



MIRROR



Dear Friends,

Every year, on the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, we pray for you, our dear benefactors, and entrust you gratefully to the wellspring of Divine Love. Pope Francis' last encyclical, *Dilexit nos* ("He loved us") (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 devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is not a simple pious practice 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, loved us to the end.

In a time of spiritual confusion and increasing alienation from God, 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 can never be destroyed—not even by death and sin. Pope Francis encourages us not merely to contemplate but also to 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 love for mankind. Hence, the devotion to the Most



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

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 ourselves 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, 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 to be loved." He urges us, in contemplating the Heart of Jesus, to ask ourselves: "Do I have a heart?"—one that is loving in the way of the Heart that so loves us.

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



You give **PRIESTS** strength to have “the spiritual heart muscles of a Rambo!”

Papua New Guinea—Thanks to you, 25 priests were able to recharge spiritually.



To His open Heart the Savior invites all to “draw water joyfully 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 you support dream of becoming 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.” In this regard, the spiritual retreats made possible thanks to your generosity are essential.

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 for Priests*. 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,

made possible thanks to your generosity, help them renew their inner strength, in prayer and silence, and find spiritual accompaniment in shared fraternal community with other priests.

Every year, you enable priests from many countries to take part in such retreats—countries like **Pakistan**, where religious 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 defenseless in these situations, turn to him for 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 \$200 or an



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

amount that feels right to you, you can help a priest in Pakistan draw strength from this vital source of spiritual renewal.

We have also received an appeal from **Rwanda** in East 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 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 many were deeply traumatized. Now the diocese has 54 priests in active ministry! Their bishop has asked us for \$170 for each priest, so that they can take part in a six-day spiritual retreat.



Shared happiness—strength for everyday life, thanks to you!

Help priests “draw from the springs of salvation.” Thanks to you, their joy is renewed. It is your love that enables them to renew their ability to bear witness, every day and with conviction, to what they receive from the Lord. Your help rekindles in them the youthful desire for holiness that first drew them to the priesthood.



Your **DONATION** will support the Church's vital work.

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. Other problems are not so easy to solve. Your love can make the difference!



Careful concentration required!

The 40-year-old iron griddles of their baking machinery are heavy, and more than half the sisters are already suffering from shoulder and back pain as a result. Some of them, in fact, can no longer manage this hard work. Additionally, the hosts often break when they are removed from the molds, 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 steadily increasing and the Poor Clares can barely keep up. But the equipment

must also be suitable for their particular situation. Given the frequent power outages, they need to be able to heat the baking plates rapidly, so the baking can continue uninterrupted. Additionally, the machinery needs to use as little power as possible to keep costs down, allowing parishes to afford it while still enabling the sisters to support themselves at least partially through their work.

An amount of \$31,000 is needed to provide them with an efficient host-baking machine. Your donation helps make their task easier, while fulfilling the needs of the Church. Thank you!



Can the Poor Clare Sisters count on you?

SOS Lebanon—Stay Generous

As a result of the renewed fighting in the Middle East, almost 20% of Lebanon's population has been forced to flee. The Church has opened her doors to all those seeking refuge, but she herself has limited means. Thanks to your generosity, *Aid to the Church in Need* was able to take immediate action to provide support.

Joint prayer for peace.



"We all hold on to the hope that the cross we carry will become a bridge to a resurrection whose timing we do not know."



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

IDPs need support of every kind —food, medicine, and basic hygiene items. Fuel is also urgently needed for the generators. As much as possible, children still need to attend school if they are to have any hope of a better future. And all the distressed people, already worn down by years of crisis, also 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 aid projects on the ground.

Your support helps the people of Lebanon not to collapse under the weight of their cross!



They pray for you every day!

Thanks to your help and support, 23 young Sacred Heart seminarians from various 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. 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."

Consider leaving a gift in your will!

A simple gesture in your will can change lives long after you're gone. By choosing to give, you continue to support the Church where it suffers most, standing with Christians who are poor and persecuted because of their faith. Your generosity transforms lives and extends your commitment to your faith.



You don't have to be wealthy to leave a gift to Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), several options are available to you.

For more information, visit our website:

acn-canada.org/planned-giving/ (or scan the QR code) →

You can also reach us at **1-800-585-6333, ext. 221**, or write to mfc@acn-canada.org.



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 secularized. We could ask ourselves, "How will this 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

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