



Argentina: Fathers Martin, Gabriel and Juan, celebrating Holy Mass for the intentions of ACN's benefactors.

Dear Friends,

The final encyclical of Saint John Paul II begins with these words: "The Church draws her life from the Eucharist." This is a truth which "recapitulates the heart of the mystery of the Church", as the Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life" and "contains the Church's entire spiritual wealth".

So I would invite you to always entrust your intentions to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in which Christ's sublime act of redemption is powerfully present.

When you make a Mass offering, the priest celebrates the Holy Eucharist for your intentions. These may be very personal – such as for your marriage, your children, your departed loved ones, for help in a particular need or some other special intention. Or you may have Mass offered for more general intentions – for example, for peace, for the pastors of the Church or civil rulers, or in honour of the saints and angels.

Making Mass offerings is rooted in a very ancient tradition of the Church. The first Christians made offerings and brought gifts of food for the support of their priests and also the poor, when they gathered together for worship.



"It is a very special act of love and mercy to intercede for the Holy Souls through the Sacrifice of the Mass."

Similarly, *Aid to the Church in Need* is currently supporting more than 40,000 priests and their work in the world's poorest countries with your Mass stipends. Without your offerings many of them could not fulfil their pastoral duties, because both priests and people lack the most basic of necessities, and their dioceses are unable to give them regular support.

Dear Friends, we are only too happy to pass on your Mass stipends, as they do a great deal of good – whether you request single Masses, a Triduum (three Masses celebrated on successive days), a Novena (nine Masses) or what is known as a

Gregorian Mass (30 Masses). A Gregorian Mass, which is celebrated for the departed souls, dates back to the time of Pope St Gregory the Great, who had daily Masses celebrated for a monk who had died. At the end of 30 days, the monk appeared to him in a vision and assured him that he had been freed from the pains of Purgatory.

Our faith tells us that departed souls in Purgatory can no longer do anything for themselves and are entirely dependent on the intercession of the living and the mercy of God. There is nothing greater we can do for them than the celebration of Holy Mass, making it a very special act of love and mercy to intercede for them through the Sacrifice of the Mass.

So I cordially invite you to consider having Mass offered, and promise you my prayers and blessings.

Father Anton Lässer CP
Ecclesiastical Assistant



Witnessing to God's Mercy

The Shalom Catholic Community was founded in Brazil in 1982 and today is active in more than 20 countries. Its members include both priests and laity and are completely committed to evangelisation. We are supporting 30 priests of the Shalom Community in Brazil with Mass stipends.

One of these is 51-year-old Father Jairo, who has been wheelchair-bound ever since 2015, when he fell off scaffolding during repair work in his parish church. Yet, despite this turn of events, he is still filled with joy: "Many people think you can only be happy when everything is going well. But I am happy and very conscious of God's grace – and it is precisely because I find myself dependent on others that I can reach out even to people who are a long way from the faith, since it makes them ask themselves why I should be happy. So I see it as divine providence. Even sitting paralysed in a wheelchair, I can see what blessings God draws from my service to him, through prayer, night vigils, celebrations of the Eucharist, confessions, and also the Faith courses that I give. I rejoice to see that God can make use of my priesthood. How good it is, despite my weaknesses and my sins, to see the hand of God intervening in my life!"

Along with Father Jairo, the other priests of the Shalom community are always available to administer the sacraments to the faithful. And in doing so they experience



"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world."



The Eucharist – medicine of immortality.



The Spotless Victim, offered for the salvation of the world.



Even in a wheelchair, Father Jairo devotes himself body and soul.

God's mercy again and again. Father Francisco tells us about a man "who had been lying at home for five years, in a deep coma. In the end they called me to anoint him with the Sacrament of the Sick. He died just two hours later. I saw in this just how great God's mercy is in reaching out to His children, for after this man had been fighting so long for life, he was waiting for the sacrament in order to depart in peace. And in this way I too experience the goodness of the Lord, who uses such inadequate instruments as the means of displaying His glory."

Father Michel agrees. "I have seen how God brings healing, strengthens our faith

in Him, reconciles us to Himself and gives a new direction to the lives of those who receive the sacraments, together with the certainty of his love. I would like to thank all your benefactors for supporting us in our mission, since in this way we directly experience the divine providence that is present and active in our lives and our mission. May God richly reward and bless you!"

Once again this year we intend to pass on your Mass offerings to the 30 priests of the Shalom community in Brazil, so that they can continue to bear witness for so many to the grace and mercy of God.



These priests celebrate Mass for you!



On their way to see the faithful: three Oblate Fathers in Bangladesh.

In many parts of the world where the faithful are too poor to support their shepherds, our benefactors' Mass stipends are absolutely vital. Not least in southern Asia.

Father Herat Mondol ministers in the Chit-tagong Hill Tracts of south-east **Bangladesh**. He tells ACN: "We are working here among the indigenous tribes who live in the hill country. This is a very remote region, where we travel mostly on foot. We cross rivers and climb mountains in order to reach the faithful. There are only a few small towns and villages where there are chapels, and so we usually gather the villagers in some place where we can celebrate Mass and teach the catechism, usually in their homes."

His brother priest, Father Paulus Murmu, adds: "These people have basically been robbed of their human rights. They don't formally own any land of their own, so they suffer attacks by the loggers, who come in and cut down the rainforest. In this situation I minister to our people pastorally. Despite the many dangers and tensions they face, their Faith remains strong. I am very grateful to you for the Mass stipends and only too happy to



India: Mass at the Morning Star Seminary.



India: Father Henry celebrating Mass for your intentions.

celebrate Masses for the intentions of our dear benefactors."

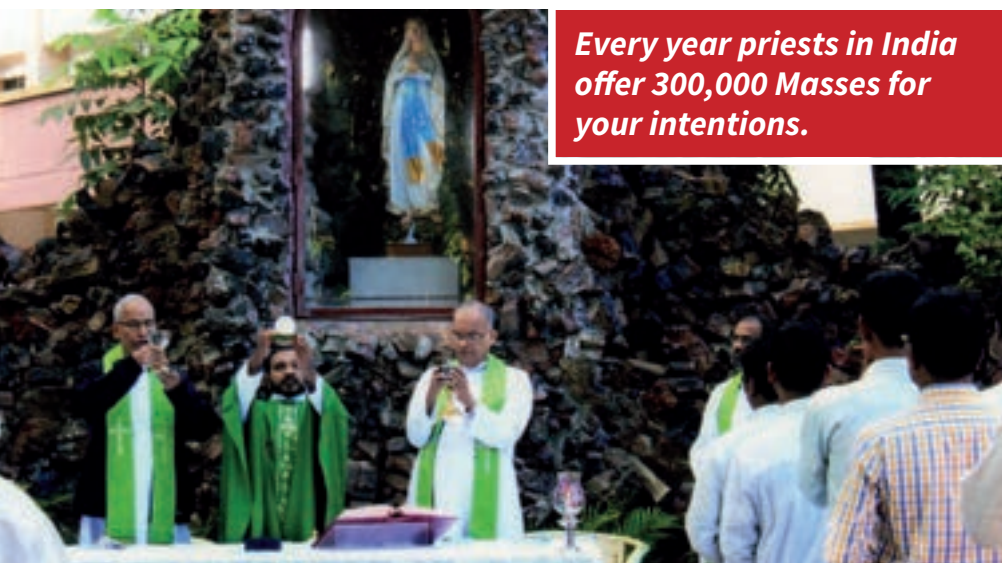
The priests teaching in seminaries are also most grateful for your Mass stipends. The spiritual formation of the young seminarians requires the greatest care and attention, and the priests involved do not have time for parish work so they get no support from parishioners. But you are helping by providing regular support for the priests at the

seminary in Barrackpore, in the **Indian** state of West Bengal, among others. The seminary has the beautiful name of the 'Morning Star Seminary' as it is dedicated to the Virgin Mary (see Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 3). Here, young men from 30 different dioceses and several religious communities are training for the many challenges they will face as priests in India. Many of them will be sent to work in the extremely poor and remote regions of north and northeast India, where the Catholic faithful belonging to ethnic minorities still long for pastors of their own.

Father Sebastian Rodrigues is one of the priests responsible for the seminarians' formation. He writes, "Celebrating the Holy Mass and experiencing the Lord in the Eucharist is a great joy. It makes me happy to experience just how good God is to me. Thank you for the care and concern you show us by sending these Mass stipends. I am praying for you, and I ask you likewise to pray for my ministry."

These priests, along with many others, look forward to celebrating the Holy Eucharist for your intentions.

Every year priests in India offer 300,000 Masses for your intentions.





“Even if they kill me, I will not die!”

*One village, after an attack.
Below, an unexploded grenade.*



Heavily armed rebels have attacked the villages.

Italian Carmelite Father Aurelio Gazzera became famous in the Central African Republic as “the man who turned aside the bandits’ guns”. The children sing songs about him, and he has been internationally recognised for his courage in conducting dangerous peace negotiations with the rebels. Now he has been appointed by Pope Francis as coadjutor bishop of the country’s Bangassou Diocese.

Life in his new diocese is far from easy. Large parts of this vast diocese in the southeast of the country are held by rebel groups and attacks still occur regularly. Due to the danger, two parishes had to be closed. It is also a very inaccessible region, covered with dense rainforest. So, although the capital Bangui is “only” 750 km (480 miles) away, in practice it can only be reached by aeroplane. Travelling by road takes a good two weeks, and in the rainy season the journey is quite impossible. Yet despite all these difficulties, this is a diocese with many vocations and a thriving Church.

Immediately after arriving in Bangassou, newly ordained Bishop Gazzera spent a few days in a parish where, only shortly before, the rebels had burned down numerous houses and murdered at least 12 people. “The people are deeply traumatised. I wanted to encourage them and their priests”, he explains. But simply

offering consolation is not enough for him. “A shepherd defends his sheep from danger. And so I will do everything possible to continue dialogue with the various rebel groups”, he says. “Within my limited capacities, I want to be a sign of peace.”

In the past he has managed to persuade the rebels to withdraw more than once, saving the lives of many people.

Indeed, some of these rebels have repented of their crimes and begun to live law-abiding lives. Nevertheless, on several occasions, he has almost been killed. When his car was being pelted with stones and he was threatened with Kalashnikovs, he prayed the Rosary. “The rebels are always heavily armed”, he says, “but I went to them unarmed and without any armed escort. True strength lies in weakness and love. When you react to violence without



Bishop Aurelio Gazzera, after his ordination.

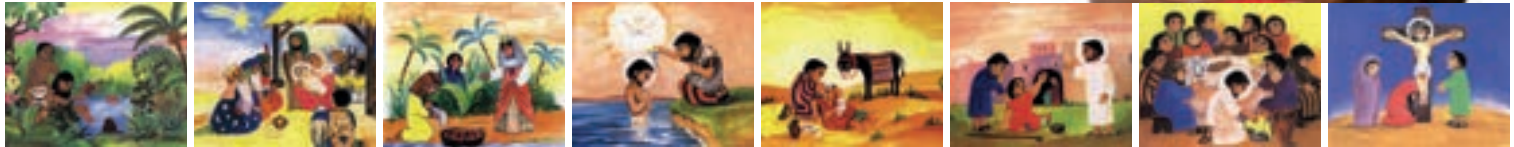
violence, you are strong. Besides, I have a trump card – prayer, and the presence of God.” He draws his courage from the Eucharist and his faith in the resurrection.

“Even if they kill me, I will not die”, he says, with the deepest conviction.

In many countries, brave priests and religious are risking their lives every day to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel. ACN is supporting them in this. Bishop Aurelio wants to thank all of you who are helping missionaries like himself. “The needs are immense; and your help is precious, since by your prayers and your practical help you encourage us to continue in our ministry.”



Our Child's Bible celebrates its 45th birthday!



ACN has been publishing and distributing its little Child's Bible *God speaks to His Children* since 1979. By now it has been translated into 194 different languages and in a total printing of over 51.7 million copies – all thanks to your help!

On occasion, this little book has transformed lives. As a child, Rolando Montes, from Oca in the Camagüey region of **Cuba**, was given a copy by his parish priest. In the socialist-dominated Cuban state, Bibles were a rare treasure. Today he himself is a priest. He even took his Child's Bible with him to the seminary. "It was through it that I fell in love with God, and this God awakened in me the vocation to the priesthood", he explains. Now, as an adult, he reads the Sacred Scriptures in their entirety, but he nonetheless confesses, "This little book remains my favourite Bible,

because through it I came to know Jesus Christ."

Many children have been known to press this little red book to their hearts and kiss it when they receive it. Some of them have never seen a book before, and many would scarcely have dared to dream they would ever own one. The brightly coloured illustrations immediately appeal to them, and there is also an accompanying poster series that can be used for teaching purposes. Together, they are a simple but effective way of conveying the Gospel message to children.



Zimbabwe: They want to learn more about Jesus.



Guatemala: The Child's Bible has arrived!



South Sudan: They greatly rejoice to receive the Child's Bible.

In Northwest **Kenya**, for example, *God speaks to His Children* is used by Sister Lillian Omari among the Turkana people. Like the better-known Maasai, the Turkana also live a traditionally nomadic lifestyle. Many have adopted a more settled way of life now, but the majority of them still roam with their herds of cattle, going wherever there is pasture and water to be found. Most speak only their own mother tongue, and so the official languages of Kenya, English and Swahili, are foreign languages to them. But they can understand the Child's Bible which has been printed in their own Turkana language – and it is loved even by those who cannot read or write. "Given the colourful illustrations in the book, they can

look at it, leaf through it, handle it and of course, even listen to the Word", explains Sister Lillian. It is one of the means that have helped us to teach the faith in this region. We are grateful to all ACN's benefactors who have supported this project and made it possible for the Child's Bible to be translated into so many different languages."

It is important that the children do not encounter the word of God as something foreign, but as something familiar, in their own language, as a voice that speaks directly to their hearts.



Brazil 2007: Pope Benedict XVI with the 10 millionth copy, in Portuguese.

God speaks to His children in every language, so we want to continue translating this little book into even more languages and give it to as many children as possible. Will you consider making a special gift for the 45th Birthday of our Child's Bible, so that the image of Christ can come alive in the hearts of even more children?



Now they're praying more than ever!

A Million Children Praying the Rosary

Every year, on 18th October, this ACN-sponsored initiative brings a million children together to pray the Rosary – truly an event not to be missed!

All over the world, children and families are invited to join together to pray the Rosary for peace in the world. For us, this precious prayer is a real source of hope. In the face of the growing conflicts, terrorism and economic crises that plague our world, it is vital that we come together in solidarity with the victims of war and terror.

And so we invite you to join this international campaign of prayer for peace on 18th October this year. Please visit our webpage <https://acninternational.org/millionchildrenpraying/>, and register yourself and your children, or grandchildren, as participants.

We want as many people as possible to join us! Now more than ever, let us come together and entrust our prayers for unity and peace in the world to the intercession of our Blessed Mother.



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Regina Lynch
Executive President,
ACN (International)

Dear Friends,

I grew up in Ireland with a wonderful tradition of having a Mass celebrated not only for the repose of the soul of the dead but also for the soul of the living. We would offer what we called “Mass bouquets” for wedding anniversaries, birthdays, or for someone’s success in exams. In other words, it was a way to celebrate something wonderful. The message of congratulations would be conveyed in a greeting card in which was written that a Mass was going to be celebrated for me. As the recipient of such a “bouquet” I was moved to know that a Mass somewhere – in my home parish or in a missionary country – was being celebrated for my intention. What a great gift that infinitely surpassed any beautiful flower bouquet.

Thankfully, this tradition continues in many countries today and brings not only joy to the recipient, but it also ensures that the celebrant has a small income. This is particularly important for the priests, who receive Mass stipends through ACN and who are totally reliant on the offerings of their faithful, who themselves often struggle to survive.

So, the next time when you wish to gift something precious to someone you love, remember the Mass bouquet!

Need, love and thanks – your letters

The gift of the Holy Eucharist on ACN Benefactors’ Day

What a Gift you gave us on the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. What a grace! What joy, that Holy Masses are celebrated for us by priests in 140 countries. I pray every day for these priests, for you and for all our brothers and sisters around the world. Thank you for so much goodness! God’s richest blessing be with you!

A religious Sister from the Netherlands

Help in hard times

I hope to be able to help you more in the future. Sadly, the Church is going through difficult times, yet hopefully the message of Jesus will continue to reson-

ate and the Church will recover. Anyway, I have not lost my faith – quite the contrary! Keep up the good work! God bless all that you do.

A friend and benefactor in Belgium

Thank you!

My warmest thanks to you for your good wishes on my birthday! It was my 90th in fact! I had a very good day. I’m only too willing to go on supporting you for as long as I can, particularly with Mass stipends. This is important to me. I am grateful that I can still manage to get to daily Mass, and can also help with various tasks in our parish. All this is a gift from God.

A friend and benefactor in Austria

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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Pass this leaflet on to your neighbours, friends or leave it at the Parish Church for others to review.



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