



World Youth Day: meeting others – and meeting God.

***“We need to protect, guide and encourage our young people, helping them to build a society worthy of their great spiritual and cultural heritage.”***

**Pope Francis in Manila, 18 January 2015**

*Dear Friends,*

On 26 July in Cracow, Poland, the 31st World Youth Day will begin. More than a million young people will travel during this Year of Mercy to the city of Saint Faustina – and also to the home country of Pope Saint John Paul II, who founded the World Youth Days. His pontificate was characterised by an emphasis on God’s Mercy. This is his great legacy. He called on all people to believe that the goodness of God is greater than all evil. And he particularly entrusted the young people of the world with this mission of Mercy.

“I am offering souls the last hope of salvation – that is, recourse to my Mercy”, Jesus told Saint Faustina. Today’s world is shaken by profound crises. People are increasingly becoming lost and confused. Young people are the hardest hit of all. Many of them are like fragile craft, bobbing on the high seas, without hope of a safe harbour. Torn from their moorings, they can find no clear sense of identity, no sense of belonging, no sense of direction. God is offering us the anchor of his Divine Mercy, bound fast to the very depths of our soul

and holding it secure. He gives us the sure knowledge that there is indeed a hand that holds me safe, and holds the world – and no one can tear me from His hand.

Yet how unfathomably horrifying are the terrorist attacks and suicide attacks of recent times that seem to weigh against this confidence... In Maiduguri, Nigeria 58



***Young people want to touch the stars and do great deeds.***

were killed, in Garissa University in Kenya 148, in Paris 130, in Brussels 35, in Lahore, Pakistan 72 – to name but a few... All the killers were young men, aged between 19 and 31. Led astray by false hopes, they wanted to change the world. They too were seeking a meaning in life that goes beyond death. Violence was their response to the great crises of the world. Mercy is the diametrically opposed response to this path. For mercy is grounded in the almighty power of the Love of God, who suffers with the world and transforms it from within. It is a transformation that must always begin with ourselves.

“I lift my eyes to the mountains; from where shall help come to me? My help will come from the Lord, my God, for He is merciful!” So runs the first verse of the World Youth Day hymn. Young people want to climb the heights, touch the stars, do great deeds. They look to role models. If they can recognise the goodness of God in our example, then the desire will grow in them also to share in the mission of mercy. The World Youth Day can mark a decisive turning point in the lives of innumerable young people. We have received requests from many of the poorest countries for help,

so that their young people can travel to Cracow. They are counting on your help. But still more, dear Friends, these young people need your prayers and your good example!

With my grateful blessing on you all

*P. Martin M. Barta*

Father Martin Maria Barta  
Spiritual Assistant



# A “House of Peace”

**Takashuf, “Austerity” – this is the current economic policy in Algeria. And yet, in Algiers, despite the economic crisis, they are building a mosque with the highest minaret in the world. It is intended to accommodate around 100,000 worshippers. Meanwhile, the tiny Catholic minority in Skikda in the east of the country would be more than happy with a small chapel for half a dozen Christian believers.**

The former parish church of Saint Therese of Lisieux was turned into an orphanage for founding children during the 1970s. There were simply not enough Christians. But the old presbytery was retained by the parish. Six years ago they began converting it into a mul-

tipurpose centre. The roof and lean-to extension have been repaired and water, gas and electricity supplies connected. Everyone has pitched in – students, the parish priest himself, friends and even visitors. Now the time has come to start on the chapel. A sliding door will

cut off any noise outside and ensure they can pray in silence. But, of course, the diocese of Constantine itself has not been left unscathed by the economic crisis in the country. The community relies on donations, and these have become far fewer in the past couple of years. At the same time, building materials have become even more expensive.

And yet the community is growing. Most of the Sunday Mass attenders are students from the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, including Egyptians – and even Asians, and in recent times Algerians too have been asking for baptism. Conversion is not a punishable crime under the Algerian penal code, although an ordinance of 2006 punishes those who seek to encourage conversions. Many Muslims find the centre a “place of peace and freedom”. The example of prayer and love has an effect. Father Bernard puts it like this: “Dialogue is the best antidote to the temptations to intolerance and violence.” €20,000 is what this small but flourishing community needs to complete the chapel and multipurpose centre. It will be a centre for a springtime of love in the shadow of the great mosque. ●



*Breakthrough for dialogue. Only love can bring a true springtime.*



*The door will be wide and open – for all are welcome, and more and more are coming.*

## Word, prayer and deed – the formula for mercy

**They come from the ends of the earth. But without your help, many of them would not make it to the World Youth Day in Cracow.**

Young people from the Middle East are particularly dependent on help to get to WYD – the 25 young Syriac-rite Catholics and the 65 Coptic Catholics from Egypt, the 22 young Syrians, and the 30 young Roman Catholics from South Sudan, as well as the young people from Ukraine, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Bangladesh, Uruguay and Ecuador – to mention just some of them. They will frequently come across ACN in Cra-

cow, whether in the pilgrim’s handbook or in the youth catechism YOUCAT. And now, thanks to your generosity, there will also be the DOCAT – a compendium of the Church’s social teaching and a course in mercy, applied to society, written and presented with young people in mind. “Blessed are the merciful”, for they shall have mercy shown to them (cf Mt 5:7) – So runs the slogan for Cracow. That means putting mercy in to action. So, the message for Cracow is precisely what Jesus said to Sister Faustyna: “I give you three



*Three years ago in Rio, thanks to you – the group from Bangladesh.*

ways of showing mercy to your neighbour – first by deed, second by word and third by prayer. In these three acts is contained the fullness of mercy.” Word, prayer and deed – this is a call to us as well. ●





# Senegal – a pilgrim shrine in the making

**The scattered seed begins to sprout – Savoigne, a tiny Catholic community of 375 souls, a flourishing sapling in a vast expanse of Islam.**

Ninety percent of the inhabitants of the diocese of Saint-Louis in Senegal are Muslims. The people in Savoigne happily live side-by-side. When Father Emmanuel Zanaboni was put in charge of this parish as a young missionary, 34 years ago, the village was virtually abandoned. A half-finished building served as a multipurpose centre for all manner of things. Father Emmanuel sought out the “scattered sheep” and brought them together again. He prayed each evening with the young people, taught them to sing psalms and hymns and began to convert the hall into a church. He had brought with him from Italy a 18th century statue of Our Lady, Health of the Sick, who quickly drew people to her. There was an upwelling of

prayer and faith, and soon pilgrims began to arrive. They grew ever more numerous, and now some even come from the capital, Dakar. Savoigne is becoming a place of pilgrimage. The converted church hall has long been too

small, and at least half the congregation have to stand outside during Holy Mass. Besides, there is a lack of accommodation for the pilgrims. So two years ago work began on a new pilgrim church. Everyone gives or helps in whatever way they can. Now ACN is also helping, thanks to your generosity, with a contribution of €30,000. This will cover a proportion of the building costs. The seed has indeed sprouted in the wilderness, thanks to Our Lady, Health of the Sick.



*Build my house... Many hands...*

# Ethiopia – faithful through the ages

**An “Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure” was one of the first Christians according to the Acts of the Apostles (8:27).**

Today the Christians of Ethiopia are among the poorest in the world. There is no earthly treasure here, only poverty, but they still remain faithful. Their real treasure is the Sacraments. In the parish of Arguba, in the apostolic vicariate of Jimma-Bonga, they would love to be able to provide a fitting house for these treasures and for the liturgical fittings, books and vessels pertaining to them. But their simple grass-thatched wooden chapels would not be a safe place: rats, termites and other pests, combined with the wind and rain, mean that the chapels have to be rebuilt every couple of years. So now they want

to build a church that will last and be secure. “What is to stop me being baptised?”, the eunuch asked Philip, who then baptised him. What is to stop us helping these Ethiopians from building a worthy house of God in which they can receive the grace of the sacraments today? Especially since many otherwise well-disposed Ethiopians might wonder at these impoverished huts and doubt whether the true God lives there? No need for material treasures; but a simple and permanent church, built by their own hands and through the generosity of their brothers and sisters in the faith in Europe, America and Australasia... that would be an enormous boost to their faith. We have promised €30,000 for the new church in Arguba.

a discriminated minority. The Church has already built a kindergarten and a primary school for the almost 2,000 Catholics of the Manja people here. Now they need a solid church to replace the crumbling grass-thatched, timber-framed mud hut they currently use. Here again, your solidarity and generosity have made possible our grant of €30,000, and their fidelity to Christ has been rewarded.



*Worshipping God beneath the heavens – but better to worship in the House of the Lord... especially when it rains!*

For the people of the Manja tribe, in the same vicariate, there are further problems, as they are



*It was always the dream of these local Catholics to have a chapel, a place to pray and worship together. For where they live, in the parish of Saint Francis de Sales in Thynri in southeast India, the priests can only visit three, maybe four times a year. The mountains and the torrential monsoon rains make the roads all but impassable from May to October. Indeed, that made their dream seem more remote than ever. But thanks to your help, Father Antony Kattathara writes, the people were able to buy the necessary materials and “everyone joined in”. And so the chapel was finished and consecrated in good time, before the monsoon rains. “Now it is the heart of the village, the centre of their life. Every Sunday the whole village comes together to sing and praise God.” Father Antony thanks you all, on behalf of the whole community: “They cannot read or write, but they have a strong faith.” And all the stronger now, thanks to their dream fulfilled in concrete reality.*



**Johannes  
Freiherr  
Heereman,**  
Executive President,  
ACN (International)

*Dear Friends,*

*The first Mass celebrated by a priest is an uplifting experience. Sursum corda – Lift up your hearts... When a new priest says these words at the beginning of the Preface, and when the congregation responds: “We lift them up to the Lord”, there is a sense of real joy in our Faith, a Faith with a future, become incarnate in the presence of the young priest. This is what I experienced recently, when our own son celebrated his first Mass in his home country. Truly, a first Mass lifts up the heart.*

*Most such first Masses take place today in Africa, Latin America and India. And not always in churches of stone or bricks. Of course buildings do not stop us lifting up our hearts to Christ, but they help establishment a sense of community, a sense of gathering in honour of the Lord, of giving thanks, as is “right and just”. The House of the Lord is the place of Adoration, the place where we lift up our hearts, the place of eternity... That is why the help which, thanks to your generosity, we are able to give for building churches is a work that endures. Nor is it simply a matter of bricks and mortar... No, it is much more than this. The celebration of the Eucharist, as Pope Benedict XVI has written, means: “God has answered. The Eucharist is God, as answering presence.” Now that really is an uplifting answer!*

## Need, love and thanks – your letters

### Sharing our joy with you

*We recently got married, and we want to share the joy of this event with you. In our separate lives before this, we both came to know about the wonderful work you do around the world. And so we decided, in a spirit of sharing, to send ACN and another charity one quarter each of the gifts and money received from family and friends. We thank you for your great work and ask your prayers for all who gave to us.*

### A newly married couple in France

### Absolutely inspiring

*The Mirror Newsletter from ACN is absolutely positively ‘inspiring’. I love receiving it and certain pages and photographs I leave open on my dining table as each time I see it, it inspires me*

*and I read the article again. I have sent the link of the website to various people I know. It can only enhance peoples lives reading this and being involved is a true blessing.*

### A benefactress in Australia

### Giving up his holidays for ACN

*At this time, when people are thinking of holidays, I try to manage without them and give the money saved to organisations like ACN instead. This year, unfortunately, the donation will be less, because my income is considerably lower. Nonetheless, I give it with joy and gratitude, because the work you do is extraordinary – concrete help to sustain and spread the Christian faith in the world. That is what my contribution is for.*

### A benefactor in Portugal

## How to make your contribution to the Church in Need:

1. Go to our Head Office website: [www.acn-intl.org](http://www.acn-intl.org)
2. Click the **donate now** button
3. Either: Go to the National Office of *Aid to the Church in Need* in your country.
4. Or: Make an online donation (if you live in a country without an ACN National Office).



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