



UKRAINE:

MINISTERING TO WAR-WEARY CHRISTIANS

An Albertine Brother preparing soup for the homeless

ACN has been sending Mass stipends to support Priests in Ukraine who continue to serve a war-weary and frightened people. Almost 1,900 Catholic Ukrainian Priests are receiving these stipends.

One such Priest is Fr Andriy Bodnaruk, who ministers both to families in the capital and to soldiers at the checkpoints. He also celebrates Mass in the shelters and organises activities to help distract the children during this war.

Wearing a bulletproof vest over his cassock, he pays pastoral visits to those who have chosen to stay, whether in homes for the displaced or in their own residences, such as a 90-year-old blind woman who lives alone with her daughter.

Fr Andriy takes Holy Communion to those who want it and, besides this spiritual nourishment, distributes aid packages to the neediest, which he purchases with funds he receives from Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), as well as other organisations that are helping on the ground.

“I am doing what I did before: I serve

God, the Church and our people. I remain close to the ailments that afflict people. I especially try to be close to those who are fighting, and to those who are dealing with stress and anxiety”, says the young Catholic Priest.

Fr Andriy is not alone in his service. Hundreds of Priests, in Ukraine like him, are carrying out this social and pastoral work. In one of the underground stations in the capital, which currently doubles as an air-raid shelter, Priests from the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church regularly celebrate Mass. One Priest celebrates, while another hears confessions. During these difficult times, the pastoral work of



A priest visiting and helping a sick old man

Priests is aided by Nuns, who often chant the hymns during the liturgy.

“I sincerely thank Aid to the Church in Need for their financial support during these difficult and very challenging times. I want to assure you that every cent spent in these times of war is a great contribution to world peace”, he said. ✚

If you wish to receive this leaflet by post please send us your contact details via SMS on 7999 9969



Aid to the Church in Need

ACN MALTA



LEBANON:

OFFERING SUPPORT AND COMFORT

Archbishop Charbel Abdallah in the warehouse where the food packages for hundreds of thousands of Christians were stored

Living in constant danger as they stay to support their respective Christian communities through this challenging time, Priests and Church leaders in Lebanon need our help.

They are standing strong and courageous, bringing vital aid to people caught in the crossfire between the Israeli army and militant groups, particularly those living near the Israeli border who endure daily rocket fire and extreme poverty.

Ms Marielle Boutros, ACN project coordinator in Lebanon said: "None of them – whether Bishops, Priests, Religious Brothers or Nuns – have left the region.

"They feel responsible and are staying with the people in their need, while offering them support and comfort."

She stressed that even the Priests of the Alma el Chaeb and Quzah parishes – who regularly find themselves in the middle of air strikes – have remained in place to support the few remaining Christians.

Maronite Catholic Archeparch Charbel Abdallah of Tyre himself visits the parishes affected by the war every Sunday and occasionally also during the week to meet the faithful and to "see what basic needs they have" and tries to help them "with

our modest means".

The Archeparch said that he has found that these visits "encourage the people enormously – they sense that the Church has not abandoned them."

Often, in order to survive, Priests serving in poor and remote areas rely on what the local parishioners put in the collection plate. In such cases, the faithful themselves are struggling to survive and therefore, they look up to their Priests for basic assistance.

Archeparch Abdallah told ACN that those living in 10 parishes of his archeparchy can no longer bring in their harvest because their fields are now located in a conflict zone.



Fr Chady Khoury of the diocese of Baalbek administering the Sacraments

He highlighted that fires caused by phosphorus bombs have destroyed cultivated fields and fruit trees, depriving locals of their only source of income.

He explained that the local Church – one of the poorest in Lebanon – depends on outside support. This is needed to help these Christians to stay in these communities. He expressed deep gratitude for ACN's longstanding assistance.

The Archeparch concluded: **"Many thanks to all the benefactors for their generosity"**.



HAITI:

WE TRY TO KEEP HOPE ALIVE

A Priest with some members of his Christian community

Your kind support through Mass stipends is the only hope of sustenance for Priests and church workers in Haiti who are grappling with an increase in violent crimes against the Church.

Many parishes have been forced to close and church workers have been kidnapped as 80 percent of Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince is ruled by criminal gangs who also target Priests and church workers, Fr Baudelarie Martial tells ACN. Many dioceses and communities have suffered from theft and aggression.

On Easter Monday, an armed gang attacked the Minor Seminary of Saint-Martial in Port-au-Prince, run by the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (The Spiritans), destroying and stealing anything they could find.

Fr Reynold Joseph, the Provincial of the Spiritans, tells ACN: "For over six hours, the bandits continued to plunder, burn and steal. Four cars were set on fire, others were vandalised, the school's offices were set ablaze – the principal's office was looted, as was the residence of the community and the school itself", with items such as "refrigerators, solar panels, batteries, a water purification system, mattresses and IT equipment" being



Bishop Pierre-Andre Dumas at a church in Anse-à-Veau-Miragoâne Diocese after an earthquake

stolen.


Despite these challenges, the local Church remains undeterred in its mission.

"We are in a risky position, but as a Church, we must have the Faith and the strength to accompany these Christians and all those who suffer. We will continue to do so, even at the risk of our own lives", says Fr Baudelarie Martial.

He stressed: "As Pastors of our people, we try to keep hope alive. The Church is

there to support its people".

He added that the Church "cannot surrender. We must keep moving forward and restoring hope".

Archbishop Max Leroy Mésidor of Port-au-Prince, expressing his gratitude for ACN's help, said: **"Without ACN's help, it would be very difficult for the Church to function because Priests receive almost no salary while many Christians are impoverished"**. 





NIGERIA:

HELP FOR THE HELPLESS

Fr Andrew with people displaced by attacks in Bokkos



Fr Andrew visiting victims after attacks last Christmas

Fr Andrew Dewan dedicates his life to caring for Christian families fleeing violence in the Bokkos area, northern Nigeria. For many years now, villages and communities in this region have been targeted by violent attacks from Fulani militants.

Last Christmas, the militants attacked 26 villages in Bokkos claiming the lives of more than 300 Christians. On Easter Monday, they struck again, attacking three communities in Fr Andrew's Parish of St Thomas the Apostle in Bokkos, massacring 10 Christians including a pregnant woman and her unborn child.

Fr Andrew has seen it all. He is living through these traumatic experiences

alongside the faithful - burying their dead, visiting and comforting affected families, providing the Sacraments, giving pastoral care and counselling and even meeting the basic needs of many who flock to him for help.

Following the Christmas massacre, 16 camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) were set up in Bokkos, mostly by the Church, to provide shelter for those affected by the attacks.

Fr Andrew, who has been assisting in caring for the IDPs at St. Thomas's Catholic Church in Bokkos, explains how the local Church, through him, stands in solidarity with the affected families.

He tells us: "The local Church has been providing shelter, food, clothing and other basic necessities to IDPs (internally displaced persons) and other Christians struggling to survive.

"They feel helpless, but as Priests we continue to encourage them to remain hopeful and resilient."

Every support given to Priests is a support to Christian children, families and communities who depend on them for help. Mass stipends provided through ACN, helps Priests like Fr Andrew to continue supporting helpless families who have nowhere to go and no one else to turn to for help. ✚

