



Praying for the dead. Mass being celebrated at a cemetery in the Philippines.

“We have an immortal soul to save for eternity. Mary calls us to penance and to the prayer of the Rosary. It would be foolhardy not to respond to her request.”

Father Werenfried van Straaten

Dear Friends,

We often tell you about the suffering Church which needs our help. But that is the Church we see in this world. However beyond this life there is what we call the “Church Suffering”, which is entirely dependent on our help. The Communion of the Saints includes not only the visible Church here on earth, which we also call the “Church Militant”, but also the “Church Triumphant” – the Saints in Heaven – and the “Church Suffering” which refers to the Holy Souls in Purgatory, who are the ones who still need our prayers.

After death when we stand before the Face of God, not only

will all good things we have done be revealed to us, but also the past sins and imperfections of our lives – the unrepented sins, the consequences of our sins, the good things we have failed to do, or done only half-heartedly... But when we stand before God, and if we are truly open to His love, then we will have only one desire, namely to love as He has loved us. We will clearly see our lack of love and be filled with remorse. All we will want is to be totally healed and transformed. With whole-hearted gratitude we will embrace all the painful, yet necessary, purification that this

involves, as a gift of Divine Mercy – just as a sick man accepts the need for a serious operation in order to be healed. However, after our death we can do nothing more for ourselves. Only with the help and prayers of others who are still on earth and still able to do good can we be helped to pass more quickly and more easily through God’s purifying fire.

In his encyclical *Spe salvi*, Pope Benedict XVI described the wonderful communion we



The purification of Purgatory – a gift of God’s loving Mercy.

share with the faithful departed: “The belief that love can reach into the afterlife, that reciprocal giving and receiving is possible, in which our affection for one another continues beyond the limits of death – this has been a fundamental conviction of Christianity throughout the ages and it remains a source of comfort today. ... No one lives alone. No one sins alone. No one is saved alone. The lives of others continually spill over into mine: in what I think, say, do and achieve. And conversely, my life spills over into that of others: for better and for worse.”

Dear Friends, to pray for the souls of the faithful departed is a work of mercy, and one that is often forgotten. And yet we can help these souls, with every little act of love, every sacrifice and prayer, however small it may be. And the most profound help is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. There are countless souls in Purgatory who are have been completely forgotten and for whom no one prays. But we can help them, and they too can make intercession for us and will prove to be good

friends to us. That is why St John Vianney, the holy Curé of Ars tells us: “If we only knew what power these good souls have over the heart of God and what graces we can receive through their intercession, they would not

be so abandoned by us. The prayer for their release from Purgatory is, after the prayer for the conversion of sinners, the most pleasing prayer to God.”

My heartfelt blessing on you all

P. Martin M. Barta

Father Martin Maria Barta
Ecclesiastical Assistant



Source of life and love

Christ exhorts us: “Remain in my love!” (Jn 15:9). He has given us the Holy Eucharist – his Golgotha and the gift of his presence – so that we can indeed remain in his love.

No grace is greater than the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. In 2015 you gave 1,431,380 Mass offerings for priests, helping one priest in every nine around the world by your offerings. Their profound gratitude for this is expressed in their numerous letters to us, promising joyfully to offer these Masses for you and your intentions. In most cases the money you give them in the form of these offerings is used for vital basic necessities, not just for the priests themselves but also for

others still poorer than they are, and for the sick and elderly. And sometimes this money is also invested in the spiritual life.

This is the case with the 29 priests of the diocese of San Martín in **Argentina**. They have written personally to thank you for your Mass offerings, which meant they could take part in a theological seminar on God’s mercy. Father José Giacomello is 85 and was ordained in 1957 by the then Patriarch of Venice, who later became Pope John XXIII. A year later he arrived in Buenos Aires. It means so much to him to gather with his brother priests and experience the solidarity of the universal Church, the Communion of the Saints. Father José Calnera also warmly thanks you for this opportunity “to revitalise the sacerdotal bond with my fellow priests”. Other priests tell us about the “difficult economic situation” in the country – without actually mentioning that Argentina is on the brink of bankruptcy.

Your Mass offerings allows many priests to survive in **Crimea**. People are unable to buy very much as they can only afford the cheapest of goods, says Bishop Jacek Pyl of Odessa-Simferopol. “Unemployment is incredibly high, and food imports from Ukraine have been blocked. Travelling in and out of



Indonesia



Nigeria

the peninsula by car is practically impossible.” Nobody knows how long the current situation will last. So now he is planning an emergency aid programme to help the poorest families here. But it won’t be possible without the priests. Already they are sharing all they have with their parishioners and with the poorest of the poor – and when they have nothing else, then they console them, providing their prayers and counselling. The auxiliary bishop has asked for more help, and we have sent your Mass offerings of **Aus\$17,400**. For Jesus has said, “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Mt 28:20). In your kindness you are helping to fulfil this promise, and thereby helping the people of Crimea both materially and spiritually. ●



Argentina



Liberia

To the end of the world ... Priests celebrating Holy Mass for you and your intentions in Indonesia, Nigeria, Liberia and Argentina.

What are Mass offerings?

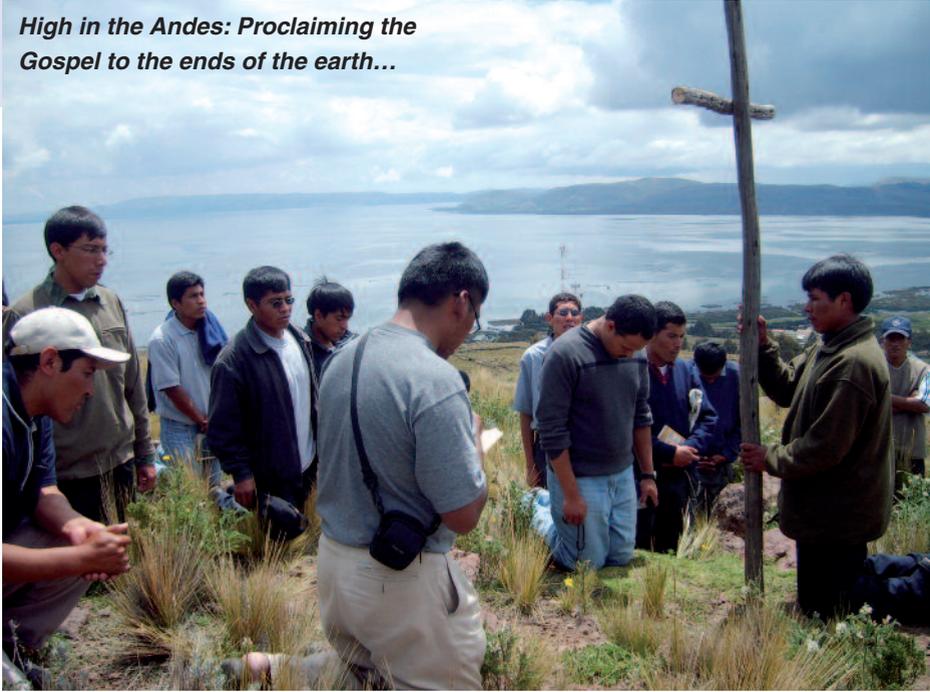
A Mass offering is a gift of money for the support of a priest, in return for which he celebrates Holy Mass for our intentions.

We cannot “buy” the Mass or the graces it brings, but the offering made unites the giver more intimately with the Holy Sacrifice that is offered. This custom spread in the Middle Ages, but dates back to the 2nd century. To avoid any abuse, Canon Law (945-958) closely regulates the process of accepting, administering and applying Mass offerings. These may be for individual Masses or for groups of three, nine or 30 Masses. The bishop or religious superior is responsible for observing these regulations.



Preaching and witness

High in the Andes: Proclaiming the Gospel to the ends of the earth...



“There is nothing more beautiful in life than belonging for ever and wholeheartedly to God, and giving one’s life to the service of one’s brothers and sisters.” So says Pope Francis. His words are a manifesto for us, a manifesto for mission. For mission means bringing God to others.

Beautiful and fulfilling though this work may be, it is not easy. Again and again it comes up against the barriers of nature and human limitation. In the prelature of Juli (Peru), at an altitude of almost 4000 m (13,000 ft) in the Andes, over 80 small communities live and work. The priest can visit only every six or seven weeks. The roads are too steep, too long, too stony. But even here, at the ends of the earth, the Good News of Christ must be preached. Over half the homes here in the Peruvian Altiplano have no electricity or running water, and one person in four is illiterate.

If Father Percy Rojas Ballón was not there in person he could not proclaim the Word of God. He has to be physically present to celebrate Mass, administer the Sacraments, help with their social and practical problems. And

he cannot do so without a tough, all-terrain vehicle. After 11 years his old jeep is on its last legs – to the point that he finds it less stressful to travel on foot. But then people would be deprived of his frequent visits. And besides, a new vehicle would be of great use to the prelature in many other ways. The mission must keep moving forward... We have promised them **Aus\$33,100** for a new vehicle.

Mission means more than simply proclaiming the Gospel. It means bearing witness. “You are not only ‘teachers’; you are above all witnesses... [to] Christ in your own charism”, Pope Francis told missionaries last year. For the *Daughters of Our Lady of the*



Water and Word. In 2003 missionaries brought fresh hope to the Gumuz people in southeast Ethiopia – with well water and the water of Eternal Life. They are working on a three-year social and pastoral evangelisation programme for children and young people. We have given **AUS\$43,600. As you can see, it is bringing great joy.**



A beacon of love providing light to a new life: Sister Marie holding the newborn child of a single mother.

Most Sacred Heart in the **Democratic Republic of Congo** this means bearing witness to the infinite love of God through their lives and their work. Some 41 of them are doing just this in Mbandaka, in the northwest of the country, by caring for street children, single mothers and young girls, and orphans.

The ongoing warfare in the country, that has now lasted over 20 years, has torn many families apart, destroyed the schools and devastated the social support systems. There is no one but them to care for the lost and abandoned. But the convent where the Sisters live is around 15 km from their social and health-care centre where they minister to the people. In urgent cases, sometimes they cannot get there in time. So they have started to build another branch of the convent, close to the centre. They need our help to continue the work. We have promised them **Aus\$116,200**. The wonderful witness to the love of God in the life and work of these sisters must be helped to continue. ●



Where once the blood of martyrs flowed

Arunachal Pradesh is a mountainous region blessed by the morning sun. But this region on the far north-eastern tip of India is also described as a “forgotten land” as state-sponsored development programmes do not reach as far as this region. But the Church has not forgotten the 32 tribes living on the frontier with China, Burma and Tibet – she is helping them. And many are seeking baptism.

Arunachal is mission territory. But once things were worse than they are today. Up until some 23 years ago Christians were still being persecuted, their churches burned down, their crops destroyed. Indeed, around the middle of the 19th century there were even headhunters abroad; missionaries were beaten and tortured, and the blood of martyrs reflected in the red sunlight of the mountain dawn. But, towards the end of the 20th century, some of the missionaries invited the local people to visit their mission outpost on the border with Assam. Many came, saw the goodness and joy that the Good News of Christ can bring, and took the message back to their own villages. Now they say, with wholehearted conviction, “Jesus is the best doctor of all. When we call on the name of Jesus, we do not have to pay anything; we

“Jesus is the best doctor”: Celebrating Mass in the mountain dawn.



In ever-growing numbers: young and old, gathering for catechetical instruction in Neotan.

don't have to give a chicken, or a hen.” Despite continuing persecution, almost 150,000 people have been baptised in the past 30 years, and the number is growing daily. In the newly established diocese of Miao the largest Catholic village is Neotan. In the past the villagers were animists, or in some cases members of a Protestant community. Then in the year 2000 the village elders came to the conclusion that the Catholic Church was the true Church of Christ. Over 500 people joined the elders in being baptised.



Beyond repair: the old Mission truck of the diocese of Miao.

Overnight, the former Baptist church became a Catholic church, and the local Catholics built a new chapel for those Baptists who chose not to convert, “so that they could continue to meet and pray together”.

By now the persecution has ceased. The seed is beginning to sprout. But all the natural and physical challenges of this mountainous region remain, the heights and distances that cannot be compassed in the time available without a suitable and sturdy vehicle. The old pickup truck, which Father Felix and Father Esack use to transport the sick to the nearest hospital – a journey of four hours covering 160 km – and they also use it to bring food to the three communities of religious sisters and visit the villages to celebrate Holy Mass, baptise and hear confessions – this old workhorse is now in the repair shop every couple of weeks and no longer worth the expense. “We feel guilty”, says Father Felix, “in using the savings of the children and their families on maintaining this vehicle – even though they give them gladly, knowing that without it we could only visit them rarely.” More and more children and families are now waiting for the priests to come with the Good News. And so, in your name, we were happy to promise them the **Aus\$14,200** they need for a new pickup truck. For this too is a means of sowing the seed of faith in this mission soil. ●



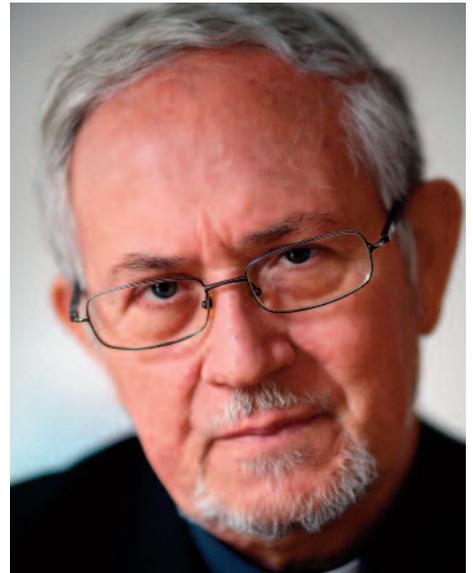
Once persecuted, now sought out and listened to: a priest explaining the Gospel.



“Blessed are the peacemakers”



“This is my body”: Celebrating Mass in Isabel on the island of Basilan.



Father Sebastiano d’Ambra:
“Peace is our vocation”.

The priest is a peacemaker, par excellence. Through the Sacraments, and especially through the Eucharist, he enables us to engage in a personal relationship with God, a dialogue between the creature and his Creator.

For Father Sebastiano, the founder of the Silsilah movement on the island of Mindanao, in the **Philippines**, this relationship, this dialogue is the founding principle of his peace movement. “Dialogue begins with God and brings people back to God”, he says. He strives to pursue dialogue with all religious groups and especially with the Muslims. For “deep in the heart of every individual there is always a place of goodness. That is what we must reach.”

Unfortunately, radical Islamists cannot grasp this way of thinking, which is simply love of our neighbours and our enemies. Twice already Father Sebastiano has survived assassination attempts, and twice the centre of his movement, which has already

won over many thousands of Christians and Muslims to the cause of dialogue and peace, has been attacked. Unfortunately Mindanao is also home to the violent Islamist terrorist organisation, Abu Sayyaf. Its campaign of terror has gripped the city of Isabela, on the island of Basilan, and in particular Bishop Martin Jumoad and the 115,000 or so Catholics of the Catholic prelature of Isabela de Basilan. They make up a quarter of the population of the island; the rest are Muslims. The priests and religious live under constant threat; many have already been abducted, like Father Eduardo and Father Bernardo, while others, like Father Rhoel Gallardo and Father Rene Enriquez, were even tortured to death. Six years ago Islamists attacked one village, burning and killing. And in Isabela, the capital city of the island, a bomb destroyed the Cathedral of St Isabela.

The goal of Abu Sayyaf is to kill or drive out all the Christians. Instead they are staying put and seeking dialogue with their neighbours. But they are poor, and can barely afford to support their 14 priests. So Bishop Martin is urgently seeking our help, in the form of Mass offerings for his priests,



Bishop Martin S. Jumoad:
“We stay, and we pray.”

and above all our prayers that they stay strong in their mission and continue supporting the Catholic faithful on the island. We have given **Aus\$23,200**. He has no illusions, but agrees with Father Sebastiano: “I know the Lord is at work. I am just an instrument; may his will be done.” Their message is clear: “Peace on earth to men of goodwill” (Lk 2:14). “I do my best”, says Father Sebastiano, “but then I add, Lord, may you bring everything to perfect completion!” This perfect completion is found above all in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Nowhere on earth is peace more perfectly present. So your help for priests, especially in crisis areas, is truly a work of peace, more extensive and enduring than anything we can otherwise achieve.



Dialogue with everyone: a group of young people of the Silsilah movement.



“We are liberated by your sacrifice”

Your Mass offerings are also missionary works. This point is made by Father Marcelo of the diocese of Barra in Brazil in his letter thanking ACN. Your sacrifices, he says, liberate the priest from the poverty that makes life a battle for survival – “above all when they are given with such joy as they are by you”, so that “we can work all the more to spread the Good News and work to extend the Kingdom of God on earth”. Father Joel (photo) for his part deeply appreciates “the brotherly love that moves you to help and support us”. We have received many other letters from the priests and missionaries of this diocese. And in all of them one can sense their profound joy, despite all the difficulties of their mission, in belonging to a worldwide community of love. All of them express their heartfelt thanks, and all of them will remember you and your intentions at the altar.



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

Dear Friends,

Just a few days after the murder of a priest in Normandy, we were visited by a bishop from Niger, in the Sahel region. Christians there are no more than a tiny minority. He told us how, for the first time, Muslims and Christians in Niger prayed together, both in a mosque and in a Christian church. He described this as a prophetic sign. There is at least a glimmer of hope in the fact that in the Islamic world the awareness is also growing that violence is not of God, God Is Love.

Now this glimmer of hope must become a hope lived in the lives of all people of goodwill. This is the task we are working on in many different countries, and thanks to your generosity, the Church can indeed visibly embody this hope. This is happening in all kinds of projects, both great and small. But it is most visibly present in the Sacrifice of the Mass. St John Vianney, the holy Curé of Ars, once said that suffering “is the most powerful of all prayers, for it always moves the heart of God.” And so we can say that in empathising with the sufferings of others and expressing the Merciful Love of God in all we do, we are strengthening hope. Thank you for your generosity, which gives us fresh courage.

Need, love and thanks – your letters

Flowers that do not wither

My husband died recently. My children and I have decided not to spend money on flowers, which next day will wither and be thrown out. Instead we are sending money to ACN. That way it will be transformed into flowers that do not wither away. Enclosed is a cheque for 350 Euros.

A benefactress in Portugal

Sharing the little they have

We will be all the more committed to spreading the mission of ACN, in the certainty that many other people are also committing themselves to helping this blessed work, which is making it possible to spread the message of Jesus to the ends of the earth. Our community will likewise share the little we have, in order to help with your projects – not only because you are sup-

porting our projects, but also so that the dreams of others can become reality too.

From a religious sister in Brazil

Heartfelt thanks

A simple word to say “Thank you” from the bottom of my heart for all that you do for the Church in need... for all your works of Mercy. Infinite thanks for being there and for doing all the good that you do for the needy. Infinite Grace and blessings on you all....

From a new benefactress in Canada

The testimony of persecuted Christians

Just recently we watched a video compiled by ACN, with testimonies of persecuted Christians in Syria. Our grateful thanks for everything you are doing!

From a religious sister in Kazakhstan

Where to send your contribution for the Church in Need

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