditated on the words of the Nicene Creed. In a different way, we find this same wisdom in the appointment of our new president, His Eminence Kurt Cardinal Koch, by our Holy Father Pope Leo XIV. We are delighted at this news and offer him a heartfelt welcome. You can read his letter on page 4.

Another example of the Church's understanding of our human nature, which again fills me with joy, is the grace of Lent. The Church grants us this time for spiritual healing. By responding to her call for renunciation, we gain new freedoms—freedom to examine and correct our old habits; freedom to put at the centre of our life what is most true and vital, namely Our Lord Jesus Christ; freedom to translate our love and compassion for our fellow men and women

into practical action. Lent is the opportunity to set ourselves free so that we can love.

Is it not often the case that the things we call our own tend to possess us more than we possess them? This is exactly what Jesus means when He says, “You cannot serve God and mammon” (Mt. 6:24). Allow me to offer some practical advice on this



“Lent is the opportunity to set ourselves free so that we can love.”

matter. Rather than offering up something rather trivial during Lent, offer up something that you know is not good for you or for your neighbour, because it enslaves you or takes up too much of your time—for example, television, your mobile phone, social media, or similar habits. Use the time this frees up for a closer encounter with Jesus by reading the Scriptures, praying, and engaging in works of charity.

Jesus' command to “Go out into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to all

creation” (Mk. 16:15) also reflects this understanding of human nature. Saint Augustine's words ring true for every one of us: “Our heart is restless until it rests in you.” True peace, loving security, and complete human fulfillment are to be found only in Christ's Gospel. And so this missionary command of Jesus serves the true goal and highest good of man—and especially of those called to mission,

because it is them who, above all, most directly experience the presence and working of God's love.

In this issue of the *Mirror*, we introduce you to some of these missionaries, who in their life and ministry show how Jesus' call to mission can bring salvation and life.

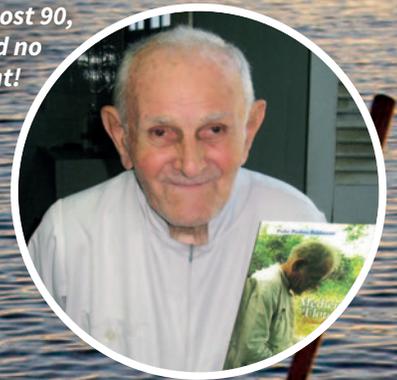
With my profound gratitude to you for helping us support these missionaries, I send you my warmest greetings.

Father Anton Lässer CP
Ecclesiastical Assistant



You're steering PASTORAL WORK safely to its destination!

Even at almost 90,
Father Paolino had no
thoughts of retirement!



“He taught the people from the boat” (Lk. 5:3), the Gospel tells us. Shortly afterwards, Peter and the other disciples cast out their nets and hauled in a great catch of fish. Did you know that in many parts of the world, rivers are the only means of communication? Here, it is by boat that the Church continues to bring the Word of God to people.

Something similar to this “miraculous catch of fish” was the result of the ministry of Father Paolino Baldassari. In 1968, when he first arrived in the Diocese of Rio Branco in the Amazon region of western **Brazil**, there was no priest, and many of the families had drifted away from the Church and even gone over to the sects. But when he died in 2016, at the age of 90—already acclaimed by many as a saint—the people were all Catholics.

Yet, initially, things had seemed very different. In the very first week after arriving, this Italian missionary from the *Order of Servants of Mary* almost died of malaria. The fact that he even survived and continued to work for 48 years in the Parish of Sena Madureira was already approaching a miracle. Even at the age of almost 90, Father Paolino continued to travel long journeys in his simple boat, often for weeks on end, visiting the people. He always wore a life jacket and a motorcycle helmet on these perilous voyages, as he could not even swim. The cause for his beatification was opened in 2022.

Again and again, we receive appeals for help from priests or pastoral teams who need a sturdy and powerful boat in order to reach the many riverside communities in the rainforest. Not only must they cover long distances, but they must also cope with rapids, floating trees, and sudden rainstorms, which frequently turn their pastoral travels into perilous adventures. A reliable motorboat allows them to more quickly and safely reach their destination, where the faithful are eagerly awaiting them.

Thanks to your help, Father Bruno Nirmal, who is from India and is working as a missionary in the Prelature of Itacoatiara,

in Brazil, has already received a boat. He tells us, “The people have a deep faith and are thirsting for the Mass, for the Eucharist, and for God. When the priest arrives, they drop everything and hurry to greet him.” Sometimes, priests have told us, dying people even seem to hang on and wait in order to be able to finally receive the sacraments, before dying peacefully soon after. The riverboats are also frequently used to transport the sick, and one missionary told us of a time when a baby was actually born on his boat!

It is your generous support that makes it possible to bring Jesus to the remote villages of the rainforest. In 2024-25 alone, more than \$460,000 helped make the catch truly miraculous. Will you continue to support these missionaries so that their pastoral mission reaches safe harbour?



Support **ANGELS** ministering amid violence and death

Your support for missionaries, true angels on earth, is invaluable! In fact, since 2017, the far north of Mozambique has been plagued by terrorism, violence, exodus, and death. Here, in the Diocese of Pemba, 59 religious sisters are devoting themselves to bringing solace in the midst of this unbearable suffering.

Sister Alphoncia Mmole from Tanzania cares for orphaned children. "Many of these children were forced to witness the murder of their own family members. They came to me suffering deep psychological trauma and poor health, so I have welcomed them lovingly and am striving to give them confidence and hope for the future," she explains.

And your support allows for small miracles. "One of the boys was quite wild and cruel to his fellow pupils. On one occasion, I found him pressing a cushion over the face of another boy, and on another occasion, hitting him in the stomach with a flat iron. I asked him if he wanted to see other children wounded or even killed. He looked at me, began to cry, and shook his head. Since then, he has never been violent toward any of the other children again."

Sister Alphoncia herself had no easy childhood. "I suffered a great deal in my own life," she confesses. "In the past, I preferred to hide away and isolate myself. But seeing the suffering of other people has opened my eyes and my heart. The truth is, I am a



Religious sisters make God's love tangible in Pemba Diocese, Mozambique.

poor individual, helping other poor people. Every day, I stretch out my hands to God and ask, 'Where will our help come from?' The prayers and support we receive from ACN give us the strength and courage to continue our mission."

Please continue to help! For each of these 59 brave women who, by the love of God, are striving to heal what has been wounded and damaged by hatred and violence, we are providing subsistence aid (\$970) for the coming year. Your generosity will enable the sisters from the Diocese of Pemba to continue to be angels in the service of the most vulnerable.



Bishop Roszyński with his seminarians, celebrating in traditional tribal dress.

In Papua New Guinea, your love can support a growing Church!

Priests can find it difficult to carry out their mission, especially in remote regions. A number of the vast parishes here cover several outlying islands, and many of the people are simply overwhelmed by the glaring clash between their traditional tribal culture and modern life. Polish Bishop Józef Roszyński of Wewak Diocese has been a missionary in this country for 24 years now, and he is very happy that 15 young men from his diocese are currently training to become priests.

This year, he needs an additional \$48,400 for their training. You can choose to help more and more local priests continue the courageous work of the missionaries who preceded them.



A greeting from our new president

Dear Benefactors,

Pope Leo XIV has appointed me as president of the international Pontifical Charity *Aid to the Church in Need (ACN)*. I am most grateful to the Holy Father for the trust he has placed in me, and I look forward to this new task. I have known and admired ACN for many long years, initially on account of its work in Switzerland, where I was formerly bishop of Basel and took part in various educational and prayer events. And now, in my present role as prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, I am still very close to this organization, for ACN itself is also at the service of Christian unity in supporting projects in many different local Churches around the world and also in other Christian Churches and thereby promoting a harmonious coexistence with the Catholic Church.



One particular and notable service of ACN that I admire is the way this charity reminds us, again and again, just how many Christians in the world are persecuted on account of their faith and killed, even today. We must not forget the martyrs in today's world but always accompany them with our solidarity, our practical support and above all our prayers. Again and again, I hear from persecuted Christians just how greatly it helps them to know that we are keeping them in our prayers.

ACN reminds us of the critical situations faced by many believers and local Churches, evoking the beautiful admonition of St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians: "If one member suffers, all suffer together" (1 Cor. 12:26). I see this as one of the most beautiful images of what our Catholic Faith understands by the word "Church." It is the living Body of Christ, with many members, all complementing one another and dependent on one another.

This reciprocal help flows from love for those who suffer and is at the same time a response to the great love which God bestows on us, for our acts of charity are powerful and credible only if we perform them as an "echo"—a reflection—a mirror of that love with which the living God always richly blesses us.

I wish you all a prayerful Lenten season in preparation for the great paschal gift of the Resurrection of the Lord, and I gladly take this opportunity to thank you most warmly for your generosity as benefactors. I look forward to remaining in touch with you in time to come.

Cardinal Kurt Koch
President of ACN



Regina Lynch
Executive President,
ACN (International)

Dear Friends,

In December 2011, Pope Benedict XVI elevated Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) to the status of a pontifical charity. This great honour confirmed our charity's close link to Peter's successors since the very beginning of ACN in 1947. Our pontifical statutes even state that the charity "is animated by faithful obedience and devotion to the Roman Pontiff" (Art. 4 §1).

Pope Benedict appointed His Eminence Mauro Cardinal Piacenza, then prefect of the Dicastery for the Clergy, as the first president of the pontifical charity. He went on to lead ACN until late 2025, when he reached 81 years of age. We are most grateful to Cardinal Piacenza for being a steady and trusted mentor who guided us with great wisdom.

Now our new pontiff, Pope Leo XIV, has blessed ACN by appointing His Eminence Kurt Cardinal Koch as our new president. Swiss-born Cardinal Koch, who is prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, knows ACN well as a result of our work with other Churches, especially in the countries of the Middle East, where Christians are a dwindling minority.

We welcome Cardinal Koch and commend him to your prayers. It is a great privilege to have him leading ACN in its service to the suffering and persecuted Church.

Send your donation to: *Aid to the Church in Need (Canada) Inc.*
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Registration number 13036 2593 RR0001

Please indicate your benefactor number in your correspondence.

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

