



***“The family is where we first learn to relate to others, to listen and share, to be patient and show respect, to help one another and live as one.”***

**Pope Francis,  
Apostolic letter *Amoris laetitia*, 276**

**With the Holy Father in Rome – loving and approachable.**

*Dear Friends,*

On 4 September in Rome, Mother Teresa of Calcutta will be canonised. She has become an icon of charity for our times. Right back in 1959 Father Werenfried van Straaten, the founder of ACN, visited Mother Teresa in India, and he was one of the first people to make her known throughout Europe, together with her community of the Missionaries of Charity and their work for the poorest of the poor. Today there can be few people who have not heard of this “saint of the slums” as some have called her. In 1985 the then UN general secretary welcomed Mother Teresa in front of the plenary assembly of the United Nations with these words: “I do not think there is any need to introduce her. She does not need any words; she needs deeds. The best I can do is to pay her the fitting tribute of saying that she is more important than I am, more important than all of us. She is the United Nations. She is the peace in the world.” Yes, deeds of love are truly deeds of peace – that is something that Mother Teresa often insisted upon. And love begins at home.

“Today the world has been turned upside down. There is so much hatred, so much killing, so much unhappiness, because the world of love, of peace and joy has been broken in families”, so Mother Teresa sadly observed. She saw the absence of love and commitment in the family as the greatest poverty that needed to be tackled. Without the tenderness, the forgiveness,



***The deeds of love are deeds of peace – above all in the family.***

the mutual respect, the loyalty and the willingness to serve selflessly, which is learned and practised within the family, there can be no peace in the world. The welfare of society depends on the health of the family.

It is in the home, in our own families, in our own society and in the workplace, among those nearest to us, that the genuineness of our love is put to the test. Mother Teresa was convinced that loving those closest to us was the way to change the world. For her the home needed to be characterised by three defining qualities: understanding, esteem and consideration.

Every day life offers many opportunities of practising this fundamental way of expressing love, through simple, unostentatious gestures. We need to learn how to be a source of joy for one another. That is not as easy as it sounds, and the family can also be a place in which people inflict deep wounds on one another. But Mother Teresa was convinced that by praying together every difficulty can be overcome. If the family members cannot find time for God, then they will not find time for one another either.

“I pray for you, that you may continue to sow peace and brotherly love, for the glory of God and the good of mankind.” So Mother Teresa once wrote to ACN. With the help of her prayers and your generosity, dear friends, we will continue this work of brotherly love.

With my grateful blessing on you all

*P. Martin M. Barta*

**Father Martin Maria Barta  
Spiritual Assistant**



These young people in Carúpano already love the Child's Bible – now they are waiting to get hold of the YOUCAT.

# Good news in times of crisis

The Bible is the revealed word of God. It tells us about the relationship between God and man. In it we find every feeling and emotion experienced by our human condition – suffering, love, hatred, humility, arrogance, lust, hunger, greed and betrayal.

The Catholic Catechism is the book that tells us how to understand the Bible and live and die by its word. The Catechism is a “Handbook for life”, a summary of the teachings of the Bible and the teachings of the Church – and there is a great need of it, particularly in

countries facing major political crises and social upheavals. Like **Venezuela**, for example, which today suffers one of the highest crime rates in the world, together with food shortages and violent unrest. Amid the instability it is the Catholic Church that is appealing for peace, especially to the younger people. Her message is one of love and hope, and she is conveying this message through a prayer book, designed to complement the now widely-read youth catechism, YOUCAT.

Bishop Jaime José Villarroel of Carúpano in northeast Venezuela has asked our help. He al-



Keeping a firm grip on the Child's Bible – now he just has to learn to read...

ready has the ACN Child's Bible, and the Rosary booklet, but the current crisis is throwing many young people into confusion and has even led some people to a crisis of faith. The bishop's aim is to tackle this, with the help of his catechists, through a major catechetical campaign. For this he needs the books in the YOUCAT series. In the past they would have printed these themselves, but paper is now scarce in Venezuela and books in general have become prohibitively expensive on account of the galloping inflation. And so we are supplying him and his neighbouring diocese with over 10,000 copies of the YOUCAT, the YOUCAT Prayer Book and also the YOU-CAT Confirmation Book. They will be distributed personally by the sisters and lay catechists to the participants in all 33 parishes in their prayer circles and faith-based learning centres. The overall cost of printing and shipping the books comes to **€43,540**.

The Catholic Church in Venezuela has already withstood many crises, thanks to the courageous women and men who have remained faithful to the Word of God and who knew and lived this Word. Today this Word – the Good News of the Gospel – is as urgently needed as ever by the people of Venezuela.

## “Merciful like the Father”



### Returning home – and into the arms of the merciful Father.

This prayer book is ideal for **Bosnia and Herzegovina**. In the dioceses of Vrhbosna and Banja Luka it will be a source of hope both for returning refugees from the war and for those who stayed behind. It is a book for families. Without your help it would have been impossible to print the 6,000 copies they need (at **€2.00** each).



# For the purification of cultures

Reconciliation under the African sun. At a table, or under a tree, what matters is to come together in harmony.



The diocese of Karonga in Malawi is desperately poor. There are few proper roads, too few schools and medical centres, and three people in every five live on less than a dollar a day. Generally speaking, the time from January to April is a season of hunger.

Poverty and hunger drive many people to shocking practices that reflect this desperation. *Kupimbira* is the name of one of these unfortunate customs, whereby poor families have to “pay” the rich by “marrying” their young daughters – often still children – to wealthy older men. For example, 13-year-old Maria was forcibly “married” by her father to a 78-year-old man from the neighbourhood. It is traditions such as these that Pope Francis has in mind when he writes in *Evangelii Gaudium* that “It is imperative to evangelize cultures in order to inculturate the Gospel... Each culture and social group needs purification and growth.” (69).

It is precisely this purification of traditional culture, through the message of love, that the young diocese of Karonga is seeking to achieve during this Year of Mercy. There is so much to do: a number of Catholics are being drawn to the assemblies of the sects, while polygamy, belief in witchcraft, alcohol abuse and the exploitation of widows – in order to acquire their inheritance – are widespread practices. All these things lead to conflict and enmity, often to decades-long feuds between and within families and clans. And so reconciliation, education and enlightenment against superstition and dialogue between and within families are among

It is their future that is at stake. Youngsters at an open-air Mass.

the priorities of the programme. None of this will overcome the underlying poverty, but it will help the people to deal with the issues in a Christian manner. For as St John Paul II has said, “It is from the family that peace will grow for the human family.” We have promised our support for this young diocese – together with €7,900 – for its programme promoting peace and reconciliation.



Praying for the future – their families’ and their own. The school and summer camp open many hearts to faith.

## Summer camps for God

For many young people in Burma (Myanmar) the alternative is unspeakable – drugs, human trafficking and destitution. But the summer camps bring hope to many.

Poverty is present everywhere in Burma, but especially among the Christian families from ethnic minorities. Many people are forced by poverty to move constantly, in search of work, but this often leaves them in still deeper destitution. The Catholic archdiocese of Taunggyi is trying to put a stop to this vicious spiral of poverty by means of a formation programme for children and young people, during a summer camp. “Otherwise, they have no opportunity to

really know and understand their religion and draw new hope from it”, says Father Tarcisio. He has 300 young people signed up for his summer camp, from nine separate parishes. “Many of them no longer see any point in their lives; the destitution stifles all the hope in them”, he adds. In fact the experience of these summer camps, with their mixture of prayer, discussions, teaching, personal warmth and mutual help, has already led to a number of conversions – a real source of hope for the Church in Burma. However, last year the diocese had to abandon the idea of the summer camp, since it simply could not afford the cost. This year, with €7,150 from ACN, that will not have to happen again.



# Doing great good with little money

The population of Africa is growing faster than anywhere else in the world. By 2050 four in every 10 Christians will be African. This continent will determine the future of the world's religions – for Islam is also growing faster here than anywhere else in the world.

**Ghana** is a very youthful country. Half the population is aged under 16. And in the diocese of Yendi in the north, the population is growing faster than the national average. Catholics are a minority here. Islam is dominant in the region, while traditional African religions still exercise a powerful influence. The boys are needed to work in the fields, the girls to work at home. There is a widespread shortage of electric power in the country, and a shortage of books as well. For Bishop Vincent Sowah Boi-Nai the answer is clear: the young must be instructed more thoroughly in Christian ideals. Not only for the sake of the future of the Church in Ghana, but above all “to offer support for the educational mission of families” (*Amoris Laetitia*, 279) and so



Forming the whole character – teaching prayer and communicating knowledge.

that Christians living in this difficult social and religious environment can live and enjoy the freedom of the children of God.

Together with his catechists and some religious communities, the bishop has worked out a formation programme for 500 young people. It will run over two years and is intended to help them avoid the dangers and temptations both of the many different sects and of the modern consumer society: to help them say “no” to drugs, to continue with their schooling, reduce the number of teenage pregnancies, cut down youth crime and develop a healthy sense of self-worth... In short, an exercise in character building that points the way towards the future. In particular, these young people are being taught virtues such as honesty, loyalty, a spirit of sacrifice, solidarity. They are learn-

ing to pray, they are learning to help, and during these two years they are also learning to apply the practical principles of the Catholic faith. Only in this way can they be credible witnesses. And the other thing that is clear to Bishop Vincent is this: “the evangelisation of young people is best carried out by young people themselves.” This is about forming the whole character, in the spirit of what Pope Francis has written: “To foster an integral education, we need to renew the covenant between the family and the Christian community” (*Amoris Laetitia*, 279).

This is something of a model project, and one that lays foundations for the future. And the cost of €4,800 is modest in relation to the ultimate objective. It is not often we can achieve so much good with so little money!

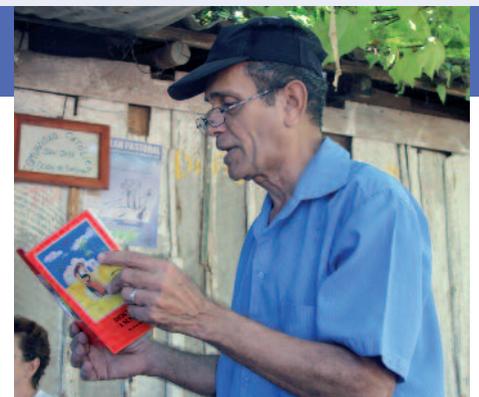


The younger they start, the better – in the Good Shepherd Bible centre in the diocese of Yendi.

## Cuba – starting again from scratch

The regime in **Cuba** is slowly opening up. But, almost 60 years of communism have left behind areas of spiritual wasteland, despite the efforts of the Church.

For the catechists, like this man here in the diocese of Santa Clara, it is often a matter of starting again from scratch. And so their missionary work, especially among the children, starts with telling stories about God. The ACN Child's Bible is especially suitable for this, and the demand for it reflects this. The Cuban bishops' conference is asking us for 18,000 copies, which will cost €16,740. The worldwide publication figures for the Child's Bible have now reached a staggering 51.9 million copies in 180 different languages!





# “A love that is total”



*Sister Alphonsa teaches natural family planning – and these children are very much wanted.*

**There is scarcely another papal document that has been so grossly distorted by the secular media, so crudely reduced to a single aspect (“ban on the pill”) or heaped with such venom as the 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (HV) of Pope Paul VI. And yet this encyclical on marriage and the transmission of human life was a prophetic text, a sober and concise overview of the beauty of married life, through which God “fulfills His loving plan through men”.**

In this encyclical Pope Paul commends natural family planning among other things. It is widely used today in many countries, including [Zimbabwe](#), a country that is among the poorest in the world, where the political situation is far from secure and the future highly uncertain. There may be good reasons here for married couples to reflect responsibly about the number of their children. But how? The archdiocese of Bulawayo has a clear programme, whereby ordinary lay folk, married couples, and also younger people who are sufficiently mature, are taught and trained in methods of natural family planning (NFP). The courses are rooted in a solid scientific approach, and as the team leader, Sister Alphonsa Tapererwa of the congregation of the Sisters of the Child Jesus, explains, the central message that the teaching staff must understand is that the teaching of the Church is not contrary to nature but rather rooted in our very human nature. “NFP demonstrates that the biblical view of human nature is the real solution in the face of the sexual chaos in our times”, she says. The young people on the courses learn that “the human

body is something wonderful and that man is truly created in the image of God”. Hence the three-day workshops also include instruction in the teaching of the Church regarding family planning. And at the same time they include the down-to-earth, practical questions, such as the consequences of artificial contraception, the anatomy and physiology of the female body, what happens when a woman stops (or does not stop) taking the pill, how to avoid

AIDS, how the Billings Method works, how to breastfeed correctly, how a woman can observe the changes in her body, what the menopause means, which values are most important in the family, and which matter most before marriage. All the questions revolve around the theme of life and love, and the most important thing is always the mutual responsibility of the married couple; and it is always about “human fulfillment”, about “a love which is total – that very special form of personal friendship in which husband and wife generously share everything” (HV, 9).

For many people the so-called “Billings Method” of natural family planning is something of a revelation. Not only because it costs nothing, is overall more effective than artificial methods of contraception and leads to a greater sense of self-control, but above all because it enhances the dignity of women. It involves a partnership in love. By the end of the year, Sister Alphonsa and her team hope to be able to extend their work beyond the 20 parishes of the archdiocese. The cost of the programme, including travel, books, teaching materials, etc. is not prohibitive (€21,000 for three years), but beyond the means of the diocese. We have promised to help, because “the question of human procreation ... involves more than the limited aspects specific to such disciplines as biology, psychology, demography or sociology. It is the whole man and the whole mission to which he is called that must be considered: both its natural, earthly aspects and its supernatural, eternal aspects.” (HV 7) ●



*Teaching the logic of married love – the courses are aimed especially at young couples and older teenagers.*



## Thank you, Mother Teresa

*In just a few days time the Church will canonise Mother Teresa. She is one of those saints who lived and exemplified mercy, to the point of making it her personal mission. For to be merciful, as St Thomas Aquinas tells us, does not merely mean having passive feelings of sympathy, but actively endeavouring to help the person suffering. In this sense she is an example for us, and for this we say "Thank you". Father Werenfried, himself a man of active deeds of mercy, discovered her in India and remained good friends with her all his life. Pope St John Paul II often received her and later beatified her. And you too helped her with countless gifts for the poor and needy, knowing, just as she herself said, that "the only thing that can overcome poverty is sharing with one another."*



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

*Dear Friends,*

*Truly, the Spirit blows where He wills. I was able to witness this at first hand when we received an audience with the Holy Father to mark the launch of our campaign for the Year of Mercy. The Pope looked tired. But at the word mercy, the life sprang into his eyes. He positively radiated, the spark of enthusiasm instantly kindled. From deep within him came the burning yearning that people might finally understand just how greatly God loves us, how infinitely wide open are the arms of the merciful Father. I have never seen such intensity as this before.*

*This man is a blessing which has been sent to the Church in our time. Following his predecessor, who so wonderfully encapsulated the profound truth that God is Love, Pope Francis is now telling us how to convey this love to others. Each of us can play our part. First of all in our own lives. His apostolic letter on the "Joy of love" is full of practical suggestions for our daily life. And then, after this, we must all get behind this Pope and carry the message of mercy into the world – into a world so full of need.*

## Need, love and thanks – your letters

### Giving with love

*As usual, I opened the envelope and simply set it aside on the kitchen bench. I never intended to read it but to toss it out when enough time had passed for me not to feel guilty. My giving started with compassion but somewhere those feelings were lost. I was happy to give but never really interested in those I was helping, and I told myself: Its okay, you're giving, you're being "charitable". I was about to drop the Mirror into the bin, when a very strong thought came to me ... "What kind of person am I, who donates freely but with indifference, without love?" So I took the Mirror and prayed the Sorrowful Mysteries, reading a paragraph after each Hail Mary and contemplating Christ's Passion in relation to the stories in it. I read though the entire issue with love for all those in it, both the suffering and those called to serve them. Now I very much look forward to receiving your next issue. With my gratitude and blessings...*

**A benefactress in Australia**

### For the faithful Christian martyrs

*I pray privately and also celebrate Holy Mass with the parish for the Christian martyrs in Iraq, and I want to send you this small offering for their sakes. The marvellous fidelity of these Christians will be a light for those enslaved by the powers of darkness, who spread terror and death among so many innocent and defenceless people. I pray also for the perpetrators; may God have mercy on them!*

**A priest in Portugal**

### Sharing her extra pension

*My pension has just been increased a little. I hadn't expected that. And so I am enclosing a modest cheque, in the hope that it will be of some use to those who need it the most.*

**A benefactress in France**

## 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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