



Syria: New-born in Christ through Baptism.

Dear Friends,

This month I would like to reflect on the Christian's fundamental vocation. Saint Paul gets right to the heart of it when he writes: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." (2 Cor 5:17f). Saint Paul makes it clear that a Christian's vocation lies first and foremost in recognising and living the new life that Jesus has won for us and bestowed on us in baptism. Only in this way can we experience, through faith, that our true home is in heaven (cf. Phil 3:20), and that we have come "to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, ... and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect" (Heb 12:22f). If we are to live out our Christian calling, we must first "seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." (Col 3:1).

The great crisis of faith of our time is ultimately due to the fact that many of the baptised do not truly believe that they are "children of God" and thus also "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:16ff).

Our Christian calling is also fundamentally rooted in the command of the risen Christ: "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation." (Mk 16:15).



"Our faith grows stronger and more joyful when Christ is confessed and proclaimed".

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Mt 28:19f). This command is the very heart of our Christian mission. On innumerable occasions I have seen how people's personal faith withers when Christ is not confessed and proclaimed. On the other hand, our faith grows

stronger and more joyful when we cling to this commandment.

Dear Friends, Baptism and Confirmation are the gateway to the Church's treasures of salvation. They confer the gift of eternal life, and enable us to fulfil Our Lord's missionary mandate. ACN is supporting not only the priests and consecrated religious who serve this mystery in a special way, but we support the lay apostolate too – whether by training catechists in South America and Africa, backing Christian holiday camps for children and teenagers in Syria and Lebanon, supporting Christian media work and many other activities.

Please help us – with your prayers, your witness, your commitment and your gifts – so that children and adults alike can benefit from this great gift of God, given for our salvation.

Father Anton Lässer CP
Ecclesiastical Assistant



How young people are finding happiness

Every one of us wants to be happy – and our deepest happiness is found when we live out God’s plan for us. Each and every one of us has our own specific calling in life. Ten years ago, the Jeunesse Bonheur (Happy Youth) School of Evangelisation was established in **Benin**, West Africa. Here young people aged between 18 and 30 spend a year learning how to serve God with joy.

Those taking part deepen their faith and their personal relationship with Christ, and at the same time learn how to pass on to others what they have experienced themselves. They go to visit schools, families, prisoners, the sick and the elderly. In this way some of them have discovered their own vocation, some were called to the priesthood or religious life, while others have gone on to start Christian families or to put their professional skills at the service of the Church.

Wilfried from Burkina Faso is a journalist, today he works in the local Church’s media office and is in the process of set-

ting up a radio station. He is also involved in the youth apostolate. He admits that five years ago, before going on the faith course, his goal in life was to earn a lot of money. But his perspective changed. “The life of prayer taught me to put God front and centre. I spent a wonderful year there”, he tells us. He even managed to banish some of his own demons, since previously he had an aversion to the physically and mentally handicapped. But as part of his training, he spent two weeks living with them. “Society generally sees these people as ‘crazy’, but I came to understand that all they need is a little human understanding and love from us”, he recalls. It was an experience that has left a deep impression on him.

Christelle is 27. She was going through a difficult phase when she went to the “Jeunesse Bonheur” school. She wanted to be able to reflect on her life and deepen her love for Christ and serve him better. At first she found it hard to sit silently in prayer and she felt as though Our Lord was indifferent to her suffering. But gradually she learned to listen to God in silence. Today she confesses, “I don’t know



Young and joyful: “Oh come, let us sing to the Lord!” (Ps 94(95):1)

just how much work the Lord was doing, silently, in my life. I came away stronger and more at peace from the experience, because I learned to tell myself, every time I was offended or insulted: ‘It’s not so bad, Christ suffered still more.’ So now I find it easier to forgive. In particular, it was the outreach to people in need that helped me to recognise the grace of God in my own life and to understand how very much I need to thank Him for what I do have.”

Thanks to your help we were able to support the building of the school of evangelisation from the very start of its ministry, and this year we have promised another €20,000. Would you be willing to help, so that more young people can learn to serve God with joy in their lives?



Searching for their true calling.



SOS from Lebanon

“I have never regretted becoming a nun”, confesses Sister Madeleine Bassil. For over 30 years now this Dominican Sister has been running a school in Ghosta, near Beirut – but now the economic crisis is threatening her life and work.



They need your help!

‘Sister, this is all I have. I have to feed my children?...?’

For her one thing is certain – “The religious life is one of total self-giving. We expect nothing for ourselves.” But they still have to pay the salaries of the teachers, not to mention the teaching materials...

We are providing emergency help for the 163 poorest Catholic schools in Lebanon. We have promised the school in Ghosta €9,090, so that Sister Madeleine won't have to send her children home.



Sister Madeleine: a life of faith and devotion.

But, “giving up” is a phrase this 78-year-old nun doesn’t understand. “I tell myself that the Lord has willed that I should dedicate myself to this ministry, right up to the last minute of my life. So long as I have the strength, and am in good health, I must carry on”.

But now the need is immense. “Can you imagine that 13-year-old children have to work, in order to earn a few cents to help their families? We have orphans here and children from families that are suffering real poverty. The parents give what they can, but many simply cannot pay anything any more. What am I to say when a father comes up and tells me,

“Are these young men crazy?”

In the diocese of Cancún-Chetumal in Mexico, the faithful are suffering from a grave shortage of priests. On average, each priest looks after more than 9,000 souls. This is a vast region, whose mainly indigenous population is poor, and there are even places where the Gospel has not yet been proclaimed. And yet there is hope...

Diego is 21, and even as a young lay missionary he had already seen how much they were longing for a priest in certain regions. Seeing this need, he felt that God was calling him. Erik, his fellow seminarian, discovered his vocation as part of a Catholic youth group. But when he confided in his mother that he wanted to become a priest, she answered, “You’re crazy!” Because of that Erik initially took a different path. But although he landed a good job after his studies, he continued to hear the call of God. So in 2018 he left everything and entered the seminary.

Forrest (20) already knew he wanted to be a priest when he was just 13. He is happy in the seminary. “While here I’ve learned



These young men want to be priests – but society doesn't always understand.

about the beauty of community, prayer and study. I really hope that you will continue to support us, so that our seminary can turn out good and holy priests.”

Even though many people think that becoming a priest is crazy, Erik, Forrest, Diego and the 24 other seminarians here are convinced that you see things differently. The seminary needs another €18,000 so these young men can continue their training this year... Will you help them?



They draw strength for their journey from the Eucharist.



“I want to be a holy priest!”

The Church in Africa is blessed with vocations. One in every three men training to be a priest today is in Africa. In Tanzania, in Saint Augustine’s Seminary, Peramiho, 304 young men are responding to the call of God.

Gabriel Chrisantus is already a deacon. He has 14 brothers and sisters. His parents are farmers. His family didn’t want him to become a priest, but he tells us, “The opposition of my parents and relatives has only strengthened me in my vocation, since I believe that something so precious is sometimes also subjected to the hardest trials and obstacles. I hope my dream of becoming a good priest will be fulfilled by Almighty God. I see the priesthood as a sacred treasure house that is not being fully utilised by many of the faithful in the Church. If I had to choose between all the wealth of the world and ordination to the priesthood, I would choose the priesthood, with all the fervour of my heart. I want to be a holy priest.”

Baraka Josaphat has no family now. His parents are divorced and remarried. They left their son in the care of his grandparents. While still a young boy, a priest



“Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!” (Ps 50(51):2)

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impressed him with his fervent love of God, and when Baraka confided to his grandparents that he wanted to become a priest, they were convinced that God was calling him. But now they have both died. In the holidays, when his fellow seminarians go home to their parents, Baraka has to stay behind in the seminary, because there is no one waiting for him at home. But his goal is still clear, he wants to become a priest “to lead people to Heaven”.

Joseph, Christian and Emmanuel are more fortunate, as their parents are delighted with their sons’ vocations. They are praying for them and supporting them spiritually. Joseph tells us: “By their faith, words and deeds, my parents make sure that a Christian atmosphere prevails at home and that the seed of faith is sown in every member of our

family. My family is a great support for me in my vocation.”

We have supported this seminary for many years. The rector, Father Castor Goliama has now asked us for help to buy a minibus. The seminary is in quite a remote area and does not have a vehicle. They need one for various activities, including ferrying seminarians to different parishes to gain practical experience, helping and supporting the priests, giving catechetical and religious instruction and meeting with the various parish groups. And there are other occasions too, when the seminarians have to take part in events outside the seminary.

They are still €56,000 short of the cost of the 29-seater minibus that they so desperately need. We can help them, if enough of you support us!



Listening to the Lord in silent prayer.

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The seminary teaches young men about community as well.

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Studying for the great mission ahead.

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Pakistani women, praying to God, the true source of their dignity.



A safe refuge for girls

40 years ago the Good Shepherd Sisters in Lahore, northeast Pakistan, founded a centre for vulnerable girls and young women, where those in distress could be sheltered and lovingly cared for around the clock.

In Pakistani society girls and unmarried women who have been abused, raped, or have “unwanted” pregnancies are shunned, and sometimes even threatened with death. Here, with the Sisters, they find safety, staying until they can make a new life for themselves. The Sisters support them spiritually and psychologically, providing medical care and where necessary also legal support. In many cases the Sisters even manage to talk with their families and enable these girls to go home again.

While staying with the Sisters the girls learn practical skills such as handicrafts, gardening, cooking, and also how to read and write. “In this way they not only gain skills that will help them in the future, but also grow in self-confidence by being able to develop their own God-given talents”, Sister Ruby explains. “It is important to be able to restore their sense of self-worth and dignity.”

After her parents died, 13-year-old Merab* and her younger sister had to live with relatives. She was taken to the shelter by

*Not their real names



Two of the Sisters, and the young women in their care.

a priest, because she was raped by her own uncle and kicked and beaten by her aunt. On one occasion her aunt even stubbed out a cigarette on her seven-year-old sister’s breast. Now both girls are safe in the care of the Good Shepherd Sisters. Merab is already starting to dream of a better future and says “I want to be a doctor, so that I can help other girls like me to have a better life. I don’t want other girls to have to go through the same problems that we had.”

18-year-old Reshida* was abused by her own father. A drug addict, he threatened to kill her if she told anyone about it. And when she nevertheless confided in her mother, her mother refused to believe her.

Asia* (28) was in a relationship with a Muslim man. When she became pregnant, he refused to take responsibility, and her own father also refused to help – even though Asia had always financially supported her family through her work. So she was left on her own. Her aunt gave her the bus fare to Lahore, and now she is with the Sisters, waiting to give birth to her baby.

As well as supporting this shelter, run by the Good Shepherd Sisters in Lahore, ACN is also helping other religious congregations in Pakistan. Sisters are protecting vulnerable girls and young women from violence, giving them a basic education and helping them to appreciate their own worth and dignity in the eyes of God. But they need your help.



How you are helping the homeless...

Thanks to you, we have been able to provide €35,000 in catechetical literature so that Brazil's homeless can find comfort in the Good News of Christ.

Father Giampietro Carraro of the "Mission Bethlehem" in Sao Paulo, has written to explain: "Only very few people understand what an enormous potential there is in our brothers and sisters on the streets. They have the right to know the fundamental Christian truths. Your help with the printing of this little book, with daily meditations on the word of God, is truly an instrument of grace. There are around 2,250 people benefiting from it today. When they discover Jesus and His Gospel, these people can give up violence and addiction and experience the inexpressibly beautiful feeling of being renewed and empowered to live a new life." Father Giampietro Carraro should have enough booklets for the next four years of his ministry.



Our heartfelt thanks to all of you who helped make this possible!

Need, love and thanks – your letters

An old friend of ACN

Now is the right time for me to say a thousand thank yous, and may God reward you for sending me your ACN newsletters. I have known ACN since my youth in the 1950s, after Father Werenfried first founded it. But in recent years I had somewhat lost sight of it. I am delighted and grateful to God to find that ACN is still going strong and I'm interested to know how and where you are helping in the world. I keep you and all your work in my prayers.

A religious Sister in Austria

Poor, but happy and at peace

For many years now I have kept all the religious Brothers and Sisters in the world in my daily prayers. Ever since 8th December 2016, when I made the consecration to Our Lady composed by Saint Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, I resolved, whenever possible, to pray the 20 Mysteries of the

Rosary for the intentions of Our Lady and the needs of the world every day, leaving the disposal of the graces and fruits of this prayer entirely in her hands. Although today I am materially poor and unemployed, I have never felt more happy or at peace, because I believe deeply in the power of prayer, especially when it is offered through the hands of His and our Holy Mother, the Mediatrix of all Graces, in accordance with her promises at Fatima.

A friend and benefactor in Portugal

Thanks for your information on the website

We really appreciate and are moved by the information and feedback provided on your website. The news updates are great and provide truthful information on the agonies and challenges for the Church on the ground.

A married couple in the UK



Regina Lynch

Executive President,
ACN (International)

Dear Friends,

Sometimes we can think that having a vocation is limited to a call to the priesthood or to religious life. However, I am sure that most of us know Catholic teachers or nurses or even politicians whose choice of career is a calling driven by their faith.

One Catholic politician, whom I was privileged to meet, was Shahbaz Bhatti, one of the few Christian ministers to serve in the government of a majority Muslim Pakistan, where Christians suffer discrimination and even persecution. I met Shahbaz when he was working for the Pakistan Bishops following a terrible earthquake in the north of the country in October 2005. The victims of the earthquake, whom he was helping were for the most part non-Christians, but he was ready to serve everyone in need, regardless of their faith.

From a young age Shahbaz wanted to follow in the footsteps of Christ and later in life his most ardent desire was to defend Christians falsely accused of blasphemy against the prophet Mohammed, a crime punishable in Pakistan by imprisonment or even death.

Shahbaz's desire to imitate Christ meant that he was ready to pay the ultimate price and to die for his faith. He was assassinated in March 2011 at the age of 42. The cause for his beatification was opened in March 2016. Let us pray for this.

Regina Lynch

Where to send your contribution for the Church in Need

Please use the envelope. Aid to the Church in Need, 39B Mdina Road, Attard ATD 9038; Tel: 21487818; Fax: 21586257

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