



## Aid to the Church in Need

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The early days: "rucksack priests" bearing gifts of bacon and love.

***"Do not condemn others, but do what you can. Pray that God may grant us holy priests for the Church in West and East. Pray without ceasing, and help wherever you can!"***

Werenfried van Straaten

*Dear Friends,*

Peter asks Jesus the question: "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus tells him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven." (Mt 18:21f). And yes, it was with this call for reconciliation – a quite scandalous one in the period immediately after the war – that our charity, now the pontifical foundation ACN, first began 70 years ago.

Our founder, Father Werenfried van Straaten was convinced that the love of God is greater than all the hurt and bitterness we can cause. Trusting in God's grace, he dared to call for the highest expression of love of his fellow Christians; the love of Christ in fact. A love that never ceases stooping to serve one's neighbour and draws the best out of the soul, as it were, "compelling" it to conversion. Love like this – selfless, humble, and therefore mighty – can move mountains. So often in the course of the past seven decades ACN has been confronted with the bitterest of human suffering. And just as often we have experienced miracles of love. During this coming year we will describe many of these moments. But as we begin

this anniversary year we must first of all acknowledge, on behalf of all our staff and co-workers, that "we are merely useless servants and have done no more than our duty". For who can ever say he has done all he possibly could have done? Yet despite our failings, we believe utterly in the love of God – a love which can save the world. This and this alone is the servant's reward. Even the elimination of the need is not what ultimately counts, but rather the ability to



***"It is not the elimination of the need that ultimately counts, but loving to the limits."***

love to our very limits, reflecting the infinite love of the Lord. A journalist once challenged Mother Teresa: "You are 70 now. When you die, the world will look just the same as it did before. What will really have changed after all the efforts on your part?" Without the least impatience she replied, "You know, I have never imagined I was capable of changing the world. I have only ever attempted to be a droplet of pure water in which God's love can be reflected. Does that seem too little to you?" Then she turned again to the reporter and added,

"Why don't you also try to be a droplet of pure water? Then at least there would be two of us."

Dear Friends, you have been faithful to ACN over so many years and have never let us down. Thanks to your help we have been able to help others. As we begin this new year of 2017 we would like, together with you all, to renew this covenant with Christ for a further 70 years. Together let us strive,

70 x 7 times a day, to forgive, 70 x 7 times to ask for mercy, 70 x 7 times to restrain our selfish impulses, 70 x 7 times to give of ourselves and 70 x 7 times to dip into our pockets without the right hand even

knowing what the left hand is doing. Then very soon the promise made 100 years ago by Our Lady in Fatima will be fulfilled: "In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph and an era of peace will be granted to the world."

In gratitude, I wish you all a blessed and joyous New Year.

*P. Martin M. Barta*

Fr Martin Maria Barta  
Ecclesiastical Assistant



# “To be a holy priest in the future”

Without priests there are no sacraments, without sacraments there will be no Church... But this simple logic is preceded by another stage. Without seminarians, no priests. Seminarians carry within themselves the future of the Church.

So it follows that by supporting seminarians we are supporting the Church's future. The country in Latin America where we support the most priests is **Peru**. This is still a developing country, with modest growth in the cities, despite the suburban slums on the outskirts. But in the countryside and especially in the Andes, the mainly indigenous Aymara people still live in poverty. But there are many vocations: a real treasure for the Church. In the seminary of Our Lady of Guadalupe, in the Altiplano, or high plateau, of Chucuito Province there are 48 seminarians currently training for the priesthood. This preparation includes not just the study of theology and philosophy – for at weekends they also go out into the villages, giving religious instruction, visiting the sick and the lonely, and reaching out to the young. “We are learning to serve”, says Wilber Sucapuca Jaila, “and we are trying to satisfy the people’s hunger for God”. His fellow seminarian Benjamin Huanca adds, “We don’t have much, but it’s not about material things. We have God in our hearts, that’s what counts.” And Richard Pari Chambi speaks not only for these three seminarians but for all the others, when he says, “I am so happy in the vo-

*“Here we are, Lord”: on pilgrimage near Chucuito in the Peruvian Andes.*



cation that God has granted me. I feel the desire within me to be a holy priest in the future.”

We are helping them to reach this goal. With a grant of **€180** for each seminarian, we are helping the seminary to fill the holes in its budget. The total cost for each seminarian is around **€2,100** for the whole year, which includes accommodation, food, medical care, books, etc. “The most important and fundamental thing for us is prayer and Holy Mass”, writes 19-year-old Denys Lerma Parillo. When he heard God’s call in his heart at first he thought, “I am not worthy, but nevertheless I am happy to be given this precious gift. And so I said, Here I am, Lord.”



*Singing God’s praises: seminarians in Lurin, Peru.*

It is the love of God – the love of Christ – that moves these 48 young men, here in the mountains of Chucuito, just as it does the other 9 in the seminary of St Augustine in Iquitos, in the rainforest of the Peruvian Amazon, and the 20 others in St Joseph’s seminary in Lurin, not far from the 8-million-strong metropolis of Lima, the Peruvian capital. Their circumstances differ widely, but the ultimate reason for their response to God’s call is the same in every case. You are strengthening their motivation with your generosity. And the other thing that is true, always and everywhere, is this: Without love for Christ, there would be no seminarians...



*Freshly ordained deacons: seminarians with their bishop in Iquitos, Peru.*



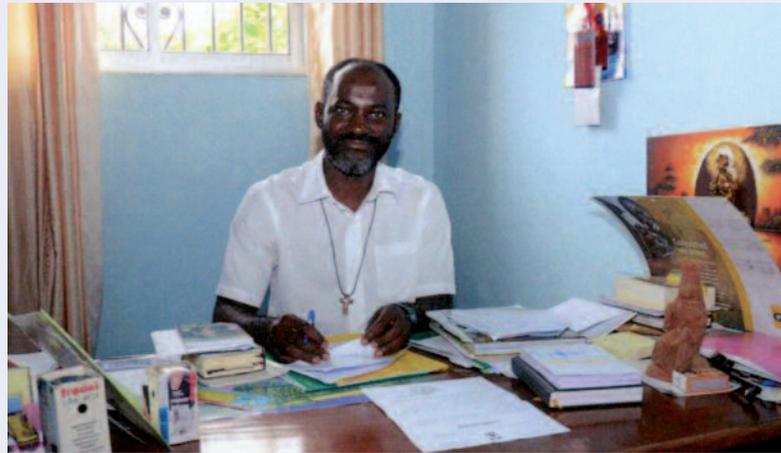
*Study time: talk on grace and the sacraments. Colombia.*



# Deeply rooted in Christ



*New challenges come and go, but the Gospel is valid for all time. Father Santos looks after the younger novices.*



*Truth is, he could spend every euro three times over: Father Alphonse is in charge of the formation in Yaoundé.*

**St Paul was also a seminarian once. After his conversion, the future prince of apostles also spent some time studying and praying in the desert (cf Galatians 1:17) before beginning his missionary preaching.**

Prayer and study are seminarian's fundamental duties. So he needs an appropriate environment (for St Paul it was the solitude of the desert) and the appropriate support. The Missionaries of the Most Holy Hearts of Mary and Jesus spend considerable time during their six-year formation learning about other cultures and ways of life. Their congregation originated in Spain and today it is present in Africa and Latin America. A major part of their formation focuses on intercultural understanding, empathy and openness to other customs and cultures – while at the same time striving for a deep rootedness in their relationship with Christ

and a solid personal formation. In the seminary chapel in Yaoundé, **Cameroon** the seminarians of the congregation pray four times a day, and they also study seven hours a day. On top of this there is time for sport, garden work, communal meals, etc. Central to everything, however, is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The rising bell wakes them at 5 a.m. and from 10 p.m. onwards the great silence is observed.

Currently, most of the congregation's vocations come from Africa, which is why the novice house is situated in Butare, Rwanda and the main seminary in Yaoundé,

Cameroon, where 23 young men currently pray and study. In later life they will take the Gospel message out across their continent, and perhaps reawaken awareness of it in Europe too. The congregation, with its 130 members, is still relatively small and until recently had always managed to cover its own costs. But now, with the growing numbers of vocations in Africa, combined with the consequences of the economic crisis in their mother country Spain which has brought with it a fall in donations and income, the community is struggling to make ends meet. They have asked our help with the training of the 23 seminarians in Yaoundé, and we have agreed to contribute **€11,500**. Who knows, maybe there is a future St Paul among them? In any case, it will be a sound investment in the future. ●

## A small gesture, but a big impact

**How many thoughts, emotions and devotions this little prayer book must have inspired by now! For over 60 years it has been used by the students and priests at the seminary of St Teresa in Taunggyi, **Burma (Myanmar)**.**

But now it is slowly falling apart (see photo), the binding is disintegrating, pages have already been lost here and there – and moreover, there aren't enough copies to go



round. To say it is "well worn" would be something of an understatement! As for the prayers inside, of course a prayer book never truly becomes obsolete, since every prayer reflects the light of eternity. But there are many new and beautiful prayers, many new devotions as well. The seminarians have

already compiled and arranged some of these and now they plan to print them in a new prayer book. This new booklet will serve for many decades to come, guiding their prayers and opening their hearts to God. Can they count on you to cover the cost (**€800**) of printing this little manual? ●



# God's messengers among us

**One in every 10 seminarians around the world is supported by ACN. Most of them are studying in Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe. Without your help there would be fewer priests in the world. Our aid covers many aspects, from scholarships, via construction aid through to assistance with the cost of printing religious literature.**

In a message of greeting to the candidates at the Benedict XVI Interdiocesan Seminary in Kendoumayah, **Guinea-Conakry**, marking the consecration of the newly opened seminary chapel, Emeritus Pope Benedict wrote as follows: "In December 1944, when I was called up for military service, the company commander asked each new recruit what his chosen profession would be. I replied that I wanted to become a Catholic priest. The recruiting sergeant told me I'd better choose a different profession, since in

the new Germany there would be no need for priests any more. But I knew even then that this new Germany was finished and that after the terrible devastation it would need priests more than ever before. Admittedly, the situation today is altogether different, but there are still many people who believe we no longer need priests any more; that it is a calling without a future. What an error! The priest is not a manager of the community", Pope Benedict told them, "He is God's messenger among us."

It is this same spirit that permeates the prayer and studies of the 73 seminarians who are currently training here in Kendoumayah. The first ordinations to the diaconate have already taken place and the first messengers from the seminary will be sent out this year to bear witness to God's love for his people. Today's world greatly needs this message! And there could be still more of these messengers, both here in Kendoumayah and elsewhere. But there is

not enough space at present; one of the dormitory buildings is still unfinished, meaning that some of the seminarians have to sleep in one of the classrooms. This makeshift solution needs to end as soon as possible. We have promised **€30,000** so that the work can be finished. And so that this world may be blessed with more Catholic priests.

Seminarians come from every corner of the earth. In **Papua New Guinea** you are supporting 17 seminarians, in **Ecuador** another 40 in the seminary of San Pedro in the Archdiocese of Portoviejo, another 34 in the seminary of St Pius X in Istmina, **Colombia**, 105 in the seminary of Fenoarivo in **Madagascar**, and 49 seminarians of the Basilian Fathers in **Ukraine** – to name just a few. They will renew the face of the earth for they know, thanks to a thorough formation, that "the true success of our mission is a gift of grace", as Pope Francis has reminded us all. ●



*The world needs priests. Archbishop Vincent Coulibaly with the first deacons from the seminary in Kendoumayah.*

*Taking a break from their studies, there's time for a game of basket ball. Madagascar.*



## Solidly Catholic

**It is unthinkable for a priest to be without a Bible – which is why the seminarians in Sarajevo, in **Bosnia Herzegovina** will each be given a copy of the Jerusalem Bible.**

The Dean of the Catholic faculty there believes it is the most suitable version for them, as it contains additional explanatory notes for their future pastoral work. Also important for these future priests in this

region, so marked by warfare and ethnic cleansing, is theological literature that deals with the moral aspects of violence and ideological manipulation and examines the ethical, historical and demographic aspects of interreligious relations. Such texts already exist; they are sound and solidly Catholic. But now they need to be printed in book form. That is where we come in. The Bible and the relevant theological literature are part of these seminarians' spiritual tool kit.



*Called by the Lord: priestly ordination in Sarajevo cathedral.*

We have therefore promised **€20,000** towards the cost of this project. ●



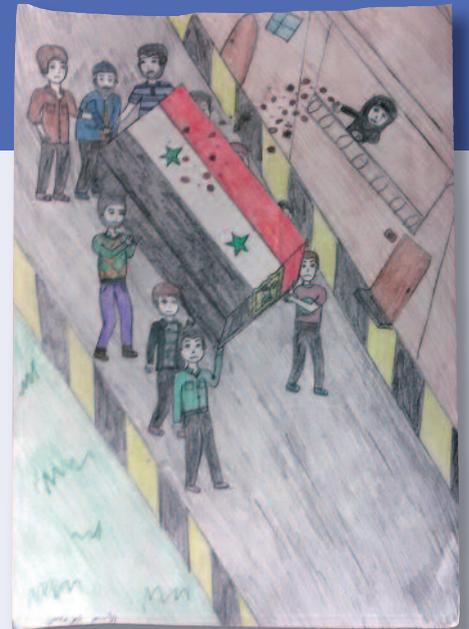
# Painting, singing and praying for peace



Tanks instead of family cars, clouds from bombs instead of sunlight, rubble instead of houses, wastelands instead of meadows, exile instead of safe homes – many children in Syria and Iraq have known little else but war.

Children love to paint the sun. Psychologists claim it represents a father's authority and love. But their fathers are either dead or fighting in the war. And it is not the sun but the shadow of death above them. In Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Latakia and everywhere else they are praying that the rumble of the tanks and the thunder of the guns will fall silent – that peace can come, so that they can go to

school without fear. They still have hope – a hope reinforced by you, the generous benefactors of ACN who are helping them via priests, religious sisters and bishops, showing the children and their families that they are not forgotten. Responding to an initiative of ACN, over a million children from 2,000 schools in Syria have painted pictures as a message of peace to the world. Some of the bishops have acted as spokesmen for the children and brought their appeals for peace to Europe, conveying them personally to senior political figures in the EU. Their messages reflect high hopes. The politicians of Europe will not be able to fulfil them. Peace is the work of justice, as we already read in the prophet Isaiah (cf 32:17), who also describes for us the effects of this justice, namely "quietness and trust for ever. My people will abide in a peaceful habitation,



in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." Sadly we cannot fulfil their hopes, but we can at least bring them some consolation, helping to bring a little sunshine back in to their lives through our gifts and keeping their hope alive. And we can also keep them in our prayers.





*The good, the true and the beautiful – all these are somehow inextricably linked. This is the experience of the parish of Our Lady of Grace in São Paulo, Brazil. Their freshly renovated parish church*



*is located at No. 274 Serra de Capivarucu Street. Thanks to your generosity it is, as Father Francisco Reginaldo writes, “still more harmonious now and incomparably beautiful”. And this is helping the people “to come together better and pray more intensely”, he tells us, adding that he has also already noticed that many more people now visit Jesus in the Tabernacle, go to confession and come to Holy Mass. At the same time the number of baptisms and weddings has noticeably increased. The people are happy and demonstrate a healthy pride in their church and in its close links with ACN. And moreover: Father Francisco has actually found several new benefactors for ACN. “They cannot give much, but then it is all the more important that we in our own poverty should strive to help others who are in still greater need than we are.”*



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

*Dear Friends,*

*This year ACN will be 70 years old. I’m sure most of you will have read or heard about its dramatic early beginnings. The initial idea came from Rome, when Pope Pius XII asked the abbot of the Norbertines to try and do something for the displaced German refugees. He immediately thought of the young Father Werenfried in the abbey of Tongerlo in Belgium, who responded with the now famous article “Peace on Earth? No room in the Inn” in the Christmas 1947 issue of the Abbey newsletter, which marked the beginning of our relief work.*

*It was likewise at the prompting of Rome that the aid initiatives spread worldwide. Pope John XXIII asked for help for Latin America, Pope Paul VI for Asia and Africa, Pope John Paul II for the Church in Russia. Hence the ‘institutional re-founding’ of ACN by Pope Benedict XVI as a pontifical foundation, five years ago, was a logical progression. Today ACN has national offices in 23 different countries and helps in more than 140. Looking back over these developments today, we can only marvel and say, “The Spirit blows where he wills...”. In fact we can see him blowing above all in the hearts of our benefactors. Without your generosity, ACN would not be what it is today. Thank you for your faithful charity!*

## Need, love and thanks – your letters

### Baking for the Middle East

*Bless you in your work of assisting the Christian refugees in the Middle East. Our parish priest asked our faith formation classes to collect donations for baskets of food and essential items needed by the refugees. Children brought in coins, and moms and catechists began baking for a bake sale at church. We are pleased to be able to send a cheque of \$176.33. We hope that you will be able to fill two baskets and help on a third for those in need.*

### Members of a parish in the United States

### Ordained a deacon, thanks to you

*I would like to express my appreciation to ACN, because I feel touched by what you do, especially for us, the Church in*

*Africa. It was by the grace of God and through your help that I was ordained a deacon this year in August in Tororo archdiocese, Uganda.*

### A future priest in Uganda

### The right decision

*Thank you for your letters of thanks, which you send me after every donation. They are just a few lines, yet they show me how deeply ACN is imbued with love and joy. Your words are a blessing, as they show me that it was the right decision to choose your charity! Please use my donations for the purpose indicated, for they are gifts given with deep passion and conviction.*

### A benefactor in Naples, Italy

## 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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