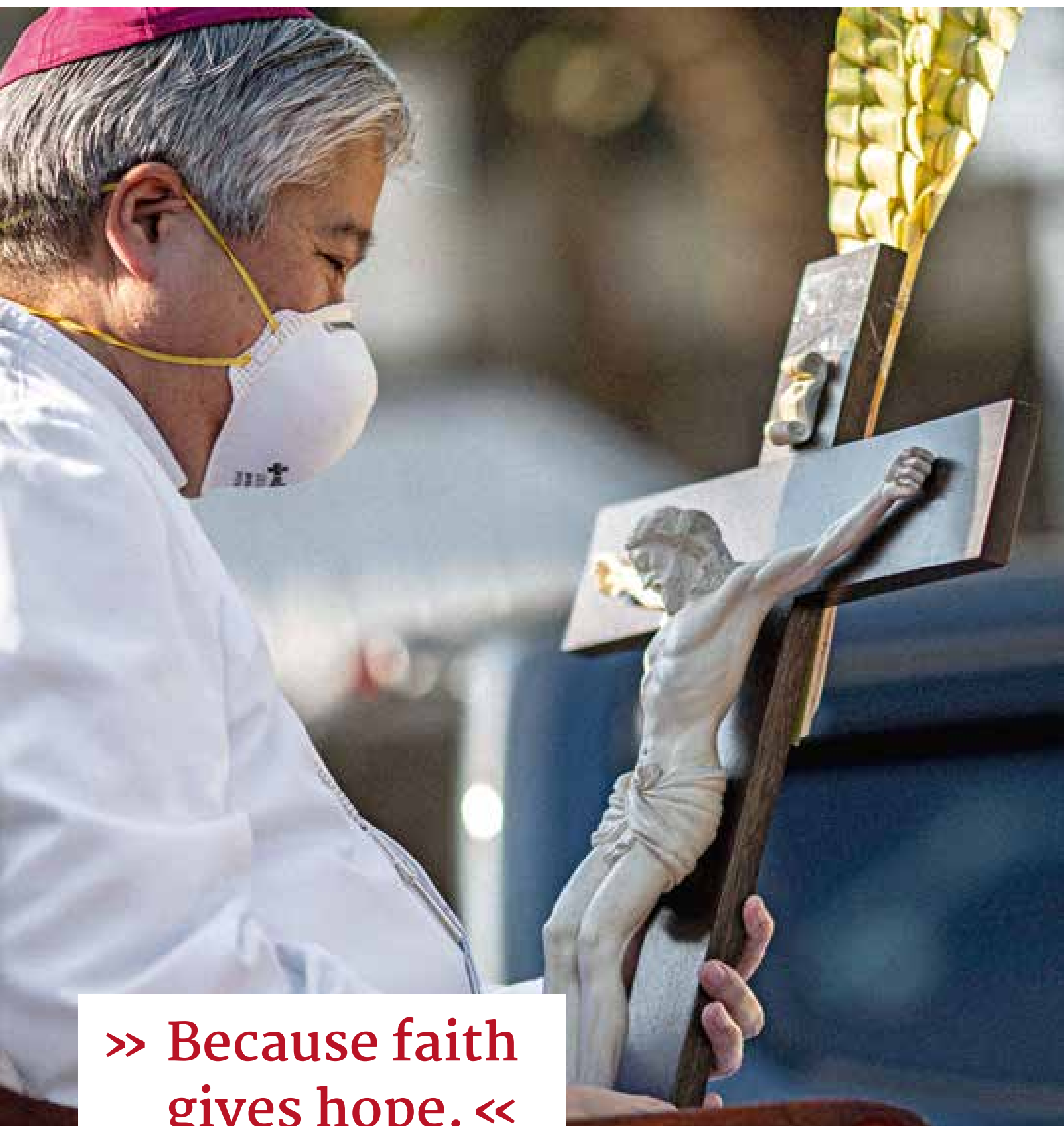




Aid to the  
Church in Need

ACN INTERNATIONAL



»» Because faith  
gives hope. ««

Activity Report 2020

PONTIFICAL  
FOUNDATION



**Imprint**

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ACN Aid to the Church in Need International

Title: Philippine Archbishop Socrates Villegas  
carries the crucifix in the Palm Sunday procession  
during the Corona pandemic.



## Dear friends and supporters,

In 2020, the words “salvation” and “healing” have taken on new meaning for all of humanity. The pandemic, which has left no one untouched, has made us painfully aware of how little we humans can rely on our own strength and how much we depend on the salvation and healing that God provides.

Many of us are grieving the loss of loved ones. Social isolation, fear of infection, concern for loved ones and, not least, distressing restrictions on Church life have marked 2020. Despite all this, it was also a year in which we were able to experience the grace of God in a special way. This is also true for us at ACN: As never before, we have felt how much we, our benefactors and project partners form a big spiritual family, close to each other in prayer and supportive of one another. Together we have experienced the wonderful spiritual reality of the communion of saints!

We were able to experience how our benefactors, despite their own suffering and difficulties – frequently economic – have opened their hearts even more generously than ever before to the needs of their sisters and brothers in faith. This shows us that even in times that seem dark to us, God gives us the light of his grace and enacts in us the miracles of his love.

We have received many pleas of distress from numerous local churches. These

were loud pleas for help. Because of the pandemic, need has increased all over the world. Many afflicted Christians continued to navigate true Stations of the Cross during this time, marked by poverty, exclusion and persecution. Africa, in particular, has once again become a “continent of martyrs” in 2020.

Through your help, dear benefactors and friends, the goodness of God became tangible for our brothers and sisters.

We pray for you and all the people you hold dear in your hearts that God will reward you for your generosity and protect you during these continuing dramatic times of the pandemic. Simultaneously, we also ask for your prayers for all those who are at risk of collapsing underneath their cross. May the Mother of God help us to become a selfless Simon of Cyrene for them.

I extend heartfelt greetings to you with my blessings.

Kind regards,

*Mauro Kard. Piacenza*



*Mauro Cardinal Piacenza  
President of the Papal  
Foundation Aid to the Church  
in Need*







**» I cordially  
bless you all. «**

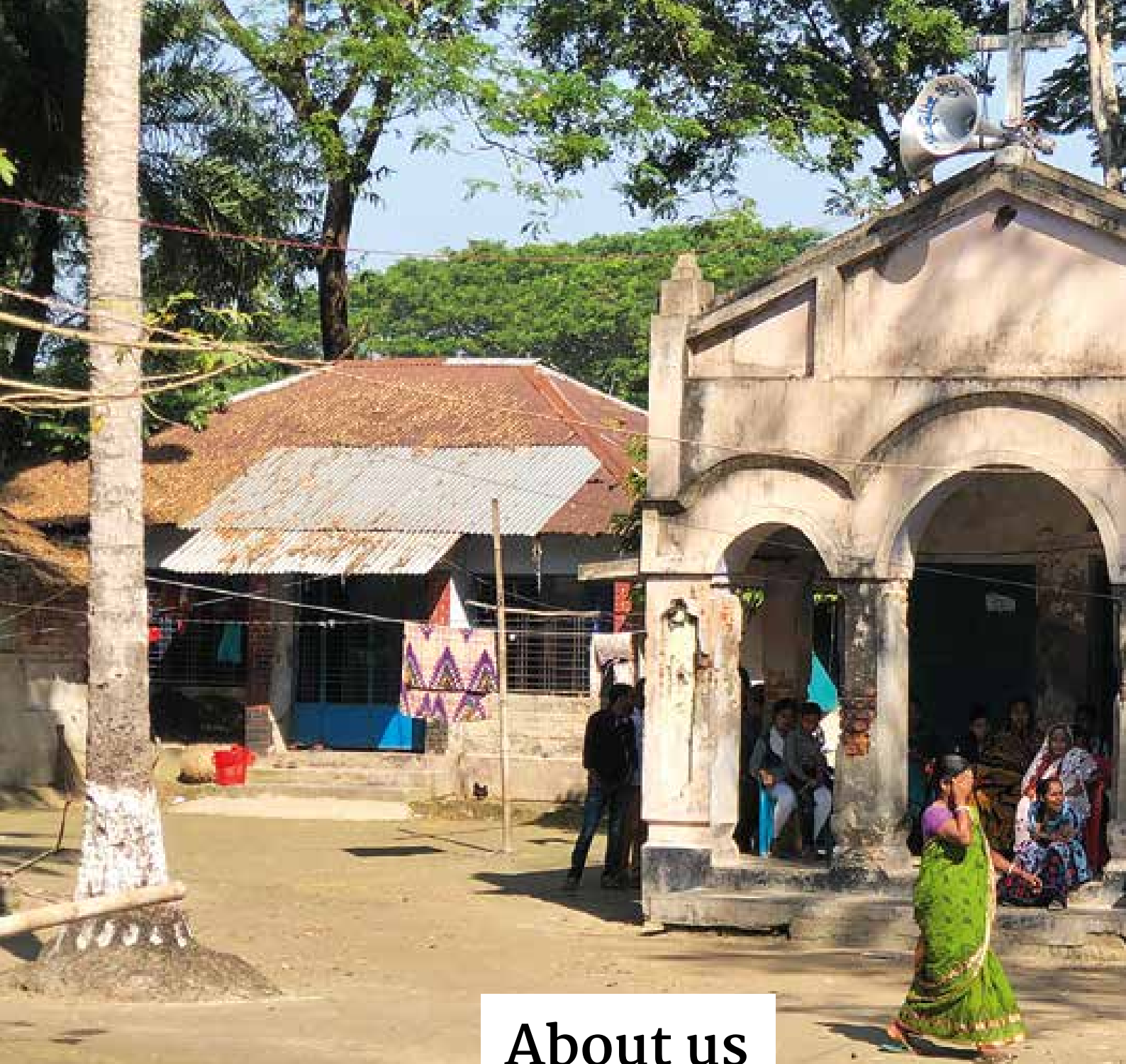
Dear friends, may the Lord make your prayers and your commitment to the mission of the Church always nurture more fruit throughout the world, especially where it is suffering from spiritual and material needs or is discriminated against and persecuted.

I cordially bless you all.

Pope Francis  
to the members and benefactors  
of Aid to the Church in Need  
at the general audience on  
2 October 2013, in Rome

As a Pontifical Foundation, Aid to the Church in Need has the mandate to act on behalf of the Church.





## About us

**Learn more about Aid to the Church in Need on the following pages:  
How we were formed and the history of our mission; what we are committed to; our funding priorities in 2020.**



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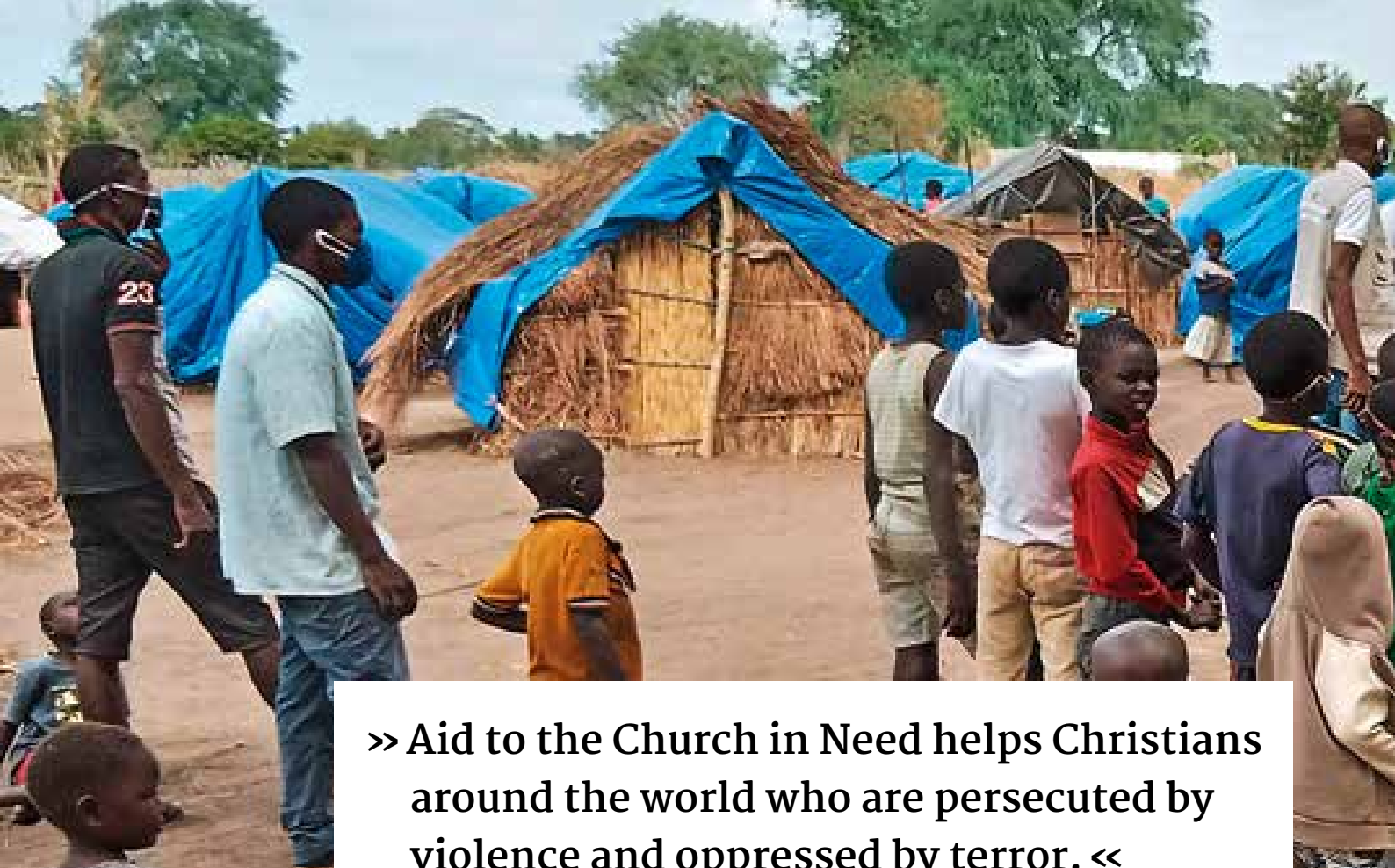
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Cover back **Aid to the Church in Need – contacts worldwide**



## » Aid to the Church in Need helps Christians around the world who are persecuted by violence and oppressed by terror. «

Thomas Heine-Geldern,  
Executive President



From its beginnings, the Church has always provided care for those in need. In addition to its pastoral mission, it is committed to sponsoring social assistance organisations worldwide and supporting those in need in many crisis areas.

But many do not realise that the Church itself often requires urgent help, mainly in developing countries and among those affected by displacement, persecution or catastrophe. According to our calculations, close to 70% of the world population live in countries without full access to religious freedom, and 50% of the world population live in countries with outright persecution. The fundamental right of religious freedom is not guaranteed in more than 62 countries.

More than 400 million Christians live in countries with religious persecution. Here the Church's infrastructure and the human dignity of the faithful cannot be main-

tained through their own resources, or if so, only with great difficulty. In many of these countries, monetary donations are the only source of income for the Church.

Unlike most charities working to alleviate social needs, Aid to the Church in Need concentrates on supporting local churches, thereby upholding the ideals of Christian charity.

Founded in 1947 as a Catholic aid organisation for war refugees and recognised as a Pontifical Foundation since 2011, Aid to the Church in Need is dedicated to the service of Christians around the world, wherever they are persecuted or oppressed or suffering material need. This is enabled entirely through the generosity of private donors, as our foundation receives no public funding.

Together with hundreds of thousands of benefactors and project partners, we support Christians around the world under our guiding principle "information, prayer and action". In addition, we are committed to religious freedom and reconciliation across all faiths. Our long-standing experience and belief in the power of charity encourage us to continue on this path and to inspire people about our work around the globe.

» I am so grateful for all that you are doing to help our suffering people. May our Lord bless you, and our brothers and sisters in Christ. «

Sr Annie Demerjian,  
project partner, Syria















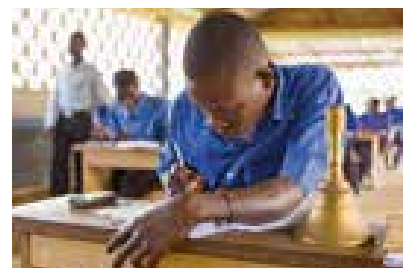
## Church in Need – our name says it all

Over the 74 years since its foundation, Aid to the Church in Need has developed into an aid organisation with a broad range of tasks. Today, we can rightly claim that our name says it all. We now support some 4,760 Catholic projects each year in 138 countries – many of these over the long term. In this way, we frequently remain in crisis areas much longer than other aid organisations.

Of course, this requires not only personnel and logistical resources, but also the necessary financial means. Only through the donations of over 345,000 benefactors in 23 countries are we able to fulfil our mission of providing and promoting pastoral assistance.

And the list of areas in which we are asked to help continues to grow:

-  Mass stipends (→ p. 20)
-  Training of priests and religious (→ p. 22)
-  Existential help for religious (→ p. 24)
-  Faith formation of laity (→ p. 25)
-  Construction and reconstruction of church facilities (→ p. 26)
-  Means of transport for pastoral care (→ p. 27)
-  Emergency assistance in cases of war, displacement, violence and natural catastrophes (→ p. 28)
-  Distribution of Bibles, religious books and media (→ p. 30)
-  Advocacy (→ p. 32)
-  Media support for the propagation of faith (→ p. 42)





» Whatever you did for the least of my brothers and sisters, you did for me. «

Mt 25:40

The roots of Aid to the Church in Need go back to the period following the Second World War. Europe lay in ruins, with millions of people displaced, traumatised, homeless and plagued by hunger. Among those suffering most were German-speaking refugees from Central and Eastern Europe.

In this time of great need, Father Werenfried van Straaten founded – at the behest of Pope Pius XII – the organisation Aid to the Eastern Priests (“Ostpriesterhilfe”) at the Premonstratensian monastery in Tongerlo, Belgium. This later became the papal aid organisation that we know today as Aid to the Church in Need.

As a pastoral initiative to provide spiritual and material support to priests and German Catholics who were expelled from Central and Eastern European states after

the Second World War, our organisation operated in the spirit of reconciliation from the very beginning.

One of the first steps it took was to organise food and clothing for war refugees in Germany, as well as providing them with pastoral care. Initially the task seemed nearly impossible – especially considering that those from whom donations were sought were themselves victims of the German war occupation in Belgium and the Netherlands. However, with passionate calls for reconciliation and brotherly love, Father Werenfried succeeded in bringing about a wave of charity.

It was above all our aid organisation’s highly original projects that thrust it into the spotlight. For instance, it dispatched “rucksack priests” on motorcycles and in VW Beetles to German Catholic diaspora





## Charity as concretely lived faith

areas to provide pastoral care for the displaced people there.

In 1950, we also started the “chapel truck campaign”, converting 35 trucks into “chapels on wheels” for displaced people. Our aid organisation repeatedly demonstrated its ability to meet exceptional challenges through successful projects. During the Cold War years, for example, we undertook unparalleled steps to protect the interests of the persecuted Catholic Church in the Iron Curtain countries. In the 1960s, our aid programmes were extended to Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Thanks to the hundreds of thousands of benefactors of Aid to the Church in Need, annual donations worldwide now total over 122 million euros. This story proves once again how faith, when put into practice, leads to charity.



**>> The camaraderie among the staff and volunteers is simply wonderful, and this itself makes our job all the more worthwhile. <<** Mervyn Maciel, volunteer, UK



## Charity with efficiency and transparency.

There are numerous charities that look after those in need. What distinguishes Aid to the Church in Need from these organisations? We are the only international Catholic organisation focusing on the pastoral and spiritual support of persecuted and suffering Christians.

Following our inclusion under the Vatican's umbrella, our General Secretariat in Germany and our 23 National Sections have been successful in building a unique bridge between benefactors and those in need.







**Each year, we screen more than 5,700 aid project requests from 138 countries.**

Due to its global structure, Aid to the Church in Need can quickly identify needs and respond promptly with aid projects. This is enabled by an efficient framework that keeps bureaucracy to a minimum while thoroughly verifying and approving projects for our project partners.

Our General Secretariat supports the fundraising efforts of the National Sections and annually screens about 5,700 aid applications from around the world, which are examined and either approved or rejected by the decision-making bodies. Our head office maintains contact with project partners in 138 countries, ensuring the appropriate use of donations.

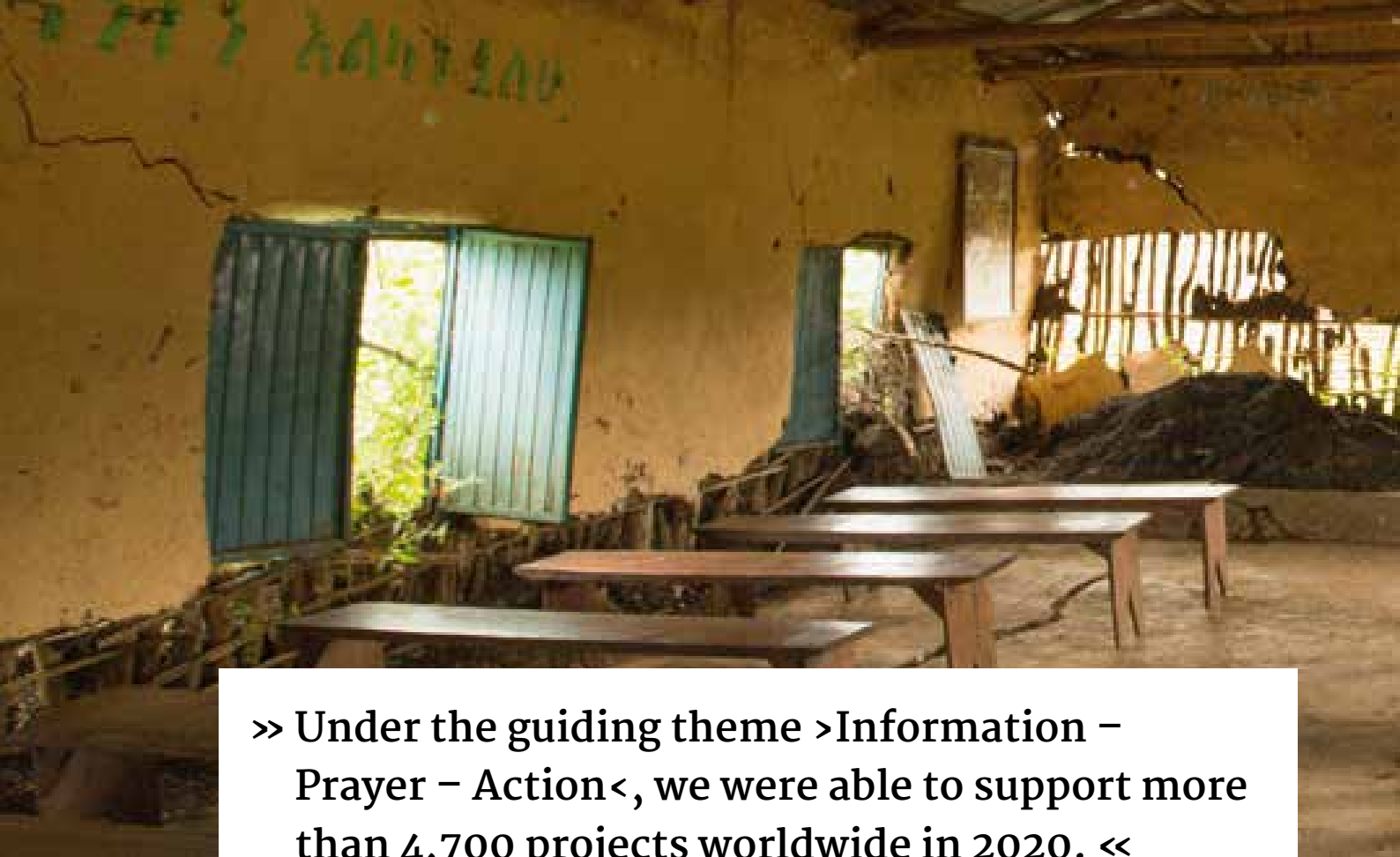
Through our National Sections, we maintain close contact with our donors. The public relations work of our offices aims to deliver a high degree of transparency regarding the purpose of donations and how they are used locally, building a bridge between project partners and benefactors.

In addition, our income and expenditure are audited annually by certified accountants, as the trust of our donors is the basis of our success.



**» I often thank the Lord for your presence beside us. Without you, it would be so hard to go on with our ministry. «**

Sr Hanan Youssef,  
project partner, Lebanon



**>> Under the guiding theme >Information – Prayer – Action<, we were able to support more than 4,700 projects worldwide in 2020. <<**

In 2020, we received 5,727 applications for aid from all over the world. Thanks to the generosity of our benefactors, we received €122.7 million in donations and were able to use this money to fund activities totalling €102.1 million. €20.6 million could not yet be spent in 2020 due to coronavirus-related delays, but the sum has already been used to fund projects in the first half of 2021. The largest portion – 79.1% in expenditure – was used for mission-related expenses, i.e. concrete project work, information, media support and prayer activities.

We keep the share of necessary expenditure for administration and fundraising as low as possible

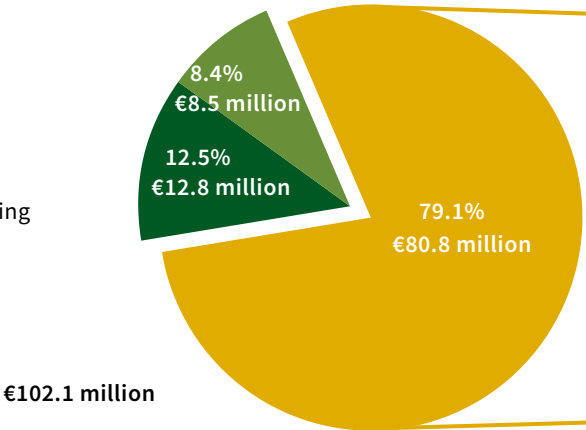
at 8.4% and 12.5%, respectively, so that as many resources as possible reach local Christians.

In 2020, we supported a total of 4,758 projects in 138 countries with approximately €68.6 million. With a further €12.2 million, we supported disadvantaged and persecuted Christians worldwide with information, evangelisation and advocacy work.

Income from inheritances continued to make up a significant part of the Church's support in 2020 (€23.5 million, or 19.2% of the revenue in 2020). With our brothers and sisters in need, we gratefully commemorate our deceased benefactors.

**Detailed use of funds (2020)**

- Mission-related expenditure
- Administration
- Donor relations and fundraising

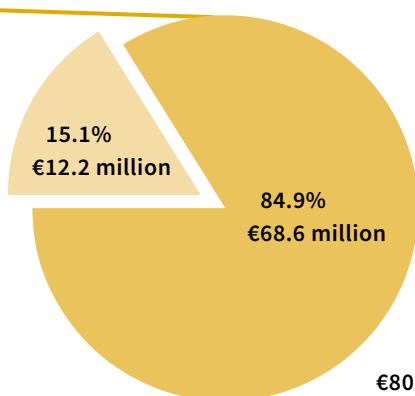




## Facts and figures\*

Offices in **23** countries  
More than **345,000** donors worldwide per year  
**122,674,982** euros in donations and legacies  
Project partners in **138** countries  
**4,758** projects supported worldwide  
**79.1%** of the funds used are allocated to mission-related expenses

All financial figures are audited by the independent auditing firm KPMG.



### Mission-related expenditure (2020)

- Project work (→ p. 18ff.)
- Information, proclamation of faith and advocacy for discriminated and persecuted Christians (→ p. 32ff.)

€80.8 million

\*Valid as of 2020











## » Reconstruction, Mass stipends, education and coronavirus aid were our project priorities in 2020. «

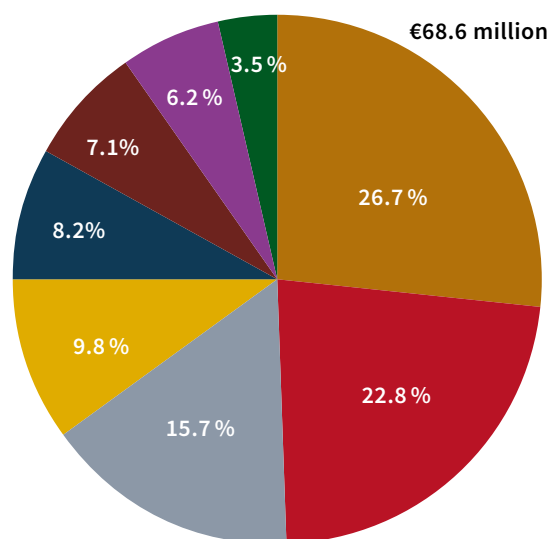
The projects we support are primarily of a pastoral nature. But we are also active in acute crises with emergency aid measures for the suffering population. This was particularly true during the coronavirus year 2020, in which nearly 15% of our funding, or €9.8 million, was used for emergency aid. A major portion was used by local churches, primarily for subsistence needs and the procurement of protective equipment.

As in the previous year, about a quarter of the expenditure in 2020 were used for the faith formation of the laity and training of priests and religious. At 26.7%, construction and reconstruction projects of churches and church facilities accounted for the largest share of funding.

Significantly more funds were used for Mass stipends in 2020, accounting for nearly a quarter of the total budget. Justifiably so, for during the coronavirus pandemic priests had hardly any income from urgently needed collections. Our warmest thanks for your support!

### Aid granted by type of help (2020)

Construction and reconstruction (→ p. 26)	
Mass stipends (→ p. 20)	
Faith formation of laity (→ p. 25)	
Emergency assistance (→ p. 28)	
Training of priests and religious (→ p. 22)	
Means of transport for pastoral care (→ p. 27)	
Subsistence help for religious (→ p. 24)	
Distribution of Bibles, religious books and media (→ p. 30)	





## » Our relief measures start with close dialogue with the local churches. «

Receiving nearly one-third of the funding, Africa (32.6%) was again the priority region for our aid projects in 2020. The situation there is dramatic, especially in the Sahel zone, where Christians are victims of persecution, violence and expulsion. The coronavirus pandemic has further aggravated the situation of the Church.

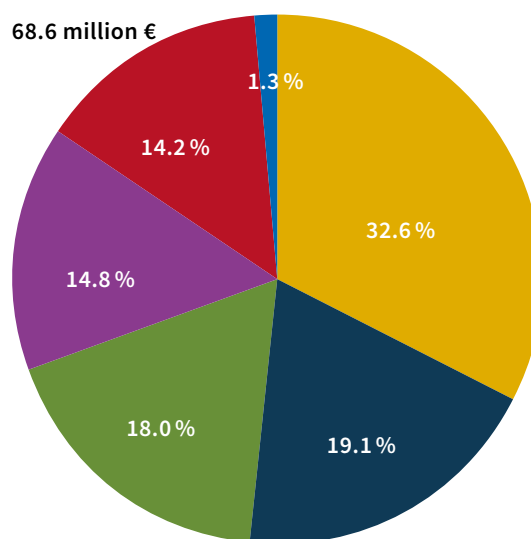
Europe (19.1%) moved further up the priority list in 2020. Many funds went to countries in Eastern Europe, as many priests, but also nuns, are suffering existential hardships due to the pandemic.

Another funding priority is Asia (18.0%). The continent was hit particularly hard by the pandemic. Thanks to our coronavirus emergency aid, local churches were at least able to purchase protective equipment and cushion their financial burdens.

Latin America (14.8%) was also one of the epicentres of the pandemic in 2020, further increasing poverty among the population and causing priests to face added hardships due to the lack of collections.

The sharp drop in aid to the Middle East (14.2%) is due to the construction stop for Christians on the Nineveh Plains. As a result of Covid-19, simply no building material could be delivered.

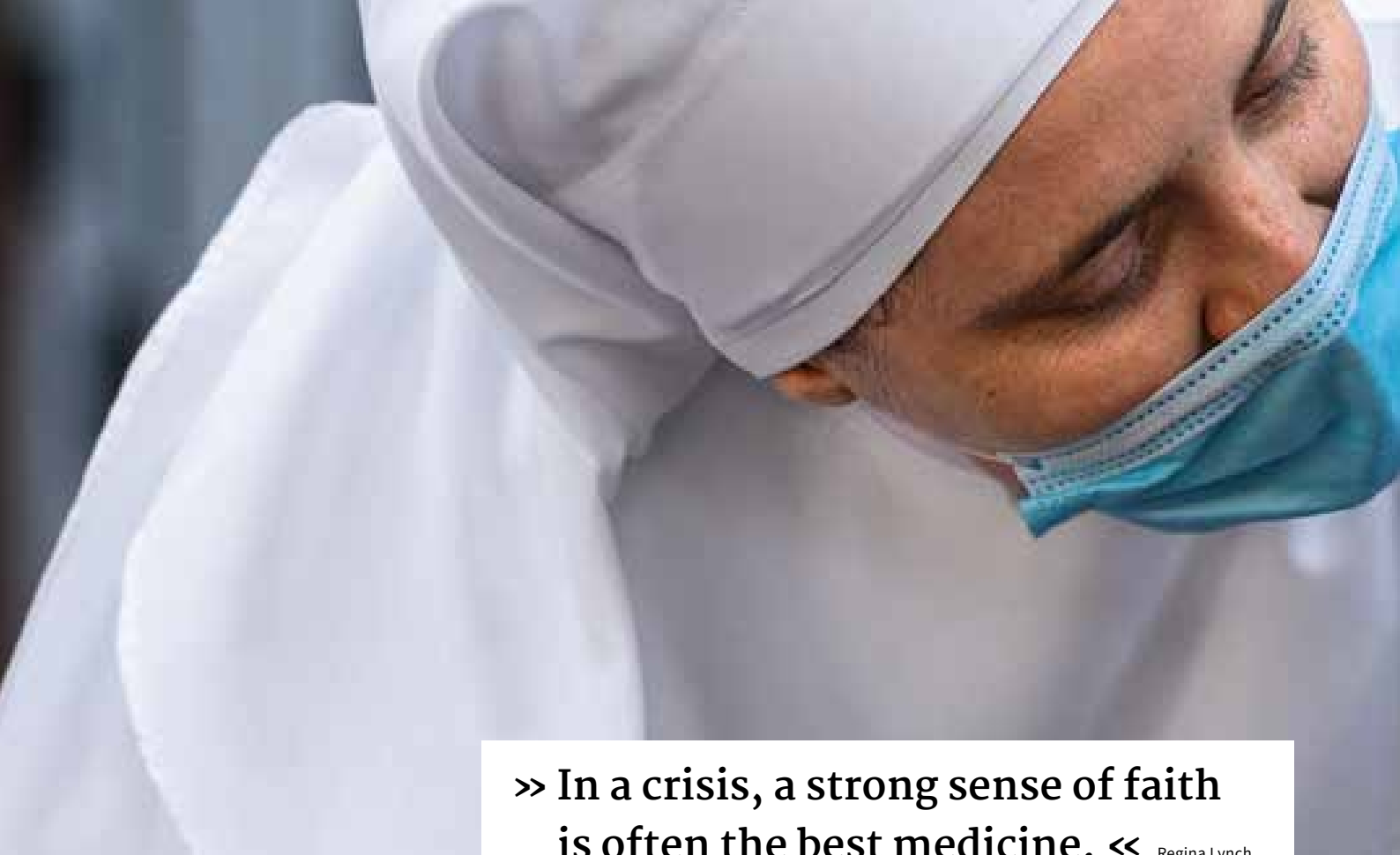
68.6 million €



### Aid granted by region (2020)

- Africa (→ p. 60 ff.)
- Central and Eastern Europe (→ p. 90 ff.)
- Asia/Oceania (→ p. 102 ff.)
- Latin America (→ p. 46 ff.)
- Middle East (→ p. 78 ff.)
- Other





## >> In a crisis, a strong sense of faith is often the best medicine. <<

Regina Lynch,  
Director of Projects



Pallotine religious sisters support the needy in Rwanda during the coronavirus pandemic.

2020 will probably go down in the history books as the “year of the coronavirus”. Within a very short time, the pandemic plunged the entire world into a deep crisis. But COVID-19 is not only a medical, social or economic problem, but also a pastoral one. Therefore, immediately after the outbreak of the pandemic, our aid organisation launched a special programme to support the Church in overcoming specific challenges during the coronavirus crisis. We spoke to Regina Lynch, Director of Projects at ACN, about the coronavirus aid.

### ***What kind of needs have been reported by ACN’s project partners during the coronavirus crisis?***

Most of our global project partners are reporting less medical needs, and more the impact of restrictions on daily life in the parishes. The most difficult thing for the churches is that no public church services have been allowed during the lockdown, nor could the usual pastoral and social programmes be carried out in parishes. To compound matters, in many of our partner countries, collections during Sunday services ensured the survival of priests and religious. This source of income has disappeared overnight during the lockdown.

### ***What is the focus of coronavirus aid from ACN?***

Especially during this severe crisis, a strong sense of faith is indispensable for many people. Therefore, as a papal aid organisation, we must first and foremost ensure that the Church is not hindered in fulfilling its pastoral and ministerial tasks

through a lack of financial resources. Above all, this means that we help needy priests and religious sisters with material aid and Mass stipends. But we also need to provide funding to local churches for masks and protective clothing, or help radio and television stations purchase technical equipment, so that the faithful can participate in Mass via television or radio during the lockdown and receive the message of the Gospel.

### ***ACN has launched a special coronavirus programme; what type of assistance has been pledged and provided so far?***

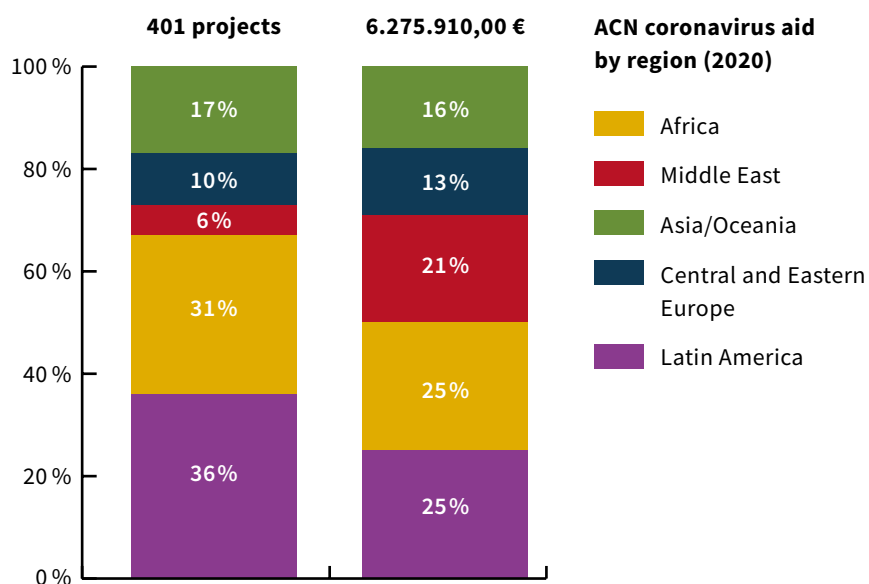
Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we were able to provide emergency aid consisting of more than 385,000 Mass stipends worth 3.1 million euros to some 10,500 priests between March and May 2020. During this period, we were also able to make pledges of material aid to religious sisters in almost all parts of the world amounting to around 800,000 euros. Throughout 2020 as a whole, our coronavirus aid reached a volume of

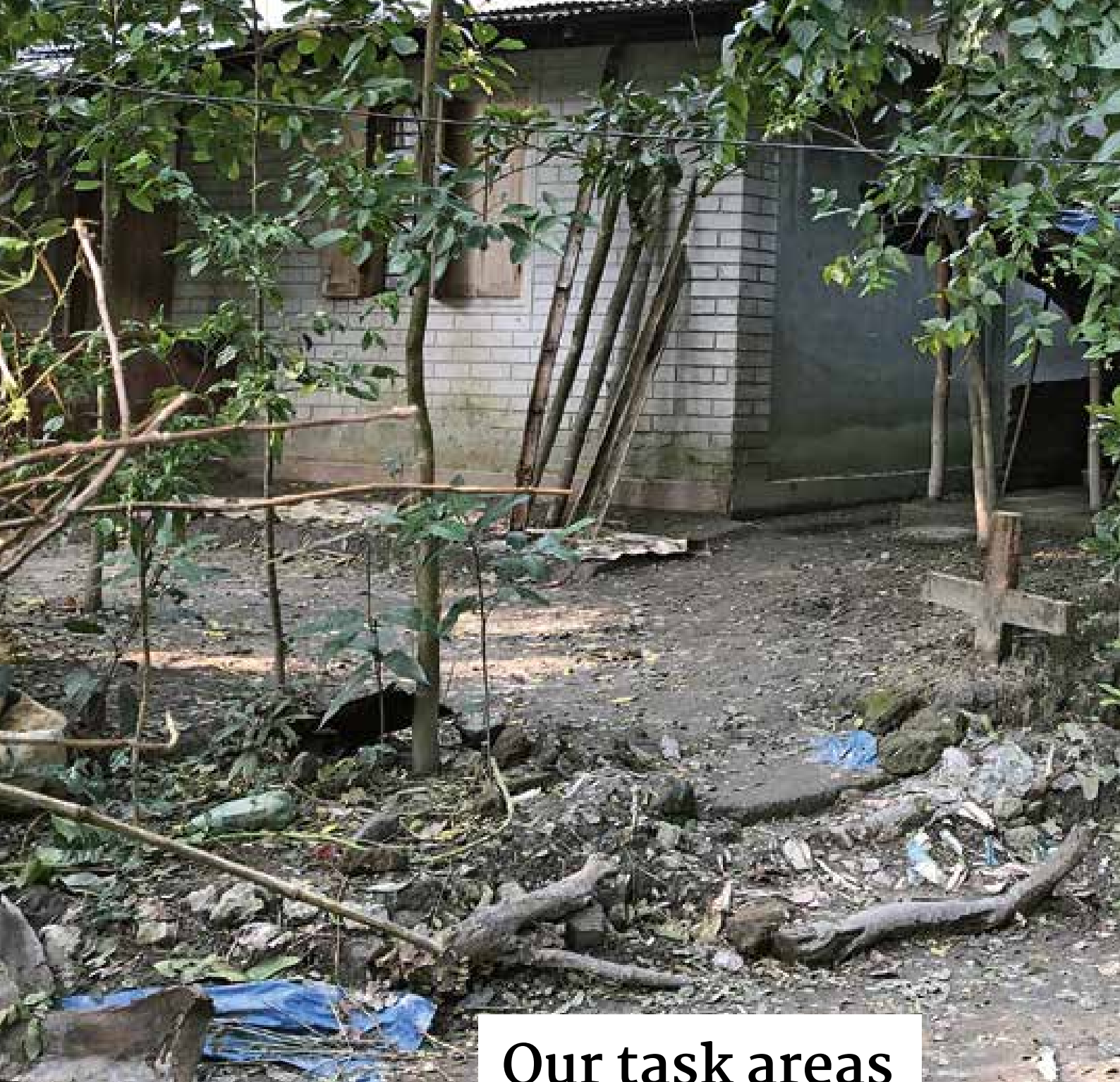


nearly 6.3 million euros, distributed over a total of 401 projects. Thus, we were able to increase the material aid to priests by 95% compared to the previous year, i.e. nearly doubling it. The provision of Mass stipends increased by 23% compared to the previous year and material aid to religious sisters by 24%.

***Which project particularly impressed you during the crisis year?***

Worldwide, I have been impressed by the tireless and often selfless commitment of priests and religious who have to cope with tasks during the pandemic, usually under highly difficult conditions. For example, priests in the Diocese of Dolisie in the Republic of Congo who share the Mass stipends they receive from us with the poorest in their community. I am equally touched by the dedication of so many religious sisters, including those of the “Hermanas Sociales” Congregation in Cuba, who, despite the prescribed restrictions, always find a way to continue their pastoral work and care for the elderly, and also mobilise efforts for the homeless.





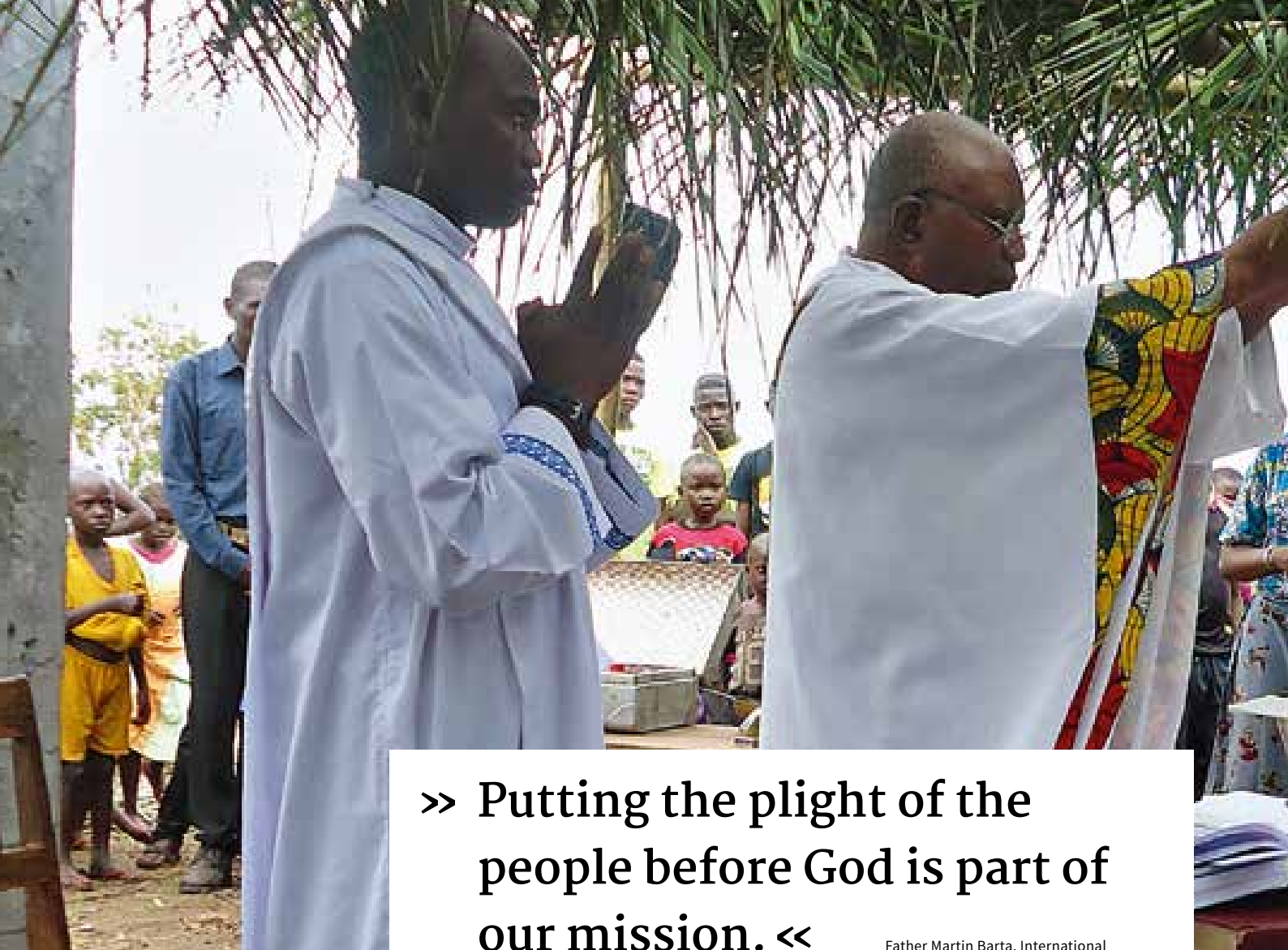
## Our task areas

**Regardless of whether we are providing subsistence aid for priests and religious, Mass stipends, training of seminarians, emergency relief aid during war and natural catastrophes or publicity work for the propagation of the faith, Aid to the Church in Need's task areas are as diverse as they are urgent. We lend assistance and fund activities where Christians are persecuted and the Church suffers hardships.**





- p. 21 Mass stipends
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- pp. 42–43 CRTN – Media support for the propagation of faith



» Putting the plight of the people before God is part of our mission. «

Father Martin Barta, International Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Foundation

**Helping persecuted and needy Christians is of the utmost priority to Aid to the Church in Need. Whether through Mass stipends, the funding of priestly formation, existential help for religious members or the formation of faith among the laity – we sponsor thousands of brothers and sisters every year so that they, in turn, can support the faithful.**



Father Juan Pablo Contempomi celebrates Holy Mass in Cruz Del Eje, Argentina.



Christening in Dori Cathedral, Burkina Faso.



## Mass stipends



In many regions today, the faithful are so poor that they cannot support their priests. Even the bishops often lack the financial means to provide their priests with a regular wage. In these areas, Mass stipends are often their only means of material support. Mass stipends are monetary donations connected with the request to celebrate Holy Mass for the deceased and the sick or other concerns of the benefactors.

In 2020, a total of 1,782,097 Holy Masses were celebrated in the intentions of our benefactors. In this way, we were able to support a total of 45,655 priests – on average, about every ninth priest world-wide.

The distribution of the Mass stipends reflects the conditions of poverty on the continents. In the reporting year, 36% of the Mass stipends went to Africa, 32% to Asia and the Near and Middle East, 16% to Latin America and 16% to Central and Eastern Europe.

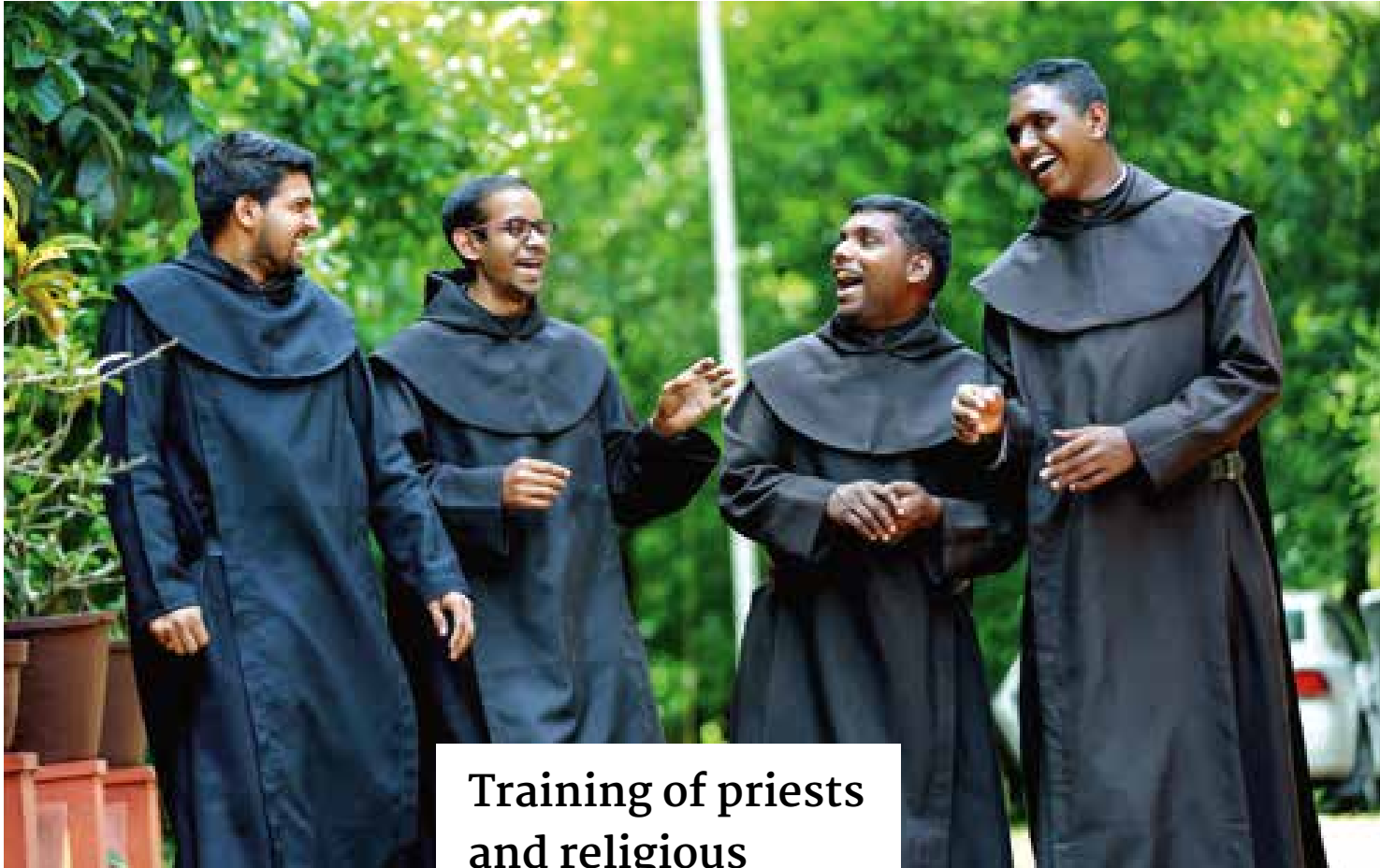
### » For some priests, Mass stipends are the only source of income. «

By focusing Mass prayers on deceased or sick relatives, on people who are experiencing life crises or on certain issues our donors may be facing, they take part in the Eucharistic celebration in a very special way. With this kind of donation, many of our benefactors recognise the profound spiritual purpose of uniting their charity with Church prayers. On average, a Holy Mass is held every 18 seconds for the intentions of ACN benefactors somewhere in the world.

Most of the priests not only use Mass stipends for their own subsistence, but are also able to cover some of the costs of their pastoral activities with them. In this way, Mass stipends are intended to secure the immediate livelihood of priests and their parishes. As a basic principle, 100% of the Mass stipends are forwarded to the intended recipients.



Mass stipends ensure the livelihood of 26 priests in the Vicariate of Yurimaguas, Peru.



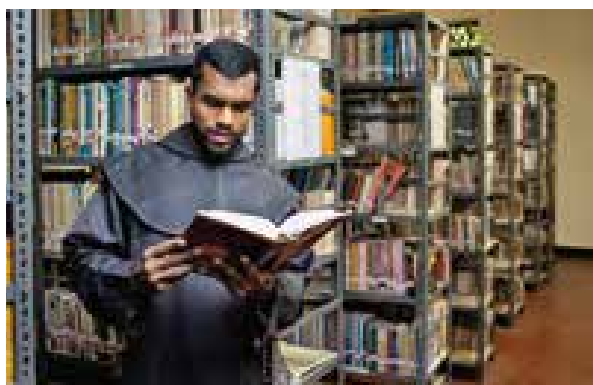
## Training of priests and religious



The theological training and qualification of seminarians has always been an important focus of our aid. After all, future priests will ultimately be spiritual pillars and safeguard sacramental life. Therefore, our educational assistance mainly flows into countries where the suitable and continuous training of future priests is endangered or is not adequately ensured due to poverty, war or persecution.

Thanks to the generosity of our benefactors, we were able to fund a total of 14,009 seminarians in 2020. The continuing education of God's servants is also an important concern to us. In the reporting year, we sponsored the continuing education of 473 priests who themselves will train seminarians and thus maintain the qualitative level of priestly formation in their home countries over the long term.

» Scholarships are the seed which we hope will yield ripe fruit for the Church. «



Young religious supported by ACN in Kolkata, India.

In 2020, we were also able to award 267 scholarships to priests who, for example, are pursuing a doctorate or an additional course of study. In terms of continental distribution, 34% of our scholarship holders came from Asia, 44% from Africa, 17% from Latin America and 5% from Eastern Europe.





Children praying the  
rosary in the Philippines.

## Safeguarding

ACN supports the Church in its abuse prevention efforts. For example, ACN sponsors courses around the world on the topic of safeguarding, in which priests and religious are trained to recognise and prevent sexual abuse and other forms of abuse of minors and wards.

ACN works closely with the leading Centre for Child Protection (CCP) at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, among others, to offer safeguarding courses. A main focus of these courses is the detection of abuse, so that it can be identified as early as possible. As a precondition for competent care, the devastating consequences of abuse on victims are taught. The aim is to learn effective measures, both in the prevention of abuse cases and in the treatment of suspected cases, e.g. in order to avoid a cover-up of abuse.

Our project partners only receive aid from ACN after submitting a written commitment to safeguarding. This aid is withdrawn if possible or actual cases of abuse are not adequately pursued.

Safeguarding requirements also apply to ACN's own employees, who are required

to comply with ACN's safeguarding guidelines and also receive regular training on them.

The full safeguarding policy can be viewed at [www.acninternational.org/safeguarding](http://www.acninternational.org/safeguarding).



**>> We are working  
worldwide to  
improve the  
protection of  
minors and other  
wards. <<**

Regina Lynch,  
Project Director



ACN supports religious  
sisters who care for  
orphans in Kapshagay,  
Kazakhstan.



## Existence help for religious



ACN also provides material aid for contemplative religious sisters in Burshtyn, Ukraine.



Particularly in areas with a great shortage of priests, religious sisters literally take care of all in the name of God: children and adults, orphans, the sick and the dying, failures and seekers, as well as the traumatised. These sisters often work under the most difficult conditions. Through their constant prayers and daily devotions, cloistered contemplative sisters provide great help to the suffering Church as well.

In 2020 alone, we supported 18,126 religious sisters from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America in their valuable work.

**>> We recognise a successful aid project when people are once again free to live their faith. <<**

Regina Lynch, Director of Projects



## Faith formation of laity



There is a lack of priests in many of the world's poorest countries. Here, the formation of the laity to serve as catechists is an essential element of preserving faith in daily life. On the completion of a basic course in theology, women and men are empowered to share their faith and to prepare the faithful for the reception of the sacraments.

With our help, more than 18,389 laypersons were supported in their faith formation in 2020.



Bible studies in Nueve de Julio, Argentina.

» It is our duty to support our brothers and sisters in faith. «

Dolores Soroa Suárez de Tangil,  
benefactress, Spain



## >> Faith and a good organisation together can move mountains. <<

Philipp Ozores, Secretary General

**Supporting the local Church in its pastoral care efforts for the faithful is the key task of Aid to the Church in Need. This includes supporting the construction, reconstruction or maintenance of church buildings so that the church can carry out its mission. We also finance vehicles for priests, sisters and catechists so that they can reach the faithful even in the most isolated areas. Wherever believers are victims of displacement, violence and persecution, we provide emergency relief to alleviate the worst suffering.**



## Construction and reconstruction of church facilities



Especially in crisis areas, churches and ecclesiastical institutions are often destroyed by violence. We support reconstruction in these areas, as the Church is the centre of the life of faith and a sign of hope.

Where the Church is growing, e.g. in Africa, Asia and Latin America, help is often needed to build up a new infrastructure. Therefore, Aid to the Church in Need provides assistance for the construction

and reconstruction of churches, monasteries, pastoral centres and mission stations, thereby safeguarding and promoting the pastoral work of the Catholic Church worldwide. From more than 70 years of experience, we know that in slums, even the smallest chapel can give people a spiritual home.

744 such buildings were constructed or repaired with our help in 2020 alone.





# Means of transport for pastoral care

As early as the 1950s, ACN sent chapel trucks as mobile churches to displaced persons. Today, ensuring that assistance and pastoral care are available to areas in need continues to be an important concern of Aid to the Church in Need.

We receive applications to fund vehicular purchases from every continent. Applications include requests for the purchase of trucks, cars, motorcycles, bicycles, boats, or in particularly difficult mountain regions, mules. In 2020 alone, 283 cars, 166 motorcycles, 783 bicycles and 11 boats were financed.






**>> For us, the greatest conceivable catastrophe  
would be not to act. <<**

Philipp Ozores, Secretary General





## Emergency assistance in cases of war, displacement, violence and natural catastrophes

 Emergency assistance for refugees is deeply rooted in the history of our relief organisation. Already in the 1950s, ACN carried out pioneering work in supporting displaced persons.

northern Nigeria, where Islamist terrorist groups are perpetrating acts of violence against the Christian minority, we stand by those who have not been able to save anything but their bare lives.

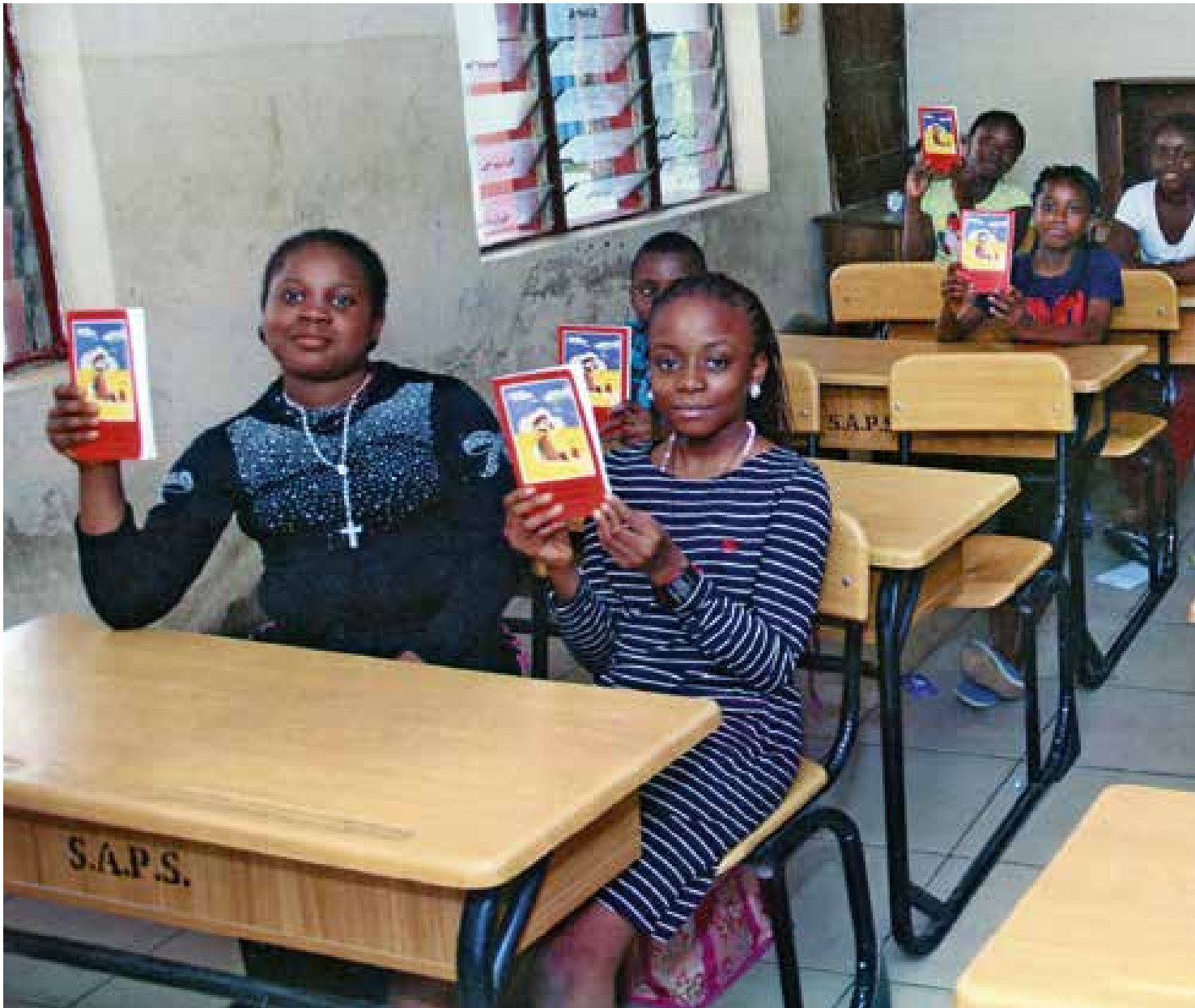
The bitter truth is that there are more refugees worldwide than ever before. 79,5 million people are currently fleeing war and violence around the world; of these, 16 million alone are in the Middle East.

Our great financial commitment to refugees and displaced persons in the Middle East is not only a response to their pressing need, but also a contribution to stop the wave of Christian emigration and thus ensure the continuity of Christianity in the region (for more information, see the Middle East chapter starting on page 78).

But we support Christians who have been persecuted and expelled for their beliefs in many other parts of the world as well: whether in Mindanao in the Philippines or in



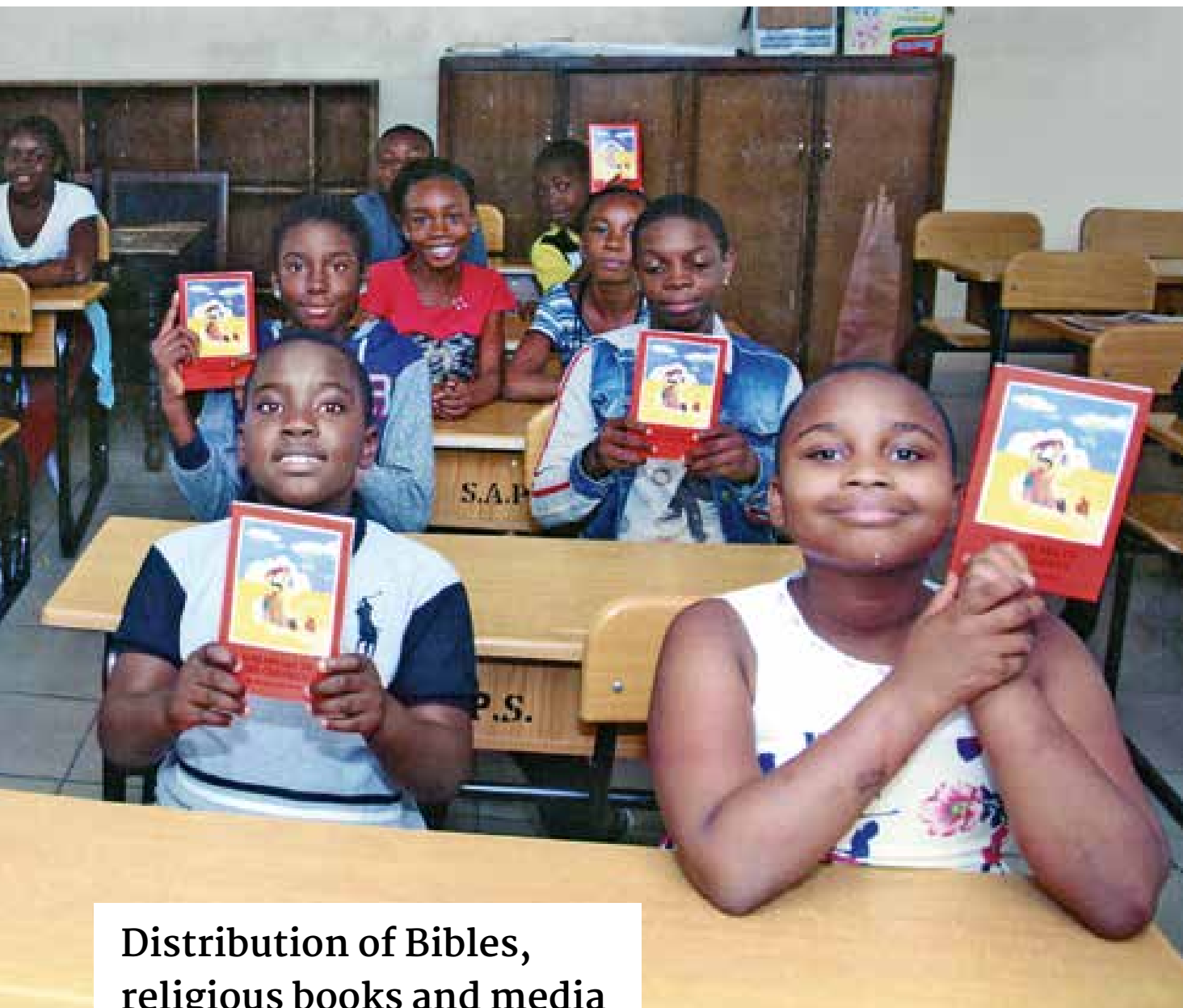
Religious sisters of the Ukrainian Archeparchy of Ivano-Frankivsk in action against the coronavirus pandemic.



» For some children the Child's Bible is the only picture book that they can get hold of. «

Fr. Martin Barta, International Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Foundation





## Distribution of Bibles, religious books and media

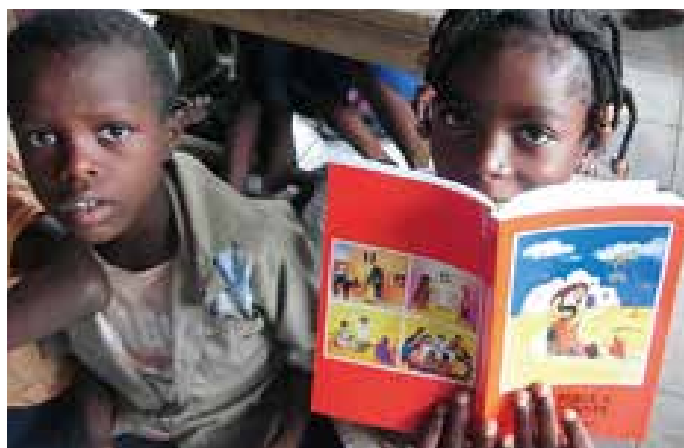


“Go out into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to all creation,” Jesus said. Aid to the Church in Need takes this assignment literally. For instance, since 1979, our organisation has been a publisher and global supplier of the Child’s Bible, which has been translated into 191 languages and has already been distributed more than 51 million times. Often in poor countries, the Child’s Bible is the first book that children receive in their own language; frequently, it is the only picture book that the little ones can get hold of in their entire lives.

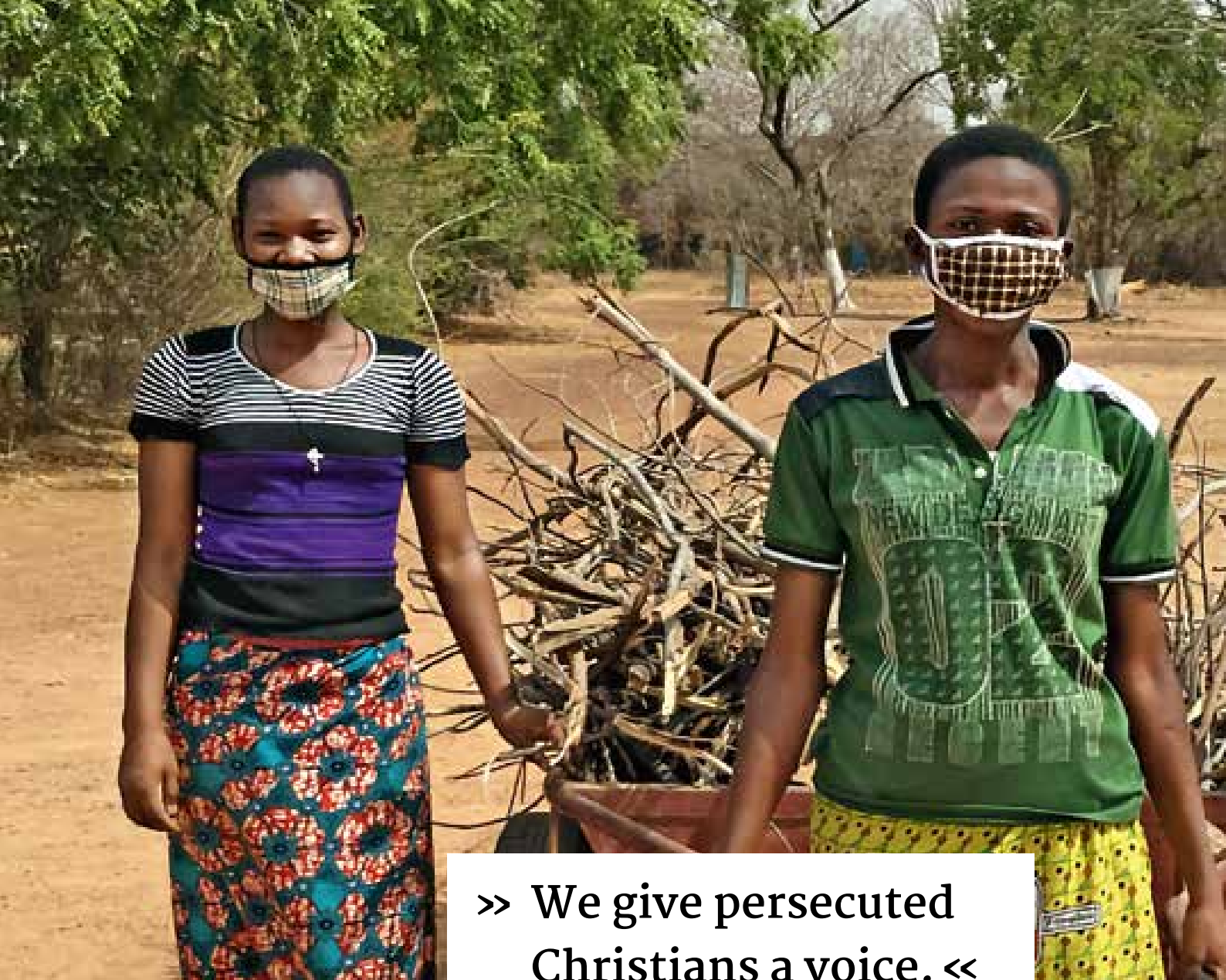
In 2020 alone, 590,000 religious books were produced and distributed with the help of ACN.

In addition, Aid to the Church in Need promotes YOUCAT, the illustrated Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church, which

is now available in 58 languages. Since 2016, our foundation has also been the publisher of DOCAT, a modern translation of the social teachings and doctrine of the Catholic Church. You can find more information about YOUCAT and DOCAT on pages 40 to 41.







## » We give persecuted Christians a voice. «

Mark von Riedemann, Director of  
Public Affairs and Religious Freedom

**In accordance to our motto “Inform, pray and act”, our communication work gives a voice to those who often no longer have one. We present the pressing issues of the Church locally and serve as advocates for persecuted Christians vis-à-vis other bodies, we create the Religious Freedom Report, and prepare public relations reports for print, social media and audiovisual products.**

These materials are provided to the National Sections to forward to the local media, including radio and television stations. With information campaigns, publications, events and conferences, the 23 National Sections advocate the welfare of the Church around the world. As the “advocate of Christians”, we raise the voice for disadvantaged and persecuted Christians in many urgent cases.

We have already been able to galvanise key people in positions of responsibility with our plea for more humanity and charity. Much of our advocacy work is made possible by maintaining contacts

on visits of project partner delegations and also by providing high-quality information. As a result, over the past few years, we have gained a high level of trust and a good reputation among politicians from the EU and other parts of the world. This helps us to launch projects and win over fellow campaigners.



## Advocate for Christians in need



**With a donation volume of approximately 122 million euros, a good deal of need can be alleviated, but more is required to create a real difference in the world. One means of leverage is the information and motivation of governmental and transnational agencies which can then influence local governments. ACN acts as an advocate of brotherly love and Christians in need, or as the foundation likes to say: “We give persecuted Christians a voice.”**

ACN does not accept government funding, but can bring together governments that want to stand up for religious freedom and Christians in need with reliable partners on the ground. In this way, we often succeed in alerting political decision-makers to the increasing persecution of Christians worldwide and in explaining the background stories.

Our activities as an advocate for Christians were put to the test by the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020. Travel restrictions came into force and many political institutions were no longer allowed to receive guests, which often slowed down the work of ACN. Nevertheless, important events could take place, some of them digitally.

For example, ACN was one of the coordinators of a meeting of experts held at Ave Maria School of Law in Naples, Florida, from 4–7 March. Participants included U.S. politicians, Church representatives, legal experts, academics and other stakeholders. ACN representatives presented case studies and gave talks on the respective backgrounds. At the invitation of ACN, the priest Joseph Fidelis Bature from Maiduguri, Nigeria also took part and gave a first-hand account of the crimes that had been

committed there. The meeting eventually led to concrete results. These included the implementation of a U.S. State Department trauma treatment project for Maiduguri and a European Parliament resolution.

ACN also participated in a webinar on U.S. economic sanctions against Syria, held at the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See. In all our activities, we are always concerned with achieving synergy effects and reaching out to multipliers in order to inform opinion leaders about the plight of Christians and to mobilise them for dialogue and action.



In September, Marcela Szymanski represented ACN during the symposium of the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See in Rome.



## December

As a result of contacts established by ACN, the EU Ambassador to Mozambique visits the Bishop of Pemba, who then takes the opportunity to give a video presentation to the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Also in December, ACN enables Nigerian Bishop William Avenya of Gboko to testify at a U.S. Congressional hearing on the violent attacks by extremist Fulani cattle herders.

## January

ACN presents the "Persecuted and Forgotten" report at the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 14 January.

## February

ACN gives a presentation on the importance of religious freedom to the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights.

## May

ACN informs various EU representatives about the crisis in northern Mozambique, leading to the European Parliament adopting an emergency resolution on 16 September.

## August

At a meeting at the U.S. Department of State and Treasury Department (OFAC), ACN raises its criticisms on the humanitarian situation in Syria as a result of the ongoing economic sanctions.

## September

ACN is a participant in the symposium "Advancing and Defending Institutional Religious Freedom through Diplomacy" at the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See, attended by the U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo.

## November

ACN representatives participate in "Red Week" events in the Czech Republic and Hungary and organise the participation of project partners from Nigeria and Pakistan, who report on the plight of the Church in their countries in online conferences. For more information on "Red Week", see pages 38 and 39.



The Nigerian Bishop William Avenya of Gboko attended the U.S. Congressional hearing.



The Chaldean Catholic Archbishop of Mosul and Akra in Iraq, Najeeb Michael, on a visit to the EU in Brussels.



The President of the Austrian National Parliament Wolfgang Sobotka and ACN President Thomas Heine-Geldern at "Red Wednesday" in the Hofburg, Vienna.





## Faith needs freedom: The Religious Freedom Report

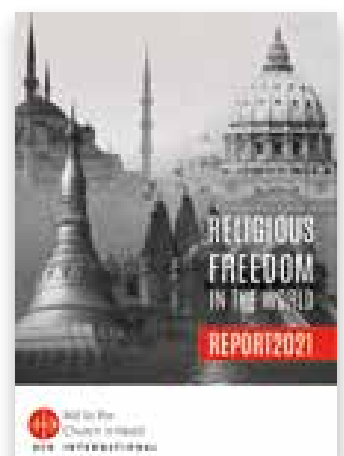
ACN Italy published the first Religious Freedom Report in 1999. The report notes whether religious freedom is upheld in comparison to other world religions and how the situation has developed over the past two years.

The report now examines 196 countries, runs to nearly 800 pages and is published in six languages. It is one of four reports on the state of global religious freedom. The other three are published by the American Pew Research Center, the U.S. State Department and the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). The ACN report is the only non-governmental report in Europe that takes Catholic social doctrine into account.

In November 2020, ACN's Religious Freedom in the World Report was to be published for the 14th time. However, due to the pandemic, the publication date has

been postponed to 20 April 2021. The sad conclusion: Since the last report, the situation has not improved in terms of religious freedom. On the contrary, this situation has worsened worldwide. The rise of ethno-religious nationalism in countries such as Sri Lanka and India and the increased persecution of Christians and Muslims by extremist Islamic groups are highlighted in the report as worrying developments, as is the use of facial recognition technology in China, which is also being used to restrict religious freedom.

[www.religious-freedom-report.org](http://www.religious-freedom-report.org)





## Public relations

Whether media relations, world meetings, conferences or campaigns – every year ACN puts the concerns of the suffering Church in the public eye. Unfortunately, many events in 2020 had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. Nevertheless, we are proud that together with our project partners, we were able to carry out some events, which were organised by ACN headquarters or by some of the 23 national offices and which we would like to present here.

Children pray the rosary in Jalisco, Mexico.



**>> I encourage all the faithful to participate in the rosary prayer, which involves children all over the world. <<**

Pope Francis at the Angelus Prayer  
on 11 October 2020



## One million children praying the rosary

The “One Million Children Praying the Rosary” campaign, organised by ACN, was launched back in 2005 in Caracas, the capital of Venezuela. This campaign is mainly about praying together for world peace.

In 2020, we achieved record participation: On 18 and 19 October, children from 136 countries on all continents united for the prayer initiative. The most children participated in Poland and Mexico, followed by India, the Philippines and Slovakia.

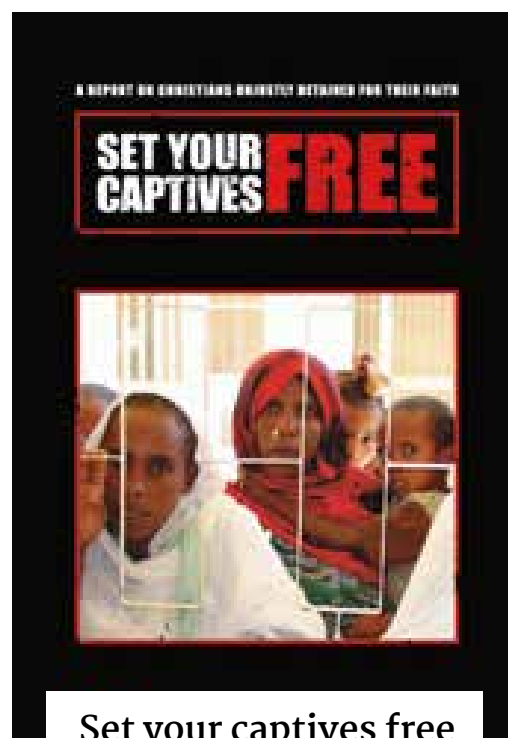
On the Nineveh Plains in Iraq, a large group of children gathered in front of a statue of Mary in Tesqopa to pray the rosary for world peace, for all those who suffer and for an end to the pandemic.

Due to coronavirus restrictions, children in many countries could not gather in larger groups, so they prayed with their families.

In Europe, the campaign was once again enthusiastically taken up by the children. For example, hundreds of schools across Spain, Great Britain and Slovakia participated in the prayer. In South Korea, children from the Diocesan School in Seoul were only able to join the rosary prayer on 22 October; it was not possible to do so earlier as a result of the government’s pandemic measures. The rosary prayer with children from Fatima in Portugal, the location of the Marian Shrine, was particularly symbolic. The live broadcast on Catholic television channels enabled thousands of faithful around the world to follow the initiative.



In 2020, ACN set up a homepage for the first time, where participants could conveniently and easily register. From the homepage, the campaign went viral, gaining enormous reach. Via social networks, it became clear that a good deal of people received the invitation from friends, parishes or dioceses. The only bad news was that the website where families and groups could register was the target of a cyberattack two days before the rosary prayer, stopping the counter at 509,771 participants. However, ACN is aware of thousands of faithful who wanted to register but unfortunately were not able to do so because of the cyberattack.



To mark #RedWeek this year, ACN published “Set Your Captives Free”, a report prepared by the aid organisation’s British office, in several countries around the world to raise awareness about wrongfully imprisoned Christians. During the report’s launch event in England, Maira Shahbaz, a 14-year-old Christian girl whose case is covered in the report, gave a video testimony from

Pakistan. Maira described how she was abducted, forcibly converted to Islam and forced to marry against her will, and how she was “blackmailed, tortured and abused”. After escaping from her captor, she now lives in a secret location. “Our lives, mine and my family’s, are in danger in Pakistan. We continually receive death threats. We are extremely scared and worried for our safety.”



## #RedWeek

**Around 250 million Christians around the world live in environments where they are violently persecuted, discriminated against or prevented from freely practising their faith. In 2015, ACN launched the #RedWeek initiative, also known as “Red Wednesday” in some countries, to draw attention to this appalling state of affairs worldwide. The aim is to draw public attention to the fate of persecuted and disadvantaged Christians. To this end, well-known cathedrals and public buildings in many cities around the world are illuminated in red.**

Between 18 and 25 November, hundreds of buildings in Australia, Canada, Colombia, Brazil, the Czech Republic, Poland, the Netherlands, Austria, Slovakia, the Philippines, Ireland and the United

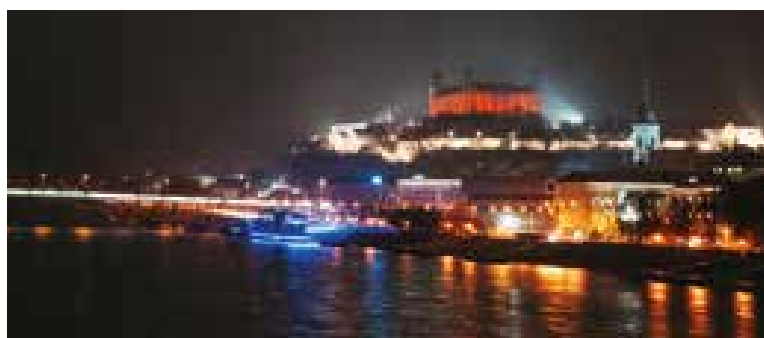
Kingdom were illuminated in red. These included the cathedrals of Montreal and Toronto (Canada), Manila (Philippines) and Armagh (Northern Ireland), the Elisabeth Bridge in Budapest (Hungary), the Slovak National Uprising Bridge and Bratislava Castle (Slovakia) and the Christ the Redeemer statue in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). In the Netherlands alone, 119 buildings took part in the action, more than twice as many as in the previous year.

The campaign culminated on the final day on 25 November, when Great Britain and the Philippines stood out with special actions this year. In the Philippines, this year’s #RedWeek was marked by the coronavirus pandemic. Therefore, the campaign wanted to draw attention to all priests and nuns who are on the frontline of services to those who are ill, and who are constantly

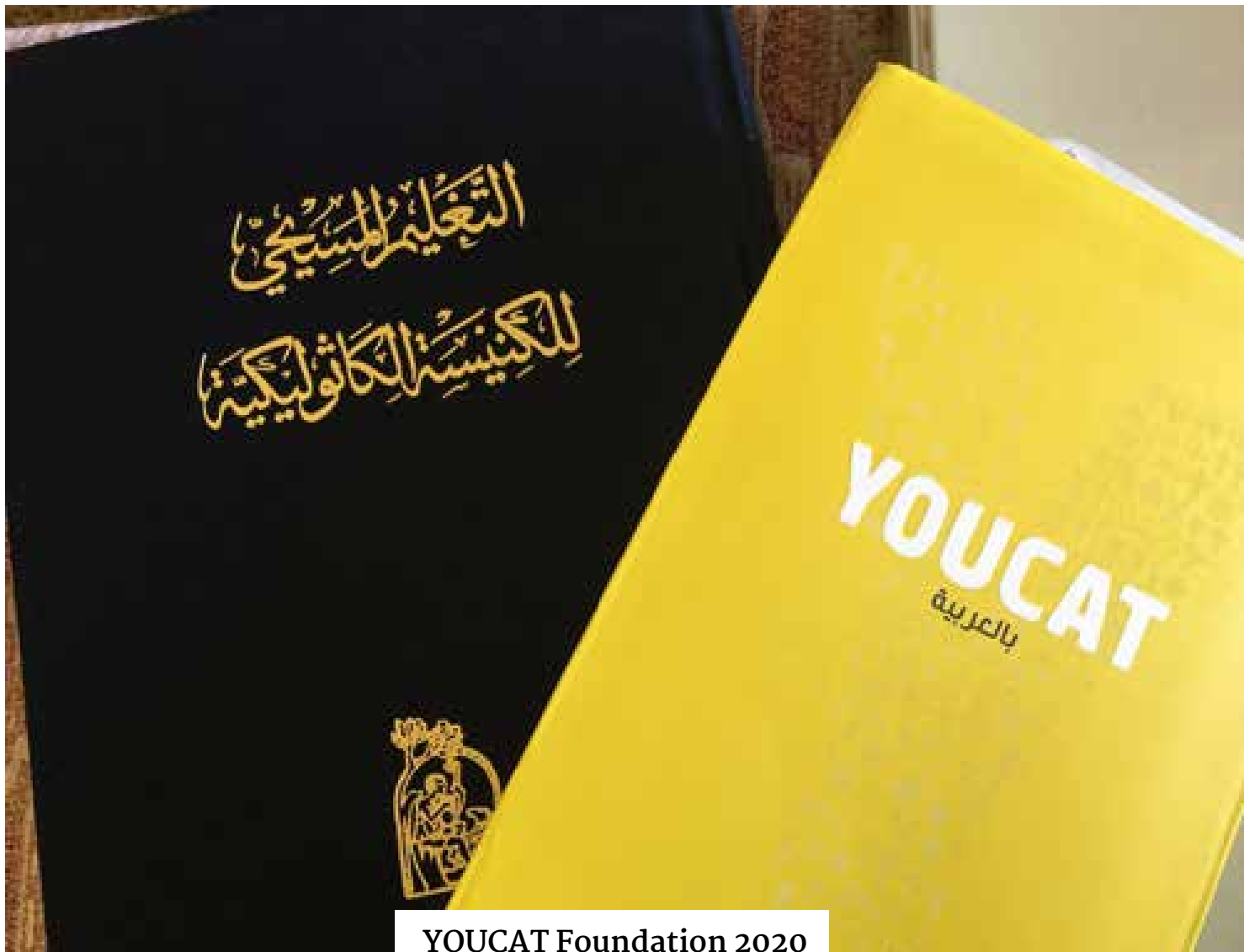
exposed to the risk of infection. So this time, in addition to churches and schools, hospitals were also invited to participate in the action.

“Red Wednesday” was celebrated in Amsterdam, in several places in Canada and Australia, and for the first time also in Budapest. The monuments and churches were bathed in deep red light, becoming a sign of solidarity for persecuted Christians all over the world.

In addition, attention was drawn to the worrying situation of Christians in Nigeria during #RedWeek in various countries. Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama of Abuja requested prayers for Father Dajo Matthew, who had been abducted just two days earlier, and also remembered many other victims of abduction among members of the Christian community.







## YOUCAT Foundation 2020

As publishers of YOUCAT, we are pleased that we have been able to continue the success story of the Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church in 2020, despite the pandemic. YOUCAT has so far been published in 58 languages, and the children's edition, YOUCAT for KIDS, in 24 languages. Through publishing activities, about 540,000 books were distributed last year and another 145,000 through pastoral book projects. With an edition in Mongolian and one in Urdu, two more translations were launched and regionalised editions were produced for French and English-speaking Africa.

But also digitally, YOUCAT is now at the cutting edge. Digital offers such as the YOUCAT Daily App have been very well received by young people. In addition to the Gospel of the day, users receive new impulses from YOUCAT ("what we believe") or DOCAT ("what we do"). More

than 400,000 users took advantage of these digital offers in 2020. In the process, educational content that was not only innovatively presented, but true to the faith was studied and shared digitally a total of more than six million times.

In many places, an increasing number of local initiatives are also being prepared to work with the YOUCAT materials. The development in India in 2020 was particularly pleasing. The lay initiative YOUCAT India, which was founded there, was recently officially recognised by the Indian Bishops' Conference and included in its structures as a multiplier for new evangelisation.

Naturally, there were also negative effects in 2020 due to the pandemic; for instance, the mission project YOUNG MISSIO, a course for young catechists who would like to pass on their faith to

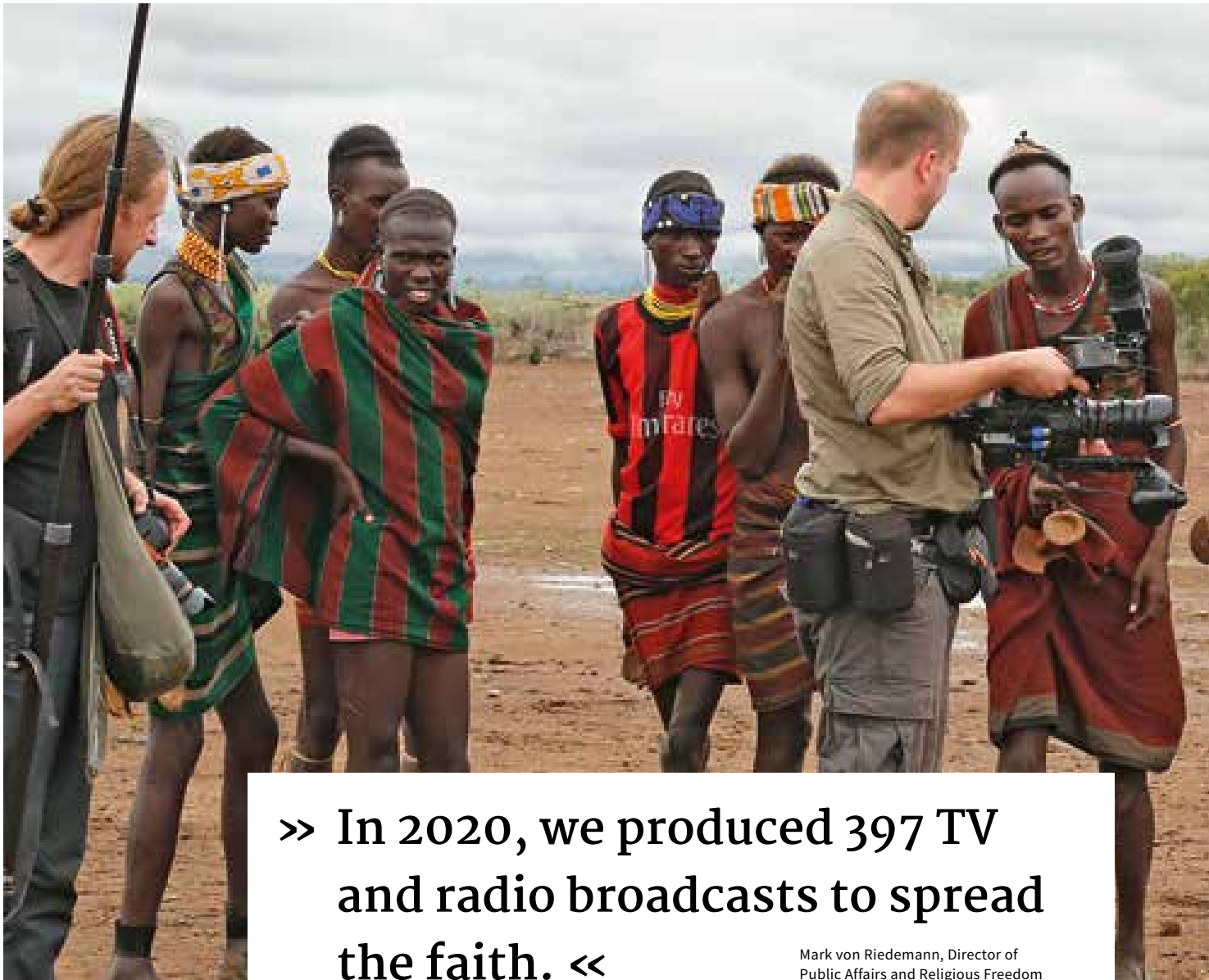
The new YOUCAT Faith Course complements the YOUCAT and encourages reflection and discussion about faith.



other young people that was successfully launched in 2019, and the follow-up project YOUCAT Lourdes planned for 2020 unfortunately could not take place. So it was all the more gratifying that it is back on the agenda in 2021 as a project for new evangelisation, despite the adverse circumstances.

» I entrust you with the YOUCAT for Kids. Never grow tired of asking questions and talking about your faith. « Pope Francis





## » In 2020, we produced 397 TV and radio broadcasts to spread the faith. «

Mark von Riedemann, Director of Public Affairs and Religious Freedom

Behind the Catholic Radio & Television Network (CRTN) is a modern production studio specialising in reports and documentaries on the Catholic Church in remote areas. The broadcasts primarily serve to support evangelisation efforts and promote solidarity with the suffering Church. Additionally, they further publicise the work of Aid to the Church in Need. Through our network, we are able to provide productions to TV and radio stations around the world. In 2020, the studio produced 397 TV and radio programmes in all language versions, which were then broadcast on 140 TV and 475 radio stations. In addition to documentary films and interview broadcasts such as “Where God Weeps” and “Donde

Dios Llorra”, we were able to produce a considerable number of short films for special ACN fundraisers.

Especially in non-Christian areas, spreading the Gospel through radio and television plays a very important role. The best example is in the Middle East, where there are more than 600 Muslim television channels, but only two Christian ones. Aid to the Church in Need oversees the establishment of Catholic radio and television stations here and supports the required training of staff members, thereby ensuring that they are professionally qualified.



## CRTN is a production and media service that is globally unique in the Church.



CRTN achieved record distribution in 2020 with documentaries alone: Programmes were transmitted by 140 television stations worldwide. A feature about a missionary working for reconciliation between hostile tribes in Ethiopia was nominated for 'Best Documentary' at the 2020 Religion Today Film Festival, held in Trento, Italy. The film was directed by Magdalena Wolnik.

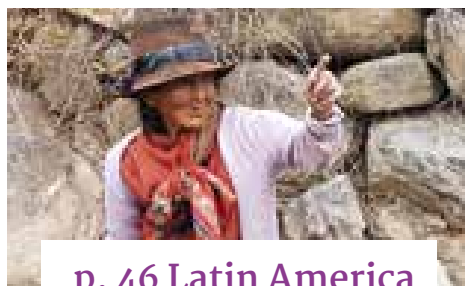
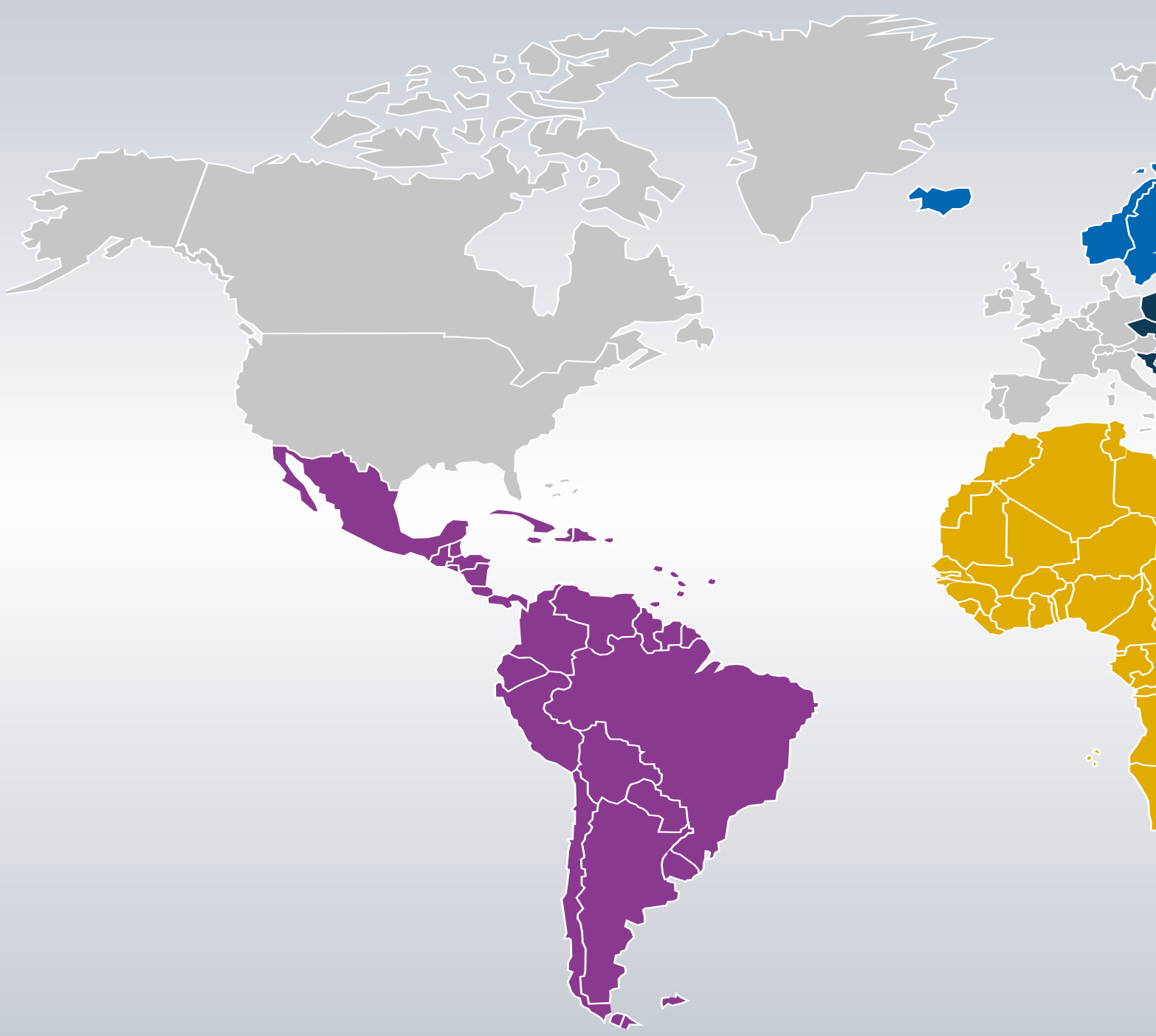
Every day, broadcasts reach tens of millions worldwide. In addition to production and distribution, CRTN also supports a number of worldwide TV distribution initiatives through consulting and programming services. What's more, CRTN established the global Catholic television

resource network [crtn.org](http://crtn.org) 20 years ago, which gives Catholic producers and television stations the opportunity to facilitate the presentation, exchange and distribution of Catholic programmes worldwide.

In addition, we have compiled a web catalogue containing 424 productions. In 2020, 309 producers and 172 television stations used this service, which is unique in the Church. A CRTN newsletter, a CRTN Facebook page with 11,180 followers and the CRTN YouTube channel round off our media service.

The CRTN YouTube Channel has had just 2,6 million views.





## p. 46 Latin America

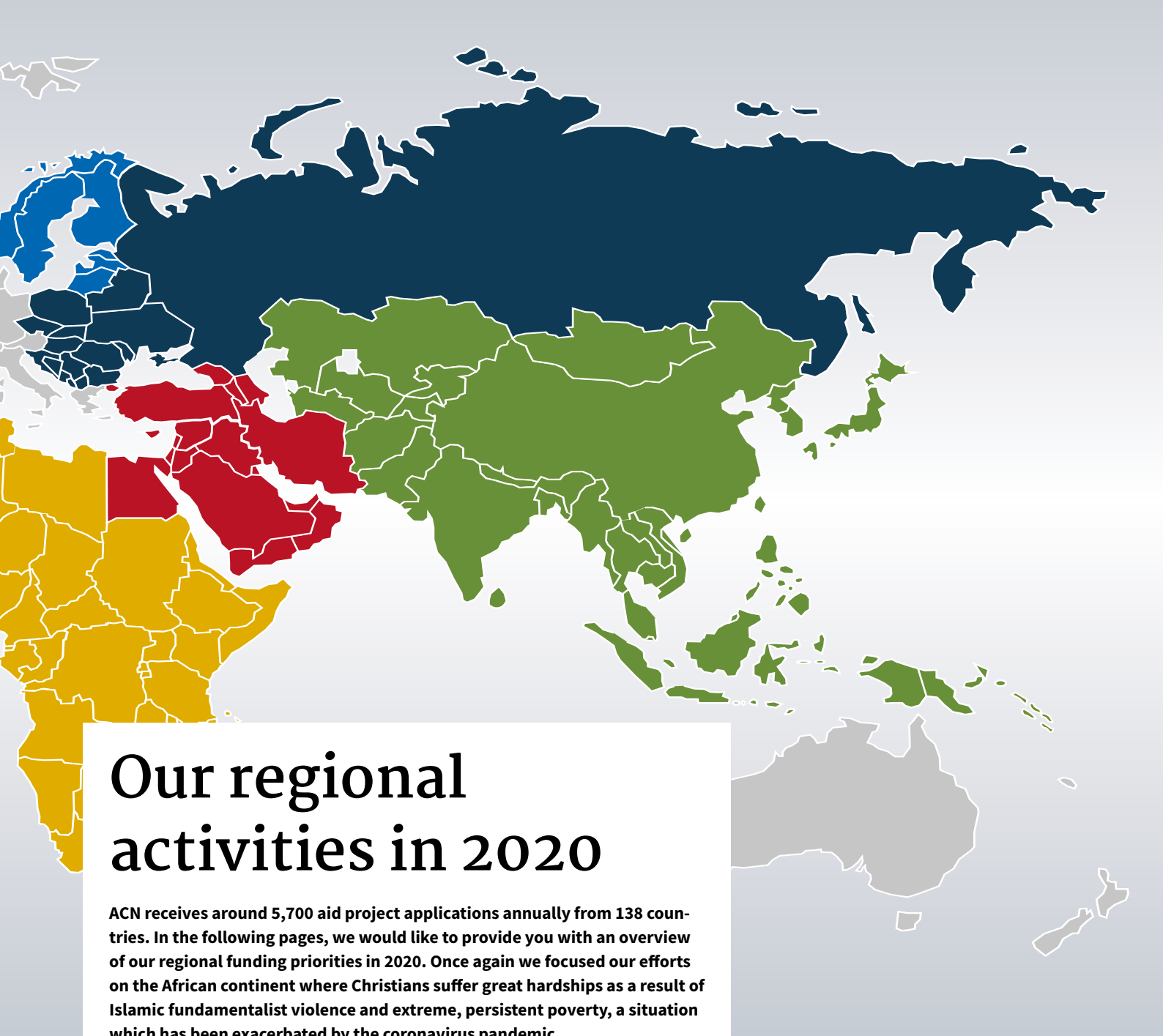
- pp. 48–49 Venezuela
- pp. 50–51 Brazil
- pp. 52–53 Peru
- pp. 54–55 Bolivia
- pp. 56–57 Chile
- pp. 58–59 Argentina



## p. 60 Africa

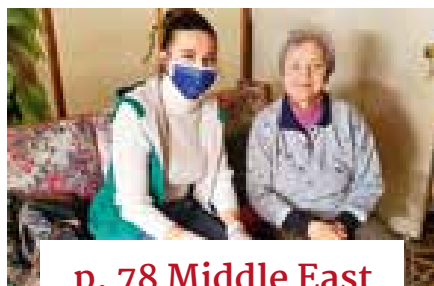
- pp. 62–63 Burkina Faso
- pp. 64–65 Nigeria
- pp. 66–67 Ethiopia
- pp. 68–69 Uganda
- pp. 70–71 Democratic Republic of Congo
- pp. 72–73 Zambia
- pp. 74–75 Mozambique
- pp. 76–77 Madagascar





# Our regional activities in 2020

ACN receives around 5,700 aid project applications annually from 138 countries. In the following pages, we would like to provide you with an overview of our regional funding priorities in 2020. Once again we focused our efforts on the African continent where Christians suffer great hardships as a result of Islamic fundamentalist violence and extreme, persistent poverty, a situation which has been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic.



## p. 78 Middle East

pp. 80–85 Lebanon  
pp. 86–89 Syria



## p. 90 Europe

pp. 92–93 Northern Europe  
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## p. 102 Asia/Oceania

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**With almost 500 million Catholics, Latin America remains the most “Catholic” continent. Nevertheless, the Church also suffers from pervasive violence in many regions. In recent years, there has been increasing social and political unrest in many Latin American countries. This has had disastrous consequences for the economy. More than 30% of South Americans live below the poverty line – and the pandemic has further exacerbated impoverishment. The Church is also in existential distress in many places due to the coronavirus crisis. ACN stands by the local churches and was frequently able to alleviate the greatest need in the reporting year with a total volume of 9.7 million euros.**

In 2020, Latin America became an epicentre of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the first half of the year the number of cases exploded and Latin America quickly became one of the worst affected regions. Despite lockdowns and other measures, health services were overburdened in many places. Images of graves dug on a massive scale in the Brazilian city of Manaus reached a global audience. Indigenous peoples were particularly hard hit.

supplies and work at home. Often the Church is the only support for these people. But many local churches suffer from violence. Sadly, in 2020, Latin America again ranked first in the statistics of murdered priests, religious and lay workers.



Brazilian hospital staff on the front line during the coronavirus pandemic.

## » Latin America is one of the epicentres of the pandemic. «

The pandemic has further exacerbated poverty in many countries with already weak economies. Particularly in the informal sector – from which around 50% of families in Latin America make a living – where many have lost their income. This further accelerates the spread of the virus, because the poor cannot build up food

ACN helps the Church to ease suffering in local communities and offer hope to the faithful. Even in times of the coronavirus, priests and religious want to continue to care for the faithful. ACN has provided them with extensive protective material for this purpose. In addition, we have been able to focus on supporting religious sisters and priests with material support and seminarians with training assistance.



## Venezuela

### Number of projects

114

Project applications

136\*

Funded projects

\*including project applications from the previous year.

### Type of projects

28

Construction/reconstruction

5

Means of transport

38

Mass stipends

3

Emergency aid

3

Media help

14

Bibles & books

24

Training of priests

9

Existential help

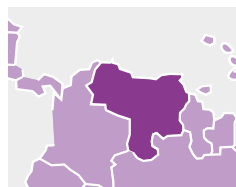
12

Formation of faith

### Head of Section

Isabel Jimenez Mancha

ACN is supporting eight parish canteens in San Carlos during this difficult time.



**Venezuela is facing a crisis that is unprecedented in recent history: the country, once well developed, was driven into the economic abyss by hyperinflation and corruption under President Maduro. Meanwhile, in terms of poverty and inequality, Venezuela is comparable to some of the poorer countries in Africa. 96% of the 31.6 million inhabitants live in poverty; 79% even in extreme poverty. The pandemic further exacerbated the economic hardships. The Church is also affected. Our aid for Venezuela therefore consists first and foremost of survival assistance.**

Venezuela is economically and politically on the brink. Prices continue to rise. Many people survive only thanks to the bank transfers they receive from their relatives abroad. Unemployment has risen even further due to the pandemic. The situation has become hopeless for many. No wonder that with the increasing hopelessness, the suicide rate has also risen. For others, fleeing the country is often the last resort. In the meantime, some five million Venezuelans have emigrated.

But those who leave Venezuela often fare no better than refugees at Europe's external borders. In December 2020, a refugee tragedy with at least 27 deaths occurred when a group of young people



## » Either hunger or Covid-19 will kill us. «

Bishop Polito Rodríguez  
Méndez of San Carlos



Communion for an old, sick  
woman in San Agustín.

trying to flee by boat to Trinidad and Tobago was shipwrecked. Gangs of smugglers exploit the desperation of Venezuelans and make them pay dearly for their services. The Church is raising its voice against these abuses and helps where it can.

Yet the Church itself mostly suffers from existential hardships; often it simply lacks the financial means to fulfil its tasks. And the pandemic does not stop at the houses of worship either. During the lockdown, churches were closed for four months. As a result, many priests no longer received collections, and frequently did not even have anything to eat. With Mass stipends and material support, we ensured that the priests and religious were at least provided with the basic necessities of life and were thus able to continue their ministry during this difficult time.



### Murder of a young priest

After celebrating Holy Mass, the 39-year-old Venezuelan priest José Manuel de Jesús Ferreira was murdered outside his church on 20 October 2020. ACN mourns the loss of a friend and project partner who served as parish priest of the Eucharis-

tic Shrine of San Juan Bautista in the Diocese of San Carlos de Cojedes. ACN representatives had visited him during two trips. He was a priest and missionary whose entire commitment was to the faith and the needs of his people.





## Brazil

### Number of projects

□ 277    ✓ 209

### Type of projects

🔔 18    📶 26    📺 44  
 📌 1    🎤 3    📖 12  
 👤 61    👥 34    👤 10

### Head of Section

Rafael d'Aqui

Holy Mass in the Cathedral of St Ignatius of Loyola in Pinheiro at the time of the coronavirus pandemic.



**The coronavirus pandemic hit Brazil with full force last year. Even though President Bolsonaro repeatedly played down the dangers of the virus, the statistics reflect a catastrophic development: At the end of the year, the country recorded 7.6 million infections and more than 192,000 deaths. The Amazon region was particularly affected. Priests and religious had a hard time continuing people's pastoral care, given the risk of infection. ACN helped with protec-**

**tive material and continued to support the local Church with priestly formation and by providing vehicles for transport.**

Of Brazil's 210 million inhabitants, 64% are Catholics. However, 20 years ago, Catholics still accounted for 75% of the population here. The Church is finding it increasingly difficult to survive in this crisis-ridden country. Corruption, unemployment, economic crisis and environmental destruction are making many people receptive to deceptive promises of salvation made by sects. These are now active almost everywhere in Brazil and, unlike many parishes, usually have a good deal of money at their disposal.



The pandemic has made the situation even worse. Thus in 2020, the local Church faced the particular challenge of providing pastoral care to its faithful despite the pandemic, while at the same time protecting its priests and staff from infection as much as possible. The situation was particularly threatening in the Amazon region. In Manaus, the capital of the state



The religious sisters of the Congregation of the Sisters of St Ann care for the needy in Natal.

» We thank God for your generous heart, which you share with those who need it most. «

Dilma Franca dos Santos,  
Shalom Catholic Community

of Amazonas, three quarters of the city of almost 2 million inhabitants are said to have already been infected. The pictures of graves dug on a massive scale horrified the world public. ACN therefore helped several dioceses with protective material.

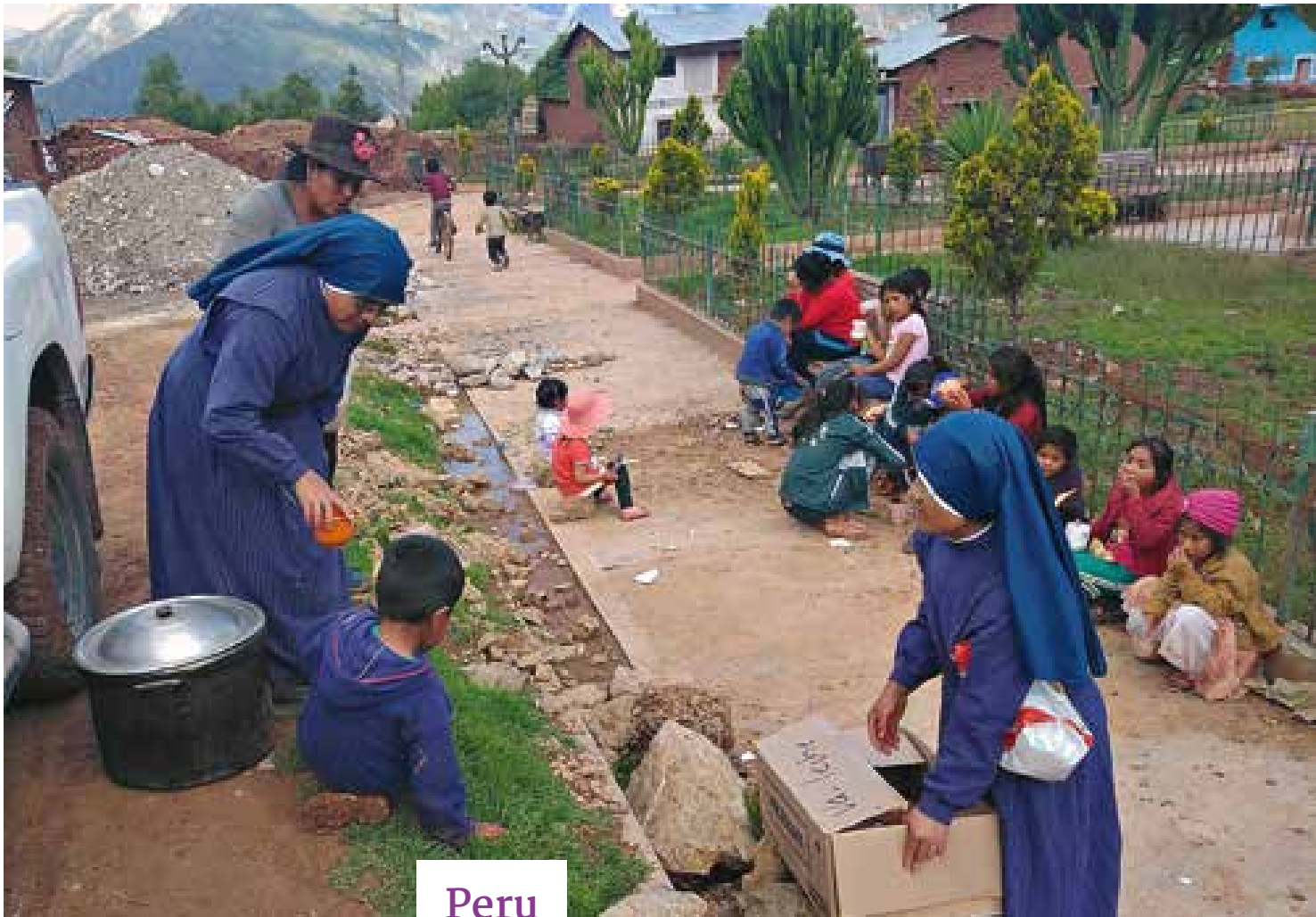
In 2020, as in previous years, we continued to support the local Church in the training of future priests, religious and lay workers. Catechetical material was also provided for evangelisation. Since many priests were forced to do without collections as a result of the pandemic, we increasingly helped with Mass stipends. To ensure mobility in the huge parishes, ACN also helped to purchase vehicles for pastoral care. In the Amazon region, where a large number of the villages can only be reached by river, we were able to finance the purchase of a boat.



## Necessity is the mother of invention – the Shalom Catholic Community

During the pandemic, charitable and pastoral care is needed more than ever. For example, the Shalom Catholic Community is helping the population on the difficult-to-reach island of Marajó in the Amazon estuary. Here, due to the coronavirus crisis, the mis-

sionaries have taken unconventional paths in pastoral care – e.g. a telephone counselling service for people who feel lonely during the pandemic. In addition, the community set up online prayer groups via video calls. Their valuable work is supported by ACN.



## Peru

### Number of projects

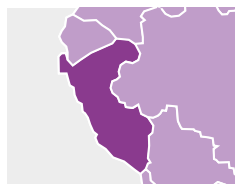
76 69

### Type of projects

12 3 20  
0 0 1  
22 8 3

### Head of Section

Isabel Jimenez Mancha



**In the third largest country in South America, the majority of the 32 million Peruvians belong to indigenous tribes – Catholics form what is by far the largest religious denomination with 76% of the population. The people are suffering from the ongoing economic crisis and social tensions. The pandemic has made the situation even worse. Bitter poverty, rural exodus and drug problems are omnipresent. ACN supported the local**

**Church in the reporting year, mainly with training and material assistance, as well as Mass stipends.**

Peru is marked by economic crises and political instability. Although modest prosperity has developed in the cities, abject poverty prevails in the countryside and in the mountains. In November, President Vizcarra was removed from office by Congress on corruption charges, which led to tumultuous protests. It remains to be seen whether the situation will change after the new elections.

Distribution of Bibles to inmates of the Sarita Colonia prison in Callao.



The pastoral work of the religious sisters of the Parish of the Immaculate Conception in Canaria District, Ayacucho, is supported by ACN.

Holy Mass in Abra Lliullita at an altitude of 4,600 metres.



Peru also had to struggle with the coronavirus pandemic last year. Although the government reacted with restrictions as early as March, the authorities counted more than one million infections and 37,000 deaths by the end of the year. Poverty has been exacerbated by the coronavirus crisis. The rural exodus of mostly young Peruvians has increased even more. In the years before, many had already migrated to the cities and urban centres. There, problems such as drug addiction and broken homes are increasing.

For many, the Church is often the last refuge of hope. During the coronavirus crisis, the Church is trying to provide more pastoral care and promote solidarity among the people. In doing so, religious sisters and priests often work under the most difficult conditions. Especially in the mountains, many places are extremely difficult to reach.

ACN supports religious sisters with material aid and priests with Mass stipends, while also promoting the formation of young candidates to the priesthood.

We also provide financial support for the training of catechists, who play an important role in pastoral care and teaching the faith, especially in remote villages that can rarely be visited by a priest.

**» In the midst of poverty and restrictions, we carry out the task entrusted to us. «**

Bishop Jesús María Aristín  
Seco of Yurimaguas





## Bolivia

### Number of projects

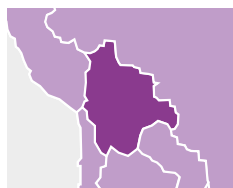
□ 52    ☒ 48

### Type of projects

🔔 7    🎯 4    🏠 13  
 📍 0    🎤 0    📖 0  
 👥 10    👤 9    👤 5

### Head of Section

Isabel Jimenez Mancha



**For a long time, Bolivia was considered the poorest country on the South American continent. Even though the economic situation has improved somewhat, not much of the increased prosperity has reached large parts of the population. The Church alone is committed to helping the weak, the poor and the socially marginalised, but at the same time faces great challenges. The nearly 9 million faithful in many places face a glaring**

**shortage of priests and religious. Here, ACN is a committed and reliable partner to the local Church in coping with its tasks.**

About 80% of the 11 million Bolivians are Catholic. Serving the faithful becomes a mammoth task, especially where there is a lack of priests and religious. This includes both the cities, which are growing rapidly due to rural exodus, and the impassable and wide-ranging areas of the Bolivian Andes. The capital La Paz, for example, located in the Andes at an altitude

In many places, such as El Alto, there is great poverty.





A missionary religious sister of the congregation "Misioneras de Jesús Verbo y Víctima" at a baptism in Sucre.

» The good news needs to be proclaimed, especially to the suffering and marginalised. «

Krzysztof Bobka, Social Work Coordinator in the Diocese of El Alto



of 3,600 metres, now has one million inhabitants due to the influx of people from rural areas. Accordingly, the number of faithful in the parishes is also increasing, so that more priests are urgently needed. ACN has responded to the applications of the affected dioceses and also supported the training of 29 prospective priests in 2020.

The pandemic is also taking its toll on the local Church. The Carmelite religious sisters in Santa Cruz are a telling example of the hardships in times of the coronavirus. The religious sister usually earn their living by baking hosts for Holy Mass. But due to the risk of infection, services were also severely curtailed, leaving the Carmelite Nuns without an important source of income. ACN helped them with a subsidy for their livelihood. We were also able to support other communities of religious sister in Bolivia through material aid. In addition, we helped priests with Mass stipends and provided financial aid for vehicles and construction measures in Church facilities.



### Existential aid secures pastoral care in the Andes

The religious sisters of the congregation "Misioneras de Jesús Verbo y Víctima" work in the most remote, poorest and difficult areas of the country, where there are few priests. Six of them are active in the Andes in the Bolivian Archdiocese of

Sucre. Even long and arduous roads fraught with danger do not deter them from carrying out their duties. The nuns have become indispensable for maintaining pastoral care. ACN supports them through existential aid.



Chile

#### Number of projects

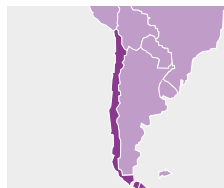
□ 33    ☒ 31

#### Type of projects

🔔 7    🌀 0    📡 7  
 📍 1    🎤 0    📖 2  
 👤 6    👤 3    👤 5

#### Head of Section

Rafael d'Aqui



Official figures claim that two-thirds of the 17.9 million Chileans are Catholic. However, according to recent surveys, the percentage is actually much lower at just 45%. But many faithful are very involved in church life, even though the Catholic Church in Chile is going through difficult times. Already in 2019, the Church suffered increasingly from social unrest in the country, in which church buildings were not spared. In 2020, houses of worship and church facilities were again the target of

violent attacks. Against this backdrop, ACN affirmed that it would continue to provide undiminished assistance to Christians in Chile.

The current escalation of violence in Chile first ignited in autumn 2019 in the capital Santiago de Chile, which is also the country's seat of government. Here, protests took place that were directed against social inequality in the country. Excessive violence followed, in which the Catholic Church also became the target of the resentment and hatred of some groups of demonstrators. To the dismay of all Christians in the country, the attacks on the Church continued in 2020.

» Seeing a church destroyed by arson hurts the soul. «

María de los Ángeles Covarrubias, President of ACN Chile



>> The demand for social change legitimises neither hatred nor violence and destruction. <<

Dr Thomas Heine-Geldern,  
Executive President of ACN International



Holy Mass during the coronavirus pandemic in La Serena in June 2020.

According to information made available to ACN, between October 2019 and the end of 2020, some 60 places of worship and church facilities in Chile were attacked and burned down.

Our relief organisation will not leave the Church of Chile stranded. In 2020, we supported priests, primarily with Mass stipends, and provided them with protective material for the pastoral care of Covid-19 patients in the hospitals of the various dioceses. Support continued to be provided for the training of seminarians, for priests are and remain the builders of the Church's spiritual future.



### Arson attack on a sacred building in Santiago de Chile

18 October 2020 was a dark day when the Church of the Assumption, one of the oldest sacred buildings in the Chilean capital, was burnt down. The attack occurred on the fringes of a demonstration by government opponents. The Archbishop of Santiago

condemned the act of violence and called for peaceful demonstrations. The church, built in 1876, had already been severely damaged in an attack in 2019. The priest there, Pedro Narbona, is also the ecclesiastical assistant of the Chilean national office of ACN.



## Argentina

### Number of projects

□ 57    ✓ 49

### Type of projects

🔔 5    🌀 0    🏠 20  
 📍 0    🎤 4    📖 1  
 👤 9    👤 6    👤 4

### Head of Section

Rafael d'Aqui



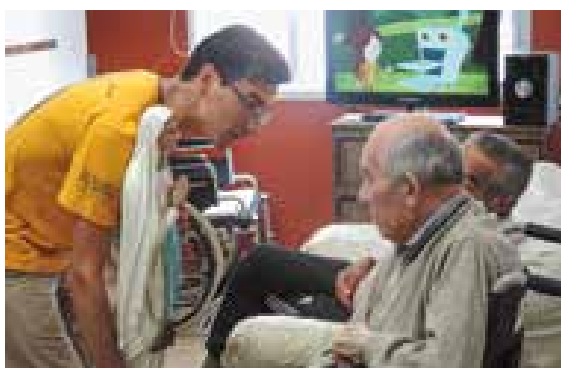
With an area of approximately 2.8 million square kilometres, Argentina is the eighth largest country in

the world. Almost 70% of the 44 million inhabitants are Catholics. Pope Francis' homeland is in the midst of a severe economic crisis. Already last year, 40% of the population was classified as poor. In addition, the poorest are particularly suffering from the consequences of the coronavirus crisis. In 2020, we were able to support the local Church in a total of 49 projects, which, in addition to its pastoral tasks,

is especially committed to the socially weak, indigenous inhabitants, the sick, women and children.

Covid-19 also hit the Argentinean population hard last year. At the end of the year, 1.6 million infections and over 43,000 deaths were counted. The Church is particularly concerned about its poorest dioceses. One example is San Roque de Presidencia Roque Sáenz Peña. The diocese in northern Argentina is largely located in impassable jungle, where mostly indigenous peoples live, who are also among the poorest in the country. Social conflicts, economic problems and, last but not least, the pandemic have left their

Seminarians supported by ACN visit a nursing home in Nueve de Julio.



A missionary sister of the congregation “Misioneras de Jesús Verbo y Víctima” carrying out pastoral work in San Rafael.

Religious sisters often have vast parishes to look after.



mark. For the people in the region, each day is a matter of survival. Many children are severely malnourished.

The Church repeatedly raises its voice for the indigenous population and passionately stands up for them. ACN is helping them. In the reporting year, we provided existential aid to 26 religious sisters who assist the poorest in this particularly poor diocese under the most difficult conditions. We were also able to support religious sisters in other dioceses of the country and help priests in need with Mass stipends. In addition, we have continued to promote priestly formation.

Another concern of the local Church is the protection of unborn life, to which it is tirelessly committed. It also resolutely resisted the Argentine government’s legalisation of abortion at the end of last year. Previously, the bishops had called for prayers for the protection of unborn life at Christmas. Pope Francis also intervened in the public discourse.



“GRÁVIDA Centro de Asistencia a la Vida Naciente” is a centre for expectant mothers in crisis and conflict situations that is headquartered in the city of San Pedro, near the capital Buenos Aires. The centre was founded in 1989 and is supported by ACN. It operates a national network with 71 branches and provides

counselling, support and courses, mainly for pregnant adolescents and young mothers. The offer also includes educational work in schools. Thanks to the comprehensive counselling and concrete support, many women decide against an abortion and instead choose to give birth to their child.







# Africa

**In 2020, 17 African countries celebrated the 60th anniversary of their independence. But despite enormous progress, the continent faces major challenges in many places. The same holds true for the Catholic Church. Political instability, Islamist terror and the economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic have left many Church institutions in dire straits. Therefore, for ACN, Africa remains a high-priority region, which we were able to support in the reporting year with a total volume of 21.3 million euros.**

The Church in Africa is young and growing. Today, almost every fifth Catholic in the world lives here. This includes one in nine priests, one in eight religious sisters and more than a quarter of all seminarians. Although the local Church draws a good deal of hope from this, the situation in many regions is daunting. For example, more and more people, including Church representatives and employees, suffer from increasing violence and persecution. The situation is particularly worrying in the countries of the Sahel and in Mozambique, where Islamist extremism threatens the peaceful coexistence of Christians and Muslims. Hundreds of thousands have already been displaced or have fled.



Students and pupils during the rosary procession in Sankera, Nigeria.

In addition, the plight of the Church has been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. Although the numbers of infections and deaths on the continent are comparatively low, the consequences for the economy and the Church are severe. The pandemic has increased poverty through unemployment and led to a drastic decline in material and financial support for the Church from the faithful. ACN has particularly helped priests and religious by providing material support and Mass stipends, and has also increased its funding for education.

**>> The coronavirus pandemic further exacerbates the existential plight of the African Church. <<**



## Burkina Faso

### Number of projects

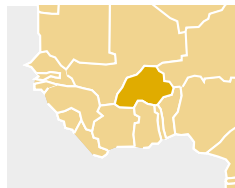
106 Project applications  
67 Funded projects

### Type of projects

12 Construction/reconstruction  
3 Means of transport  
10 Mass stipends  
4 Emergency aid  
5 Media help  
0 Bibles & books  
22 Training of priests  
9 Existential help  
2 Formation of faith

### Head of Section

Rafael d'Aqui



**Burkina Faso was long considered an example of peaceful coexistence between religions. In this country in western Africa, just over 60% of the 20 million inhabitants are Muslims, while around a quarter of the population are Christians. Since 2019, however, the country has been a hotspot of jihadist violence, which is mainly directed against Christians and Church institutions. The coronavirus pandemic is further exacerbating the crisis for the local Church. ACN supported Burkina Faso in 2020 with numerous aid projects from which many believers are drawing new hope.**

Jihadist aggression particularly affects those parts of the country located in the north, east and Sahel area. The “warriors of God” plan to establish a caliphate here. Since 2019, almost one million people have been displaced from these areas. Thousands of internally displaced persons remain in the few villages that are still populated. The situation is also desolate for the children. More than 1,000 schools have now been closed or destroyed. Children run the risk of being forcibly recruited as child soldiers. Fortunately, despite terrorist threats, the parliamentary and presidential elections in November were largely peaceful.

Refugees have to walk miles for water.



**>> We witnessed the jihadists killing without mercy. <<**

Etienne,  
14-year-old refugee



The coronavirus pandemic represents an additional burden for the population of Burkina Faso. Our project partners describe the virus as “a disaster in the midst of disaster”. The Church is also affected. At St Peter and Paul Seminary in Ouagadougou, one of the professors died of Covid-19 and four trainee priests also fell ill with the virus. The young men studying there mostly come from families who had to flee as a result of jihadist terrorist attacks. ACN supported the seminarians and their families with existential help and supported them by funding the provision of protective materials against the coronavirus.

ACN also supported the expansion of the Catholic radio in Burkina Faso. Especially in crisis zones, radio is an important tool for proclamation of the faith, information and advice. The coronavirus crisis has reinforced the importance of radio. ACN also sent existential help to priests and nuns assisting the population and supported displaced catechists and their families who play an important role in pastoral care.

## » Terrorism claims even more victims than Covid-19. «

Priest of the  
Diocese of Kaya



A camp of internally  
displaced people.





## Nigeria

### Number of projects

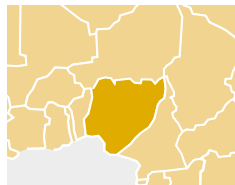
□ 121    ✓ 113

### Type of projects

🔔 12    🎯 1    🏠 32  
 💎 0    🎤 0    📖 1  
 👤 57    🏫 6    👤 4

### Head of Section

Kinga von Schierstaedt



For years, the Christian minority in the predominantly Muslim north of Nigeria has suffered from attacks and assaults by the Islamist terrorist group Boko Haram. In the first two months of 2020 alone, the group killed 350 Christians. Added to this are the victims and economic

burdens of the coronavirus crisis, which is also causing increasing material hardship for the Church. ACN stands by the local Church during this difficult time, helping it above all to maintain the Church infrastructure and training of priests.

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic also left its mark on Nigeria. The Church was particularly concerned about the threat

Archbishop Kaigama distributes food to needy Nigerians.







Reconstruction of St Peter's Church, Kagadama, destroyed by Boko Haram.



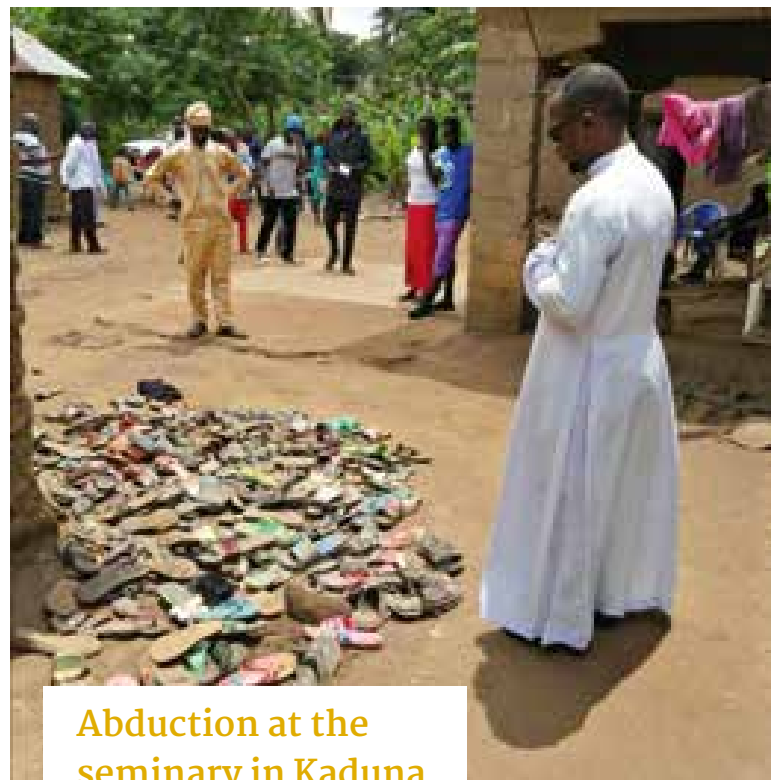
Pupils of the Holy Spirit Boarding School, Sankera.

## >> Boko Haram will never take away our faith. <<

The Bishop of Maiduguri,  
Oliver Dashe Doeme

of famine and the destabilisation of the country's already weak economy. In addition to the virus, however, it is above all the violent excesses of Boko Haram that are terrifying the Nigerian population. Since 2015, some 12,000 Christians have been murdered in Nigeria, more than 200 churches and numerous schools have been burned down, and more than 70 priests and religious have been kidnapped or murdered.

The end of the year was also marked by violence against Christians: on Christmas Eve, Boko Haram carried out an attack in the village of Pemi in the north-east of the country, killing eleven people and razing two church buildings to the ground. But Boko Haram is not the only group that is responsible for the violence. In the central zone of the country, brutal attacks by heavily armed Muslim Fulani cattle herders are becoming more frequent.



## Abduction at the seminary in Kaduna

On the night of 8 January 2020, four young seminarians were kidnapped at Good Shepherd Seminary in the northern Nigerian city of Kaduna. The kidnappers released three of them in late January, but 18-year-old Michael Nndadi was found murdered. One of the kidnappers explained that the

young man had not stopped preaching the Gospel. But despite the difficult situation, the number of priestly vocations in Nigeria is encouragingly high. In 2020, ACN therefore focused on promoting the training of seminarians while also supporting needy priests through Mass stipends.

## >> Though we suffer terror, we must be a people of hope. <<

Father Samuel  
Aseer Aluga



## Ethiopia

### Number of projects

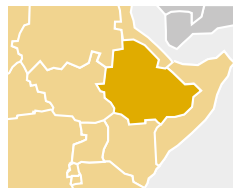
105 72

### Type of projects

18 6 9  
0 1 3  
13 1 21

### Head of Section

Toni Zender



The country on the Horn of Africa is a land of many contrasts. Ethiopia's population of nearly 102 mil-

lion is divided into more than 100 different ethnic groups with different cultures and languages. There is strong economic growth, but also abject poverty. In recent years, Islam has become radicalised in some regions – often with support from abroad. There have already been repeated attacks against Christian churches. Most recently, in the summer of 2020, massacres were committed against

Orthodox Christians in the Oromia region. ACN supports the local Church with financial aid for education and training, youth pastoral care and the construction of churches.

With 58% of the population, Orthodox Christians are in the majority in Ethiopia, but the proportion of Muslims is increasing and currently stands at 34%. Catholics make up barely 2% of the population. Nevertheless, the Church runs many schools, kindergartens and social institutions. Especially in areas of first evangelisation, where people still belong to traditional tribal religions, there are many baptisms.

Father Kenneth Iwunna celebrates Mass in a small village in the parish of Dhadim.



>> The situation in northern Ethiopia is alarming. <<



Father Kenneth  
Iwunna, Holy Cross  
Parish, Dhadim.

But like so many countries in Africa, Ethiopia is also repeatedly hit by outbreaks of violence. In a massacre of Orthodox Christians in the summer of 2020 in the western Ethiopian Oromia region alone, 239 people were killed, according to official reports. In the north of the country, on the other hand, since November 2020, the central government has been fighting against regional militias of the “Tigray People’s Liberation Front”, whose goal is the self-determination of the Tigray ethnic group. Many people have fled the violence – at least 50,000 of them to Sudan. The civil war threatens to destabilise the entire Horn of Africa region. Communication with the crisis region is cut off, and the fate of the local bishop and that of priests and religious in the war region is uncertain.

For ACN, those who proclaim the faith were once again the centre of focus in Ethiopia in 2020. For instance, we supported numerous projects for the education and training of priests, religious and lay people, as well as the implementation of pastoral programmes. Pastoral care for young people is very important to us; among other things, it contributes to young people wanting to work for a better future in their homeland instead of

leaving the country. The construction of churches and chapels was also once again on our funding list in the reporting year, for these contribute to a sense of identity in the parishes. In addition, we helped to procure suitable vehicles for pastoral care in the vast areas of the country.



## Mourning for Bishop Angelo Moreschi

ACN mourns the death of Bishop Angelo Moreschi, Vicar Apostolic of Gambella in western Ethiopia. The bishop died on 25 March 2020 on the Feast of the Annunciation of

the Lord in Brescia, Italy, as a result of a Covid-19 infection. He was the first Catholic bishop and the first ACN project partner to fall victim to the virus.



## Uganda

### Number of projects

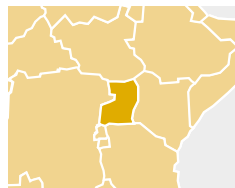
□ 145    ✓ 74

### Type of projects

🔔 11    🌀 5    🕊 21  
 📍 0    🎤 0    📖 0  
 👤 29    👤 6    👤 2

### Head of Section

Toni Zender



**The landlocked East African country of Uganda has about 44 million inhabitants. With a population share of about 85%, Christians are the largest religious community in the country; of these, about 39% are Catholics. Nevertheless, the local Church is facing increasing pressure from Islamist extremists and the spread of sects. In addition, the coronavirus pandemic has further exacerbated the material hardship of the Catholic Church. ACN therefore**

**supported the Church in Uganda with Mass stipends and training grants in the reporting year.**

**supported the Church in Uganda with Mass stipends and training grants in the reporting year.**

In 2020, poverty in Uganda was once again significantly exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. The virus also had noticeable consequences for the Church of Uganda – especially for priests. For example, the ban on public church services for several months resulted in a total loss of collections. Nevertheless, the lockdown did not lead to people practising their faith any less intensely. On the contrary: ACN project partners report that

Priestly ordination in the Diocese of Kabale.





## » Despite the lockdown, Christians have been intensively practising their faith. «

people prayed more privately in their homes and devoted themselves to reading the Bible. In addition, many believers follow daily Holy Mass via radio, television or the Internet.

Other challenges in Uganda in 2020 included severe flooding and landslides in the Diocese of Kasese in the south-western part of the country, as well as one million refugees from South Sudan who continue to live in refugee camps. These refugees are also receiving pastoral care. But despite what are often adverse conditions, there are many priestly vocations. ACN has therefore focused its project aid in Uganda in this difficult year on training grants for the seminaries and Mass stipends for priests.



### From war refugee to catechist

John Joseph Gazi is one of millions of traumatised refugees in Uganda. He witnessed his father, sister and brother being killed before his eyes during the civil war in South Sudan. He managed to flee to the neighbouring country of Uganda, where more than one million South Sudanese live in refugee camps. Despite his

difficult situation, John Joseph trained as a catechist to work for reconciliation and help people not to lose hope and faith. ACN funded his training. At the Emmaus Centre near the Ugandan capital Kampala, young people like him are trained to help their compatriots heal and overcome their emotional wounds.





## Democratic Republic of Congo

### Number of projects

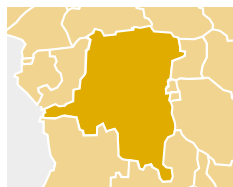
□ 342    ✓ 248

### Type of projects

🔔 24    🕒 13    🏠 108  
 📖 1    🎤 0    📄 4  
 👥 80    👤 8    👤 10

### Head of Section

Kinga von Schierstaedt



**The Democratic Republic of Congo is known for its wealth of mineral resources. But a large part of the**

**85 million inhabitants lives in abject poverty due to corruption and mismanagement. For 25 years, several parts of the country have been the scene of armed conflicts involving changing rebel factions. In addition, in 2020, the consequences of the coronavirus crisis were felt by the Church everywhere in Congo. ACN granted a coronavirus aid package to several communities of religious sisters to help ease the worst of their existential needs.**

In Congo, the Catholic Church is usually at the forefront of tackling social and political problems. It raises its voice wherever the state fails to do so. In 2020, the situation was once again particularly dramatic in the east of the country. Several bishops received death threats when they publicly raised their voices against the catastrophic security situation in the region. Furthermore, at the end of October 2020, the village of Lisasa was the scene of a bloody attack by suspected Ugandan guerrilla fighters. At least 21 people were killed in the massacre, including a catechist. Several buildings – including social facilities of the Church – were burnt down.

Not only violence, but also the coronavirus had a severe impact on the local Church in 2020. In many dioceses, the pandemic has left Church institutions in dire straits. Therefore, in addition to the support ACN already provides to priests and seminarians for their

**>> Please continue to support us in the struggle for greater human dignity. <<**

Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo Besungu,  
Archbishop of Kinshasa



The Kazadi-Musoko  
ferry across the Lubi-  
lanji River.

training and livelihoods, emergency material support was provided to nearly 70 communities of religious sisters in the six dioceses of the conflict region of Bukavu in the east of the country as part of a coronavirus project package.



Confession in  
the Archdiocese  
of Bukavu.



## Mass stipends – more urgent than ever in times of the coronavirus

For many Congolese priests, Mass stipends have become even more vitally important than they already were since the spread of the coronavirus. For example, Father Alain Mwila Wa Ilunga of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Workers thanks us for the help provided by Mass stipends, which he shares with the poor-

est of the poor and destitute sick in these difficult times. Likewise, the novice master of the order, Father Clément Mwehu Muteba, is very pleased about the financial support. It has enabled him to buy petrol and also paper to teach young people, and so continue to carry out the tasks of his apostolate.



## Zambia

### Number of projects

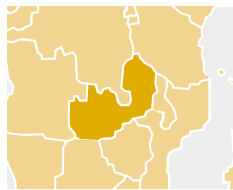
75 77\*

### Type of projects

4 9 18  
1 0 17  
20 1 7

### Head of Section

Ulrich Kny



**Zambia has one of the fastest growing populations in the world. Although the landlocked**

**southern African country is one of the more stable countries in Africa, over 60% of its people still live in poverty. The infrastructure is poor, and diseases such as AIDS and malaria are widespread. As nearly everywhere, the coronavirus pandemic is weighing heavily on the country. The local Church is also very concerned about the spread of sects. ACN supports the Church of Zambia primarily in education and training as well as for mobility in rural areas.**

Of the approximately 17 million inhabitants of Zambia, about 95% are Christians – the majority Protestants. About 33% are Catholics. Besides the current coronavirus crisis, the spread of sects has been posing enormous challenges to the local Church for years. Believers are mostly enticed away where there are too few Catholic priests. Bishop Justin Mulenga, who died in March 2020 and was in charge of seminaries at the Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops, attached great importance to promoting the next generation of priests: “Since we know all too well that the Church needs true witnesses of the Gospel who are very well trained, motivated and disciplined priests, the seminary must fulfil its daily duties.”

\*including project applications from the previous year.



The new vehicle of St Dominic's Seminary in Lusaka.



First Communion  
in Lusaka.

## » The Church needs true witnesses of the Gospel. «

Bishop Justin Mulenga, Bishop Chair for  
Seminaries in the Zambia Conference of  
Catholic Bishops (deceased March 2020)

ACN is doing all it can to support the next generation of priests in Zambia. We regularly support the local Church with direct educational aid and provide funding to equip the seminaries. For example, with the help of our foundation, a vehicle was purchased for the seminary in Lusaka and the minor seminary in Kasama, and a water purification system for the seminary in Mpika. In 2020, we also supported the further education of priests and the deepening of their spiritual life through days of reflection and meetings with others. But formation of the laity and catechesis are also close to our heart. The parishes were very pleased about our shipment of more than 3,200 poster sets for the Children's Bible, which can be used in catechesis regardless of the 70 languages spoken in Zambia.

Another focus of our project aid in Zambia is improving mobility. As is the case almost everywhere in Africa, the parishes extend over huge, sometimes impassable areas and consist of numerous villages. This means that priests and pastoral workers have to travel great distances, mostly on poor roads, to care for the faithful. For this reason, ACN financed, among other things, 45 motorbikes for rural parishes last year and contributed to the livelihood of the priests of several dioceses and religious congregations with Mass intentions.





## Mozambique

### Number of projects

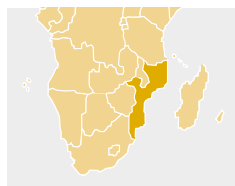
□ 64    □ 40

### Type of projects

🔔 2    🎯 8    🏠 10  
 📍 2    🎤 2    📖 1  
 👤 5    👤 10    👤 0

### Head of Section

Ulrich Kny



**Mozambique, located in south-east Africa, is the tenth poorest country in the**

**world. In many places, the consequences of the civil war that raged here between 1977 and 1992 can still be felt today. In recent years, the population has had to endure severe natural disasters. The north of the country has also been plagued by jihadist terror since 2017, which has triggered a wave of refugees in the region. The Church has also been affected by severe attacks. ACN supported the local Church in 2020 with a whole range of measures, focusing on emergency aid for the displaced.**

Just under 19% of Mozambique's population of around 30 million are predominantly Sunni Muslims. However, in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique's northernmost province, they make up the majority of the population. Until recently, coexistence was peaceful. But since October 2017, the jihadist group "Ahlu-Sunnah Wa-Jamu" (ASWJ) has been terrorising the region. The "jihadists" have modern weapons and are particularly active in the Diocese of

**>> Everybody loses in war, but the poorest suffer the most. <<**

Bishop Luiz Fernando Lisboa of Pemba

The destroyed Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Nangololo.





Internally displaced people after the devastating attacks by jihadists in Cabo Delgado province.



Pemba. By December 2020, more than 2,500 people were killed there in over 600 attacks. Many villages have been depopulated. At least 560,000 people are now on the run.

Even the Church has not been spared from attacks: the mission station of Nangololo, the Benedictine monastery of Auasse, the parish church of the port city of Mocímboa da Praia, a Catholic radio station and several chapels were attacked and destroyed. In most cases, the missionaries managed to escape to safety, but in a recent attack on Mocímboa da Praia in August 2020, two religious sisters were kidnapped and only released after 24 days.

For the Diocese of Pemba, which was badly hit by the attacks, ACN provided emergency aid amounting to 160,000 euros in 2020 for the initial care of displaced people. But the traumatised people also urgently need pastoral and psychological care, which we also support. In addition, we were able to financially support religious radio programmes that are broadcast over the stations in the Diocese of Pemba. Especially in the current crisis, the broadcasts give many believers, especially amongst the refugees, inner

**>> In the north, entire villages have now been depopulated. <<**

Bishop Luiz Fernando Lisboa of Pemba

stability and hope. In the year under review, further funds were used for material support for religious sisters, Mass stipends for priests and for the training of seminarians.



Missionary sisters from the Monastery of St Stephen.





## Madagascar

### Number of projects

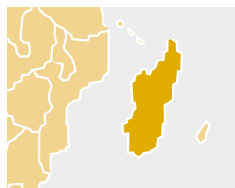
71 62

### Type of projects

8 3 26  
1 0 0  
18 3 3

### Head of Section

Kinga von Schierstaedt



**Madagascar is the world's second largest island state and is known as a natural paradise with lush biodiversity.**

**In contrast, there has been widespread destruction and exploitation of nature in recent decades. Three quarters of the 25.6 million inhabitants live in poverty. The local Church faced great challenges in 2020 due to the consequences of the lockdown caused by the coronavirus pandemic. ACN supported the priests, in particular with Mass stipends, as they were barely able to support themselves during the pandemic.**

Islamisation is progressing steadily in Madagascar. Although 50% of the inhabitants belong to traditional African religions and 40% to a Christian church (of which 4.7 million are Catholics), the local Church laments that money from the Gulf states is being used to promote the spread of radical Islam. Even in places where no Muslims live yet, mosques are already being built. Non-Muslims are being persuaded to convert through financial incentives and women are being paid to wear the full-face veil. In recent years, there has been an increase in Islamist attacks.

The current immigration policy further increases Islamisation, as immigration from Muslim countries, especially

Harvesting oranges in the vegetable garden of Our Lady of the Angels Monastery in Ampandratokana-Ankil.





Turkey, is immensely encouraged. Ten years ago, there were only 1% Muslims, but today there are almost 7% – and the trend is rising. In the recent past, Islamist attacks on Christian institutions have increased. Many Christian communities have been living in fear ever since.

## » Islamist attacks and the aftermath of the coronavirus weigh heavily on the local Church here. «

In 2020, however, this fear took a back seat to the pandemic. There was also a lockdown in Madagascar, with all Catholic dioceses striving to continue to care for their faithful as intensively as possible – including through the media. For ACN, the first priority was to support priests through Mass stipends, as they are irreplaceable for pastoral care, but are suffering extreme hardships due to the coronavirus pandemic. Support also continued for the formation of seminarians from several dioceses in the country.



### A chapel for prisoners

Father Henryk Sawarski has been a missionary on the island of Madagascar for more than 40 years. In 2015, he became the prison chaplain in Port-Bergé. In the beginning, he only “preached” through deeds, for example by ensuring the improvement of hygiene and medical care. In addition, he brought food and clothing

to prisoners. Soon, however, the prisoners asked him for his prayers and blessings, wanted to celebrate religious services and sought advice to change their lives. The problem: there was no space for this. ACN therefore helped to build a prison chapel, which was inaugurated with a festive consecration in 2020.





**The Middle East is the cradle of Christianity. But many Christians see fewer and fewer life prospects for themselves and their families in the region. The consequences of war, jihadist terror, economic decline and not least the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic are weighing heavily on the population and also on the local Church. Following the improving situation for Christians in Iraq, the focus of our Middle East aid in 2020 was on Lebanon and Syria. In total, funds amounting to 9.3 million euros flowed from ACN to our project partners in the region, of which around 3.9 million euros alone went to Lebanon.**

The situation in the Middle East continues to be marked by uncertainty. The aim of our aid projects in the region is predominantly to give hope to Christians and to support them in staying in their homeland or returning to their villages. This applies especially to war-torn Syria. While reconstruction is beginning in some regions of the country after ten years of war, there is still no peace in the north. In many places, the danger of jihadism has not yet been averted.

**>> The situation is very difficult, but there are also hopeful signs. <<**

The situation in Lebanon is now similarly catastrophic. The country, which has always been a refuge and a foothold in the Middle East, especially for Christians, is on its knees. While the political and economic crisis already had Lebanon firmly in its grip in 2019, in 2020, in addition to the pandemic, there was also a serious explosion in



Father Firas Lutfi with children in Aleppo.

the port of the capital Beirut, which severely damaged numerous churches and church facilities as well. Here, a Herculean task lies ahead for the Church, but ACN will not abandon it in this mission.

Development in Iraq, on the other hand, is more positive: in the Nineveh Plains, about half of the Christian families have returned to their villages. In addition, the Iraqi government declared Christmas a public holiday in 2020. Above all, however, the Pope's announcement that he would visit Iraq in early March 2021 was a true ray of hope for the people living there and for Christians in the Middle East in general.





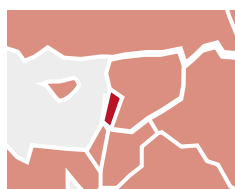
#### Number of projects

82 Project applications  
67 Funded projects

#### Type of projects

19 Construction/reconstruction  
2 Means of transport  
8 Mass stipends  
23 Emergency aid  
0 Media help  
0 Bibles & books  
5 Training of priests  
4 Existential help  
6 Formation of faith

**Head of Section**  
Reinhard Backes



Lebanon has often been praised as the Switzerland of the Middle East. Not least because of its comparatively high level of prosperity and the peaceful coexistence of religions. But the consequences of the civil war, the endless conflict with Israel and economic decline have plunged the country into chaos. To compound matters, the flow of Syrian war refu-

gees, the coronavirus pandemic and the trauma of the terrible explosion in Beirut in August 2020 are placing heavy burdens on Lebanese society and thus also on many Christians in the country. Our aid to Lebanon was therefore high on our agenda.

Lebanon was once the only country in the Middle East with a Christian majority. Today, only 34% of the inhabitants are Christians. Of those under 25, only a quarter are Christians. But Lebanese



Father Nicolas Riachy with a homeless person.



## » Poverty in the country has doubled in just one year. «

Christians enjoy a high level of respect in society; Christian schools are appreciated by people of all faiths, and above all they form a bridge between the different denominations in the country. Many Lebanese, however, see the refugee situation in the country as problematic. The war in neighbouring Syria has brought around 1.5 million refugees to Lebanon, which itself has only 4 million inhabitants. In addition, there are between 200,000 and 500,000 Palestinian refugees who further complicate the local situation.

Many Christians are now thinking of leaving the country. This is because the economy in Lebanon is deteriorating, compounded by inflation and high unemployment. The survival of the Catholic schools is also uncertain, as they have difficulties finding money to pay their teachers. A lack of Christian school education for children is a further reason for families to emigrate. The crisis started back in 2019, when tens of thousands took to the streets against corruption and mismanagement. The Lebanese currency has lost more than 80% of its value in less than a year, and the price of basic foodstuffs has risen by up to four times. According to the United Nations, more than 55% of the Lebanese population are now poor – nearly twice as many as last

year. The Lebanese are forced to struggle daily to cover their basic needs. But it is not only the poor economic situation, but also the constant feeling of insecurity caused by the permanent crisis with Israel that contributes to many people's desire to emigrate.

ACN therefore sees its most urgent task in giving Christians in Lebanon new hope and prospects so that they can stay in their homeland. For many believers, the Church is the centre of their lives. And we want to strengthen this in the long term. For us in 2020, this naturally also included funding priestly formation and Mass stipends, which make an indispensable contribution to the livelihood of priests in need. We supported Lebanon with a total of around 3.9 million euros in 2020.

## » Many Christians are thinking of leaving the country. «



Explosion damage  
in the church of the  
Sœurs Antonines.



A Syrian family  
in need in Zahlé.



**>> The explosion took away everything we had within seconds. <<**

A woman from Beirut who lost everything

As if Lebanon did not already have enough burdens to bear, on 4 August 2020 a disaster of unimaginable proportions also struck the country, shocking not only Lebanon but the entire world. The explosion in the port of Beirut was the national trauma of the past year and has made the situation in the country many times worse. According to official reports, 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate

exploded. The huge detonation triggered a shock wave that spread in a circular pattern at lightning speed, and, like the explosion of a nuclear bomb, a giant mushroom cloud of smoke rose over the port area. Nearly 200 people lost their lives and 6,500 others were injured. Almost 100,000 buildings were destroyed and several hundred thousand people were left homeless in one fell swoop.



**>> It looked like an atomic bomb. <<**

Eyewitnesses

The port of Beirut, destroyed on 4 August.

Christelle and Jad's son had seen the light of the world for just 15 minutes when there was a huge explosion in the port of Beirut. The baby was unharmed, despite the flying objects and shards of glass.



Sister Rita, Nanil and Madal support families in Karm Al Zeytoun.

## » With your help, we will rise from the rubble. «

Sister Nicolas Akiki, Director of the Holy Rosary Hospital in Beirut

The detonation in the Lebanese capital is already considered one of the most severe non-nuclear explosions in human history. Beirut has now been devastated – and with the city, so too the entire country. Christian life in the capital has also been hit at the very core by the disaster. About 80% of the Christian district of Achrafieh

was severely damaged by the explosion. The part of the Christian district closest to the port was virtually wiped from the face of the earth. Hundreds of Christian families have lost their homes and livelihoods. Numerous Catholic hospitals and medical facilities, as well as churches and monasteries, are in urgent need of repair.



The cloud of smoke from the explosion could be seen for miles.

In the days following the explosion, ACN provided emergency aid of 250,000 euros to help the 5,000 most severely affected families. Those left homeless were provided with food and basic necessities to alleviate the initial hardships. Just one month after the explosion, ACN representatives travelled to Beirut in order to work with local partners to identify key relief needs for the reconstruction of church buildings. ACN visited 23 sites, including churches, convents, monasteries and other church buildings that were severely affected by the blast. Through discussions with the bishops of various rites and denominations, our representatives were able to get an even more detailed picture of the destroyed infrastructure and the acute needs of the Christians.



**>> I survived 15 years of civil war, yet I could not imagine something so terrible. <<**

Sister Hanan Youssef

The explosion on 4 August levelled almost everything in the entire port district. The Maronite Catholic Church, the largest local church in Lebanon, was also badly hit. But many buildings of other religious denominations, including Greek Catholic, Latin and Orthodox churches, were also badly damaged. Here too, ACN has already pledged assistance.

The devastation was so severe that we have increased our aid budget for Lebanon by a further 5 million euros. The first 16 reconstruction projects,

totalling over 2.65 million euros, were approved soon afterwards. Among the projects our relief agency has pledged to support is the symbolic St Saviour's Melkite Greek Catholic Church, built in 1890 and located at the "entrance" to the destroyed Christian quarter. Its reconstruction is an encouraging sign of hope for the Christian inhabitants. The Maronite St George's Cathedral is also to be repaired. This cathedral is also an important symbol for Lebanese Christians that there is a future for them in this country.

Rebuilding churches near the destroyed port of Beirut.





Devastation in the immediate vicinity of the church and the nuns' residence of the Holy Rosary Hospital after the explosion.

**>> We were able to increase our aid to Lebanon by a further 5 million euros. <<**

Young Christian volunteers help clean up the damaged Maronite Cathedral.



### **ACN supports the “John the Merciful Table” project**

In 2020, our humanitarian aid for Syrian refugees in Lebanon also continued unabated. For example, we again supported the “John the Merciful Table” project with 700,000 euros, a facility in the town of Zahlé not far from the Syrian border that provides a hot meal every day to around 1,000 Syrian refugees, but increasingly also to local people in need. The

project has been supported by ACN since 2015. Not only is the physical nourishment important, but people also experience comfort and human compassion through the staff. In addition, ACN again helped Syrian refugees in 2020 with funds to cover school fees and paid for the costs of necessary medical treatment.



## Syria

### Number of projects

103 115\*

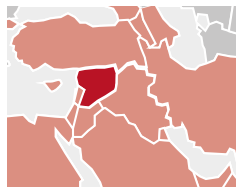
### Type of projects

11 2 7  
54 0 1  
1 7 32

### Head of Section

Reinhard Backes

\*including project applications from the previous year.



In the first years of the Syrian war, when it was a matter of sheer survival, ACN was able to save

tens of thousands of Christians with emergency aid projects. But even after ten years, the war is not yet over. In particular, the city of Idlib, close to the Turkish border, as well as the Jazira Region in the north-east, are still sites of conflict. Meanwhile, only one-third of the former 1.5 million

Christians still live in the country. In 2020 ACN mainly helped with ensuring survival, education, medical supplies and church reconstructions. We also launched an emergency pandemic relief programme for Christians.

Since the beginning of the war in 2011, ACN has supported projects in Syria totalling around 42 million euros. In 2020, our aid reached a volume of over 3.4 million euros. The support is still urgently needed, because Syrian Christians have suffered severely in the

Participants in the "One Million Children Praying the Rosary" initiative at the Church of the Annunciation in Aleppo.



» Throughout the long years of war,  
ACN's help has been a lifeline for  
us Christians. «

Sister Annie Demerjian

civil war. Today, it is estimated that only one-third of the 1.5 million Christians who resided in the country before the war are still living there. Even though the guns are now silent in many regions, the violence continues in northern Syria. In Idlib District, for example, some villages are still under the control of jihadists.

The economic sanctions imposed by the EU against the Assad regime are also causing severe suffering amongst the Syrian population. The poor economic situation in neighbouring Lebanon is also having a devastating effect on the Syrian economy. The dollar exchange rate has skyrocketed, and with it, also the prices for housing, basic foodstuffs and fuel. This tempts many parents not to send their children to school or university in order to avoid "hidden education costs", including travel expenses, textbooks and photocopies. In order to prevent students from dropping out, ACN again supported 550 students at Damascus University with scholarships this year. We were also able to help 300 families with rent subsidies. In addition, our relief organisation launched a pandemic emergency aid programme that enabled many Christians to buy food and protective materials.

The health system in Syria is also in ruins. Many doctors have emigrated because terrorists have kidnapped many and threatened to kill others. Drug prices have tripled since 2016, and there is a shortage of doctors and medicine. Those who are ill are often forced to seek help from charities and churches. ACN is therefore supporting 200 sick people again this year with necessary medicines and remedies through the religious sisters congregation "Sœurs de la Charité de Besançon" in Damascus.



In 2020, ACN also supported Syrian families through the project "A Drop of Milk".



**25,000 coats for  
the festival of love**

With ACN's help, 25,000 warm coats were distributed to needy children in Aleppo, Damascus, Homs and other Syrian cities at Christmas. The coats were made in sewing factories in Aleppo thanks to the initiative of Sister Annie Demerjian, a

long-time project partner of ACN, and the Congregation of Jesus and Mary. This major order provided many Syrians with the opportunity to earn a living for their families for several months in the midst of high unemployment.



**>> The rebuilding of the cathedral is a sign that Christians are still in the country. <<**

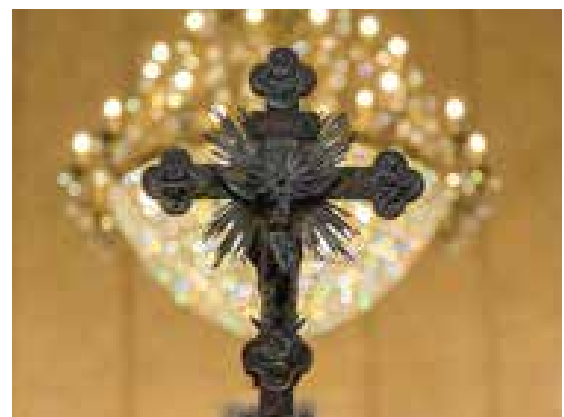
The Maronite Archbishop of Aleppo, Joseph Tobji

Few things give believers more hope in times of war than the rebuilding of destroyed places of worship. Such a sign of hope was also the consecration of the rebuilt Maronite Cathedral of St Elijah in Aleppo on 20 July 2020. Between 2012 and 2016, it had been severely damaged by several major rocket attacks and numerous smaller attacks. In 2013, the cathedral was most severely destroyed when jihadists stormed the district and attempted to

destroy all Christian landmarks. ACN had supported the reconstruction with 400,000 euros.

Aleppo, besieged by rebels between 2012 and 2016, is one of the cities worst hit by the war. The population is still suffering from the consequences today. In the reporting year, we were able to support a total of 53 projects in Aleppo. To thank us for this help, the Syrian Catholic Archbishop of Aleppo, Monsignor Antoine Chahda,

Aleppo Church leaders celebrate the 20th anniversary of the consecration of Archbishop Antoine Chahda.



The icon “Our Lady of Sorrows, Consoler of Syrians” in the Carmelite Convent in Aleppo.



Rosary prayer in front of Our Lady of Fatima in Damascus.

celebrated Holy Mass in the Syrian Catholic Cathedral of the Assumption on 20 December 2020 for the intentions of benefactors of Aid to the Church in Need. Among the guests were the heads of seven other Christian churches in the city, including Catholic and Orthodox bishops. The service was broadcast live on Facebook and was also a sign of hope for many benefactors in donor countries, especially as the coronavirus pandemic rages.

The prayer campaign “Comfort My People”, which was launched the previous year by ACN and the Catholic and Orthodox Churches in Syria, also continued in 2020. At the centre of the initiative is the icon “Our Lady of Sorrows, Consoler of Syrians” (see picture page 33), blessed by the Pope. The aim is to provide not only material but also spiritual aid to Catholic and Orthodox believers in Syria. In particular, it is hoped the campaign will allow families who have lost loved ones in the civil war to experience solace and compassion again. For people of different denominations, this initiative was also an occasion for encounters and discussions.



## ACN mourns the loss of long-time Syrian project partner

We were saddened to learn that the Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan of Homs, Selwanos Boutros Alnemeh, died on 7 December at the age of 52 after a short and serious illness. We are deeply saddened by the loss of our friend and project partner, with whom our relief organisation has been able to implement nearly 40 projects over

the past seven years. Our joint trip to Geneva and Brussels in 2016, where we informed representatives of the UN and the European Union first-hand about the situation in Syria, will also remain unforgettable. Selwanos Boutros Alnemeh was a role model for ecumenical cooperation and was also tireless in his commitment to his people.







**In Europe, the Church needs help, especially in the former Eastern Bloc states. There, atheistic communism left a great vacuum in society that has not yet been completely overcome, even 30 years after political transition. In Northern Europe, where very few Catholics live, the local Church is also in need of support. Where it is in need, ACN supports the Church, especially in the education and training of priests, religious and the laity.**

Particularly in the countries of Eastern Europe, where the Catholic Church is in the minority, the Church still relies on foreign aid. To ensure pastoral care in the mostly sprawling parishes of Eastern Europe, the foundation finances new vehicles for priests and religious sisters, for example.

**>> Particularly in Eastern Europe, the Church is dependent on aid from abroad. <<**

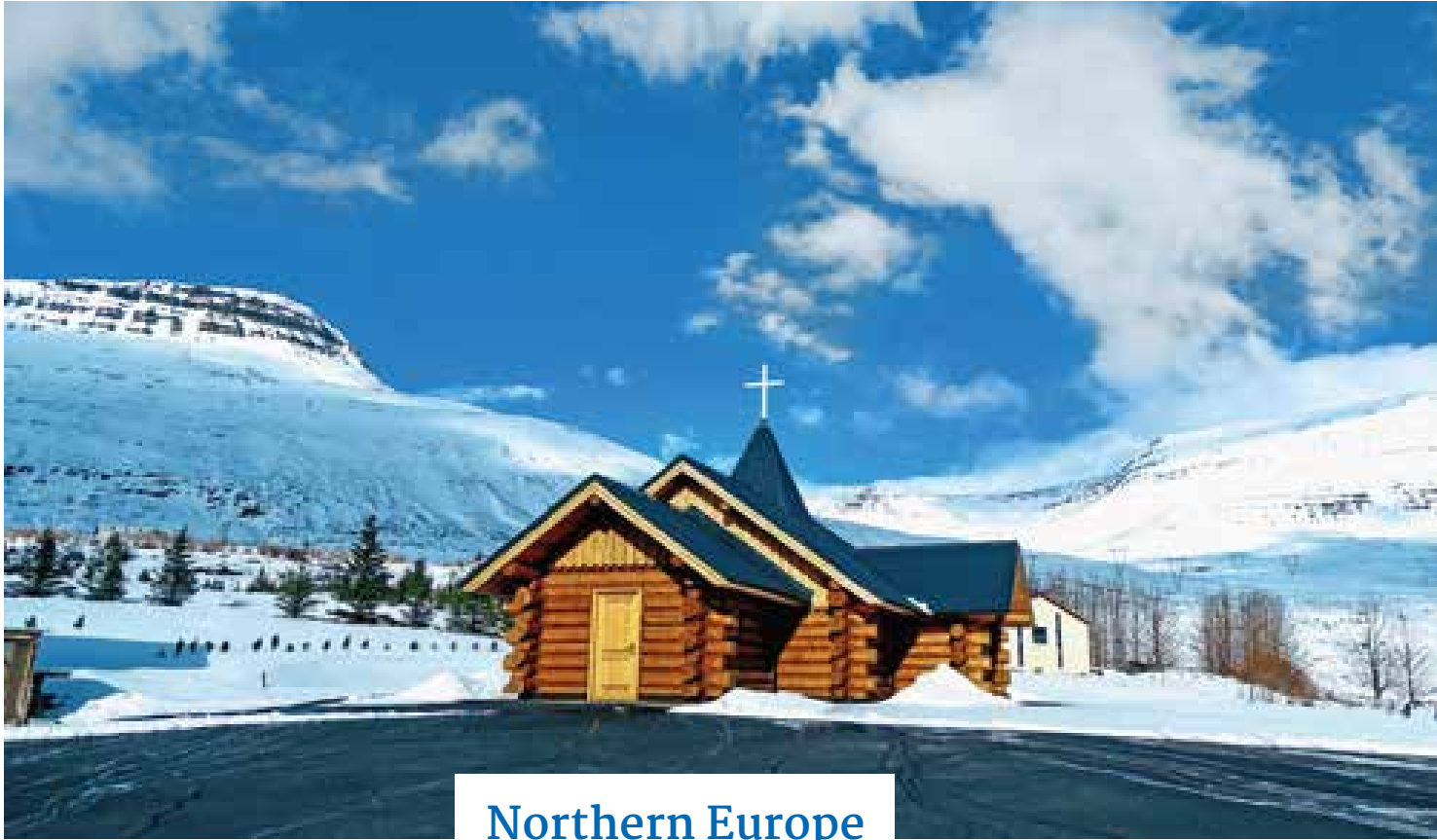
In Russia, a traditionally Orthodox country, ACN has been actively engaged in a dialogue with the Orthodox Church for nearly 30 years. This commitment was entrusted to ACN in 1992 by Pope Saint John Paul II. And it is bearing fruit: Over the course of time, many joint initiatives have been



Pastoral care in central Siberia during the coronavirus pandemic.

developed in which the Catholic and Orthodox Churches work hand in hand to find solutions to current problems.

In Northern Europe, the Catholic Church has no historically established presence. Catholics make up only a tiny minority. The majority of the few Catholics are immigrants. Due to this minority situation, the local Church is dependent on aid from abroad.



## Northern Europe

### Number of projects

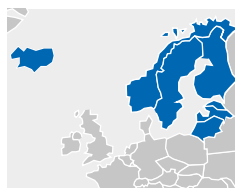
□ 29 Project applications  
☒ 29 Funded projects

### Type of projects

6 Construction/ reconstruction	3 Means of transport	2 Mass stipends
0 Emergency aid	3 Media help	1 Bibles & books
5 Training of priests	2 Existential help	7 Formation of faith

### Head of Section

Marco Mencaglia



**In the countries of Northern Europe, with the exception of Lithuania, Catholics form a very small**

**minority. As a result, the Church often lacks the necessary income to continue fulfilling its functions. The faithful are also widely scattered across the region, which makes pastoral care difficult. The Church is urgently in need of help from abroad. In 2020, the focus of our aid to Northern Europe was primarily on Iceland, Norway and Estonia.**

In the Northern European countries such as Iceland, Norway, Finland and Sweden, most of the faithful come from abroad and are often spread over a large area across the region. Although these are predominantly rich countries, the diaspora situation means that the local churches find it difficult to fulfil their tasks on their own. For example, in Iceland: Only 13,500 Catholics live on the island, almost all of whom are immigrants and speak more than 100 different native languages. Of Iceland's approximately 357,000 inhabitants, they form a minority of 3.8%.

Mother Teresa's religious sisters on a pilgrimage to Viðey Island, Iceland.



The parish church of St Thorlac  
in Reyðarfjörður, Iceland.



Vietnamese Catholics far  
from home in Norway.

Nevertheless, the number of  
believers is steadily increasing,  
mainly due to further immigration.  
Just 50 years ago, only about  
1,000 Catholics lived on the island.  
In the reporting year, ACN supported  
religious sisters in particular in  
acquiring vehicles for pastoral care.

But pastoral work is arduous because  
the parishes cover huge areas. In  
addition, the climate and the long  
hours of darkness in winter are hard  
on the priests and religious sisters,  
most of whom come from abroad.

Other recipients of our aid to Northern  
Europe include Norway and Estonia.  
In Norway, we helped to rebuild the  
parish centre in Harstad on the island  
of Hinnøya, which fell victim to a fire  
in 2015. This municipality is 250 km  
north of the Arctic Circle. In 2020, it  
was the northernmost project of our  
aid organisation. And in Estonia, we  
supported foreign priests who hope  
to work in this Baltic country to learn  
Estonian during the reporting year.

» We specifically get  
involved where the  
Catholic Church  
lacks resources. «

ACN supported the rebuilding of  
the St Sunniva rectory in Harstad,  
Norway, which burned down.





## Belarus

### Number of projects

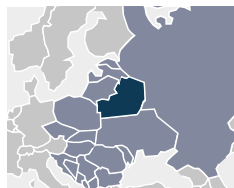
75 52

### Type of projects

7 20 9  
0 1 1  
6 8 0

### Head of Section

Magda Kaczmarek



**Belarus has had a turbulent year, and not only as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. In**

**2020, there was also political turmoil in Belarus. Hundreds of thousands took to the streets against President Lukashenko's authoritarian regime following his re-election. During the mass protests, many demonstrators were brutally suppressed by security forces. There were deaths and injuries; many were imprisoned. The Church also raised its voice against the brutal**

**crackdown. Despite the difficult situation, ACN managed to continue its aid to the Church in Belarus last year.**

After the opposition filed a petition with the Supreme Court to annul the presidential election, mass demonstrations took place in Minsk. These were directed against the authoritarian rule of President Alexander Lukashenko, who had been re-elected with 80% of the vote after 26 years in office. The opposition and a majority of the population in Belarus assume that the government deliberately falsified the election results. Following the violent police action against peaceful demonstrators, the Church voiced criticism of the abuses.

Church representatives were not spared either. At the end of August, the Chairman of the Conference of Catholic Bishops', Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz, who had strongly criticised the heavy-handed government response, was refused re-entry to Belarus after a business trip without a stated reason, although he has Belarusian citizenship. He was only allowed to re-enter on Christmas Eve.

Peaceful demonstrators protest against the re-election of President Lukashenko.





ACN supported the renovation  
of the retreat centre at  
Holy Trinity Parish, Ros.



On 18 August, a common prayer for peace among all religious communities took place in Minsk due to the political crisis. In September, prayers were then made in all the churches of the country to “stop the conflict from getting worse and to find a solution as soon as possible.”

» We pray for a positive solution  
to this unprecedented socio-  
political crisis. «

Archbishop Tadeusz  
Kondrusiewicz

We are pleased that despite the pandemic and political unrest in Minsk and Grodno, 34 seminarians and their instructors were able to start the new academic year “full of optimism” with the help of ACN. In addition, we granted emergency aid to priests in several dioceses due to the coronavirus crisis, which was used to order necessary protective material and to compensate for lost income through donations. We were also able to support several parishes and religious communities in procuring urgently needed vehicles for pastoral care.



ACN provided educational support for  
seminarians in the Diocese of Grodno.





## Russia

### Number of projects

☐ 89 ☒ 94\*

### Type of projects

☒ 28 ☒ 7 ☒ 6  
☒ 7 ☒ 7 ☒ 5  
☒ 10 ☒ 5 ☒ 19

### Head of Section

Peter Humeniuk

\*including project applications from the previous year.



**Like almost everywhere in the world, 2020 was marked by the coronavirus pandemic in**

**Russia. There were also many infections among Church representatives. The Orthodox Church, in particular, suffered numerous deaths amongst its clergy, including several bishops. This is a loss that also greatly affects our foundation, because we have been working to foster a dialogue between the Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches for nearly 30 years. Despite everything, we managed to continue the interdenominational exchange, even during the pandemic.**

Of Russia's approximately 145 million inhabitants, the majority is of the

Russian Orthodox faith. The Catholic Church is only a small minority and continues to rely on help from abroad to care for its faithful. ACN has been a reliable partner for decades, also fostering important dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church. In 2016, the historic meeting between Pope Francis and Moscow's Patriarch Kirill gave new momentum to the exchange between the Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches.

Since then, an ecumenical working group initiated by ACN has been transposing important topics from the joint declaration of the Church leaders into concrete projects. Examples here include helping Christians in the Middle East, improving pastoral care and accompanying the mentally ill, mothers in crisis situations and addicts.

Religious sisters of the Diocese of St Joseph in Irkutsk care for the needy during the coronavirus pandemic.



Two religious sisters of the Congregation of the Holy Angels support parish work in a vast area of the Diocese of the Transfiguration in Novosibirsk.

Religious sisters and volunteers in Krasnoyarsk, Siberia support people in need during the pandemic.



And the joint projects continue. Just before coronavirus restrictions were put in place, the fourth anniversary of the historic meeting of the two Church leaders was celebrated in February 2020 with a high-level symposium in Rome, at which ACN was also represented.

## » Despite the pandemic, the dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church could be further intensified.«

In 2020, we naturally also helped the local Church to cope with the pandemic. Because of the coronavirus crisis, the Church is increasingly dependent on material aid. When the lockdown caused collections to diminish, ACN provided special support to the religious sisters, who have had a truly Herculean task on their hands during the pandemic. "It would be a disaster for the religious sisters if this help were to stop," confirms Bishop Joseph Werth, who heads the Diocese of the Transfiguration in Novosibirsk. ACN also continues to provide vehicles, building and renovation aid, supports the training of priests, religious and the laity and grants Mass stipends to priests.



### ACN supports children's hospice in St Petersburg

In 2003, the Orthodox priest Aleksandr Tkachenko founded the first children's hospice in Russia in Saint Petersburg. Terminally ill children receive competent medical care there and are given the opportunity to live out their remaining time happily, in a manner

that is highly suitable for children. Their families are also accompanied and given pastoral care. ACN has supported the project from the very start and helped renovate the building in 2020. For all involved, it is a shining example of successful ecumenical cooperation.



## Ukraine

### Number of projects

□ 342    ✓ 278

### Type of projects

🔔 42    📍 36    📺 63  
 📁 6    🎤 5    📖 6  
 👤 54    👥 35    👤 31

### Head of Section

Magda Kaczmarek



Of the approximately 44 million inhabitants of Ukraine, just under 10% are Catholics.

**The Catholic Church is represented here by two rites: the Roman Catholic and the Greek Catholic. Seventy years of communism have left their mark on society. Corruption, lack of prospects, economic crisis and the war in the east of the country have caused mainly younger and well-educated people**

**to leave the country. The pandemic has exacerbated the hardship. ACN supports the local Church with coronavirus emergency aid, promotes the training of priests and religious and is involved in Catholic media work.**

The consequences of the coronavirus crisis could also be felt by the local Church. In 2020, for the first time, dioceses that had previously managed without support submitted petitions to ACN. For example, the Diocese



Religious sisters of the Holy Family caring for patients in Lviv.

**» Due to the pandemic, many dioceses, which until now had managed without support, have also had to ask for help. «**

Stanislaw Shyrokoradiuk,  
Bishop of Odesa-Simferopol,  
visits the pastoral social  
centre in Vasylkiv.



ACN is involved in educational  
work to strengthen and  
expand the Christian family  
movement.

of Kamyanets-Podilskyi. Here, the religious sisters normally receive remuneration from the parishes for their service as catechists or sacristans. However, as the Sunday services and thus collections were cancelled for months due to the lockdown and the faithful became increasingly impoverished, the bishop could no longer support the religious sisters with necessities for survival. ACN stepped in and helped with coronavirus material aid.

Other religious congregations were also granted material aid, as they are indispensable to the Church through their apostolate. In addition, religious also provide important services to society on a daily basis by caring for those seeking guidance, the elderly, the sick, people with disabilities and neglected children. Their work gives many people hope again.

Despite the pandemic, the number of priestly and religious vocations in Ukraine remains encouragingly high. Thus, in 2020, ACN again supported training in numerous seminaries and monasteries. In addition, we were again able to support Catholic media work in the reporting year. Especially during the coronavirus pandemic, Catholic media play an important role in the lives of the faithful. But they also reach out to seekers who have had little contact with the faith and the Church.



Sister Oresta Borshovska is  
developing the distance learning  
programme for catechists.







## Albania

### Number of projects

□ 26    ☒ 19

### Type of projects

🔔 6    🎯 5    🏠 2  
 📍 0    🎤 0    📖 1  
 👥 3    👤 1    👤 1

### Head of section

Marco Mencaglia



The Catholic Church in Albania is a small minority among the majority Muslim

population, with 10% of some three million inhabitants. Most of the priests and religious come from abroad; unfortunately, local vocations are still far from sufficient. During the communist era, all religions were cruelly persecuted in Albania, but since the political

transition, religious freedom has prevailed once again. However, for the local Church, there is still a lot of work to do to socialise new generations in the faith. ACN is helping them with this endeavour.

Albania has the youngest population in Europe, with an average age of 34.3 years. Around one-third of the population is under 25 years old. At the same time, Albania is one of the poorest countries in Europe. Due to the widespread poverty, the Catholic Church lacks the means to train enough local priests and to offer the faithful adequate pastoral care. Without help from abroad, the existence of the local Church is threatened.

ACN is aware of the plight of the Church in Albania. Through our grants in 2020, the Church was able to ensure the continued formation of local trainee priests, purchase new vehicles for pastoral care and undertake urgent



A religious sister from the parish of Saranda helps with outpatient care.

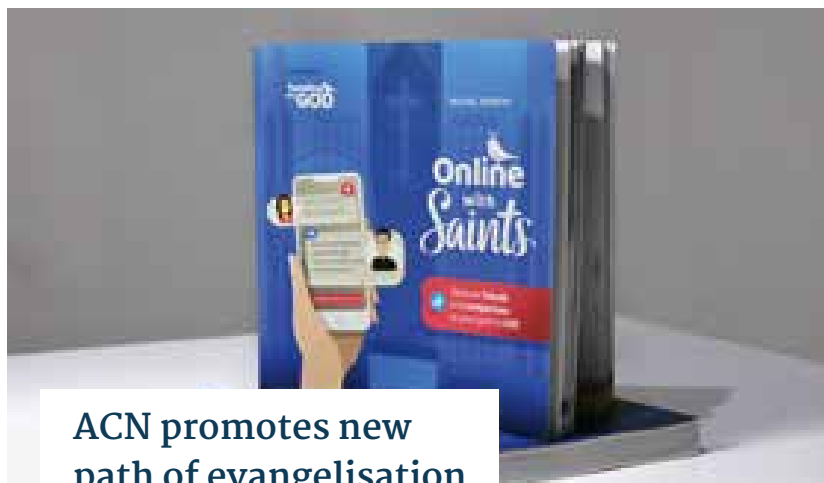
Baptism in the parish  
of “Famullia Shen Luka  
Ungjilltar” in Korçë.

ACN supports the education  
of seminarians from Albania  
and Kosovo in Shkoder.



renovations to church buildings. In  
addition, we supported the local  
Church with special aid as a result of  
the pandemic.

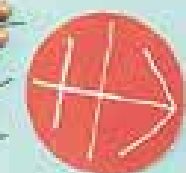
» The Church in  
Albania is young  
and dynamic,  
but dependent  
on aid from  
abroad. «



### ACN promotes new path of evangelisation

*Online with Saints* is the name of  
the book that introduces young  
readers to more than 100 saints  
from completely different eras and  
countries who provide answers to  
very modern questions. The idea  
behind it: Young people should  
become acquainted with the saints  
as friends and personal companions  
on the pathway to God. Archbishop

Angelo Massafrà of Shkoder-  
Pult in northern Albania is also  
enthusiastic about this new path  
of evangelisation. He writes to us:  
“Modern materials are needed very  
much, and *Online with Saints* offers  
an innovative approach to learning  
more about God and faith.” ACN  
sponsored the publication of the  
book in Albanian.



THANK YOU  
CHURCH IN NEED



**The challenges facing the Catholic Church in Asia and Oceania are many and vary greatly from region to region. In most countries of this vast region, Christians are in the minority and thus often suffer from discrimination. In addition, poverty, natural disasters and, since 2020, the coronavirus pandemic have made life difficult for the population and thus also for the Church. ACN responded to many applications and supported the Church in Asia and Oceania in 2020 with a total of 11.8 million euros. One focus was our coronavirus emergency relief.**

Christianity has always had a difficult time in Asian countries. Christians are often seen as a harmful influence from abroad, threatening the respective government and the supposed religious unity of the nation. Thus, nationalist movements, authoritarian government systems, but also other religious communities make both life and the free practice of their faith difficult for many Christians.



Bishop Goveas during the inauguration of the church in Maihindiyabadi, India.

**>> In Asia, the Church has witnessed hope and compassion in the midst of the coronavirus crisis. <<**

In some countries, social discrimination against Christians intensified even further during the pandemic, e.g. in Pakistan, where the Christian minority was excluded from aid by the government or local NGOs. ACN provided emergency aid here, particularly in the form of protective



material and funds to secure the livelihoods of priests and religious, so that they can continue their ministry to those in need.

But there are also encouraging developments. Apart from Africa, Asia and Oceania are the only regions where the number of priestly and religious vocations is increasing. Asia alone, for example, has about 30% of the world's seminarians. ACN is doing all it can to promote their formation.



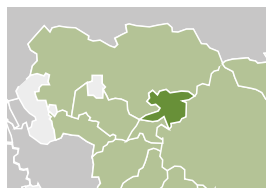
## Kazakhstan

### Number of projects

 64 Project applications  
 64 Funded projects

### Type of projects

 16 Construction/reconstruction  
 5 Means of transport  
 4 Mass stipends  
 3 Emergency aid  
 1 Media help  
 1 Bibles & books  
 18 Training of priests  
 8 Existential help  
 8 Formation of faith



**With a national territory of more than 2.7 million square kilometres, Kazakhstan is**

**larger than a quarter of the USA. At the same time, however, the country only has 18 million inhabitants. The former Soviet republic has been independent since 1991. Catholics form a minority of only 300,000 believers here. In order to survive economically, the Catholic community is dependent on help from abroad. ACN mainly helps religious sisters in Kazakhstan with existential help.**

Religious sisters do important work in the Church. They hold catechesis sessions for children, young people and adults, prepare them to receive the sacraments, organise days of reflection, holiday camps and youth meetings, and care for the old, the sick, the lonely and the needy.

**>> Without help from abroad, the Church in Kazakhstan could hardly survive. <<**

### Head of Section

Peter Humeniuk

Kazakhstan is a fine example of outstanding cooperation between Catholic and Orthodox Christians; there are joint initiatives and a constructive dialogue.

Our aid to religious sisters increased during the pandemic, e.g. for a children's home in Kapshagay in the south-eastern part of the country. Here, religious sisters look after 50 orphans and children from the most difficult family backgrounds. Under the care of the religious sisters, the children often become acquainted with safety, care and a regular life for the first time. We supported the religious sisters with an extra coronavirus grant so that they could purchase the necessary protective and hygiene materials during the pandemic. ACN also supports spiritual retreats designed to help priests and religious recharge their batteries, and promotes the formation of future priests.

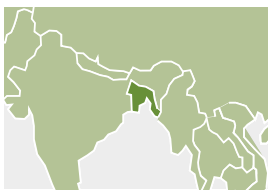
Orphans in the care of religious sisters in Kapshagay.







## Bangladesh



**Bangladesh, a country in South Asia, has about 163 million inhabitants.**

**89% of them are Muslims. Hindus make up 9.5% of the total inhabitants, while Catholic Christians, with about 270,000 believers, are only 0.2% of the population. More than 60% of the Christians belong to ethnic minorities and are discriminated against, not only because of their faith but also because of their ethnicity. ACN has been working with the Church of Bangladesh for many years; in 2020 mainly with existential help and Mass stipends.**

For some years now, Bangladesh has been experiencing encouraging economic growth, but a large part

of the population still suffers from poverty. Due to climate change and natural disasters, many people in rural areas have lost their livelihoods and migrated to urban centres. In 2020, the pandemic made matters worse. The Church is also struggling to meet all its tasks during the coronavirus crisis. Priests and religious sisters have to visit more sick people and, unfortunately, often also hold funerals. ACN supports them – as in the Diocese of Khulna – by providing protective suits, safety goggles and masks.

But the virus also claimed its first victim from the local Church: ACN mourns the death of Archbishop Moses Costa of Chittagong, a long-time project partner in Bangladesh and a good friend of our foundation. He died in July as a result of a Covid-19 infection. At the beginning of the crisis, he had sent us an urgent appeal for help to support the religious sisters working in his archdiocese. With the closure of schools, hostels and wards, the nuns could no longer earn a living. ACN responded to his appeal and supported the religious sisters with existential help and quite a few priests with Mass stipends.

### Number of projects

☐ 44 ☒ 40

### Type of projects

9 4 9  
 1 0 1  
 5 6 5

### Heads of Section

Véronique Vogel

Children of the Christian colony in the village of Kashipur.



**» The Church is not only an important contact point for Christians. «**



## Pakistan

### Number of projects

83 99\*

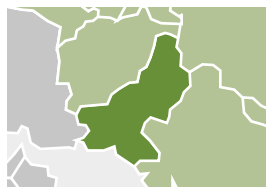
### Type of projects

22 15 5  
4 3 8  
10 3 29

### Head of Section

Reinhard Backes

\*including project applications from the previous year.



Religious minorities – including Christians, who make up 2% of the

Of Pakistan's approximately 207 million inhabitants, about 97% are Muslims.

total population – are practically second-class citizens. They suffer discrimination and often violence. Of particular concern are abductions of young girls who are forced into marriage and conversion to Islam. In 2020, several such cases became public. ACN is particularly committed to training and securing the livelihoods of priests and religious in Pakistan and launched an emergency coronavirus programme in 2020.



14-year-old Maira Shahbaz was kidnapped, forced to convert to Islam and marry.

Christians and other minorities in Pakistan particularly suffer from the effects of the pandemic due to their low social status, as many families have lost their livelihoods. As ACN learned from the local Church, Muslim leaders and even some NGOs refused to support Christians and other religious minorities under the Covid-19 emergency relief. Aid programmes offered at the state level also mostly exclude religious minorities.

In the Dioceses of Faisalabad, Islamabad-Rawalpindi and Lahore, ACN therefore

>> Christians were often excluded from assistance from the state and local NGOs. <<



At the church shelter, Shafique Masih was able to safely reunite with his family after a long time in hiding through no fault of his own.

launched an emergency relief programme totalling 150,000 euros during the lockdown. 5,000 needy, predominantly Christian families could be supplied with food. The priests and catechists of the dioceses were also equipped with protective material such as masks and disinfectants to ensure the continued care of the faithful.

As many Pakistanis do not have access to the Internet, an awareness programme about Covid-19 was also launched via local radio and printed handouts. Furthermore, we continued to support the local Church in the training and sustenance of priests and religious, as well as the continuing education of lay people.



### Scholarships for pupils from poor families

The coronavirus crisis further plunged poor families, in particular, into hardship in Pakistan. Many men and women became unemployed as a result of the pandemic and were thus unable to afford school fees for their children. In desperation, many have

asked for donations in their churches. As part of our coronavirus emergency aid, we therefore also support pupils from particularly needy families with scholarships, so that they can continue their school education during the lockdown.



## India

### Number of projects

□ 421 ✓ 418

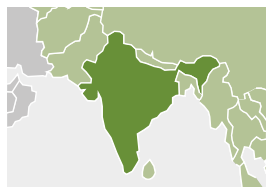
### Type of projects

🔔 54 🎯 26 🏠 153  
 ⚡ 0 🎤 1 📄 4  
 👥 115 👤 15 👤 50

### Head of Section

Véronique Vogel  
 Reinhard Backes

Support for the  
 old and sick in  
 Rourkela Province.



With more than 1.3 billion inhabitants, India is the country with the world's

largest population after China. Although the country has a rapidly growing economy, many regions are still plagued by poverty and underdevelopment. In addition, India is the second most affected country in the world by the coronavirus pandemic. Many have lost their

livelihoods during the pandemic, including countless Christians. As a religious minority in India, they are often victims of discrimination and violence. ACN is aware of the difficult role of the Church of India and stands by it with many aid projects.

Culture and society in India are deeply rooted in Hinduism. Hindus form the largest religious denomination with 80% of the population. Minorities such as Muslims and Christians, on the other hand, are often victims of discrimination and violent attacks. In the reporting year, the Church was particularly concerned about an announced "anti-conversion campaign" by Hindu nationalist circles who want to take massive action against alleged Christian missionary activities. Church representatives called on the government to protect Christians and other religious minorities from attacks.

India also had to bear the brunt of the coronavirus crisis in 2020. When the first lockdown was announced in March, the



## » Christians need to be protected from attacks by Hindu extremists. «

Coronavirus emergency  
aid for poor families in the  
Diocese of Hazaribag.



number of unemployed skyrocketed. The hardest hit were millions of migrant workers who were left without food, money and shelter during the lockdown. At times in September, the number of new cases reached 100,000 per day.

ACN concentrated its aid efforts mainly in the poor north- and north-east of India. For example, in the Diocese of Tezpur in the state of Assam, where most Christians work on the huge tea plantations. Priests not only care for them pastorally, but also provide concrete development aid so that people can escape their misery. In the reporting year, we were able to support 113 priests with Mass stipends. We also provided training aid for seminarians, financed vehicles for pastoral care and helped with the renovation and construction of church buildings.



### Help for the religious sisters of the “Daughters of the Cross” Congregation

In the Diocese of Rourkela in north-east India, 63 religious sisters of the “Daughters of the Cross” Congregation are working as teachers. As the schools were closed during the lockdown, the religious sisters did not receive salaries for months. In addition, disinfectants and protective

material were needed to prevent the spread of the virus, which caused additional costs. The religious sisters sewed hundreds of metres of fabric into protective masks for those in need and supported families left destitute by the pandemic. ACN supported the religious sisters with 10,000 euros.





## Philippines

### Number of projects

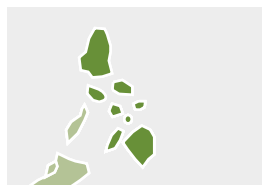
□ 47    ☒ 46

### Type of projects

🔔 7    📶 1    📺 9  
 📍 0    🎤 1    📖 0  
 👥 14    🧑 3    👤 11

### Head of Section

Reinhard Backes



**The Philippines is the only majority Christian country in Asia. More than 80% of the island nation's**

**100 million inhabitants are Catholic. 2020 was also marked by the coronavirus pandemic here. Churches were closed from March to mid-July, after which services resumed with restrictions, and even Christmas could only be celebrated on a small scale. ACN is supporting priests and religious during the pandemic with existential help and Mass stipends.**

The coronavirus crisis developed into a severe test for the mostly very devout Filipinos. Pastoral care is particularly important during this difficult time, especially as only a few people are allowed to gather in the churches at one time. Counselling and help from priests and religious are therefore increasingly in demand. However, since collections were lost due to the lockdown, their livelihoods were no longer assured. Therefore, in the reporting year, we supported the priests, predominantly through Mass stipends.

» In Mindanao, there seems to be no end in sight to the terror. «

Religious sisters from the Diocese of San Jose in Nueva Ecija pack aid packages for the needy during the lockdown.



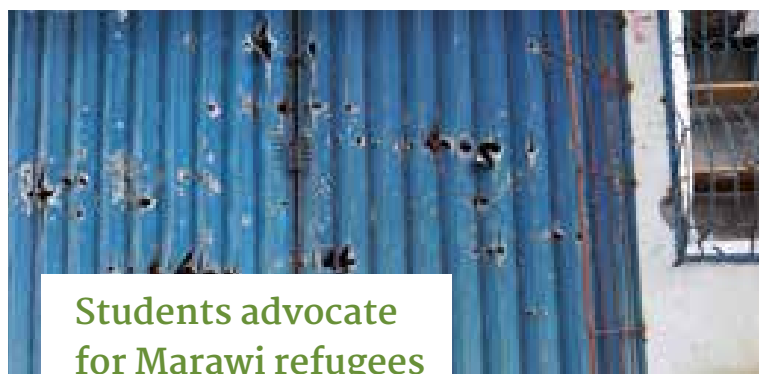
Palm Sunday blessing during the coronavirus pandemic by Father Ronaldo Manabat.

The Sisters of Mercy of St Charles Borromeo distribute food parcels during the lockdown.



In addition to the pandemic, the situation on the Mindanao archipelago continues to be a concern for the local Church. Since many Muslims also live on the islands, Islamist terrorist groups have become active there in recent years, hoping to establish an Islamic state. The jihadists' actions were mainly concentrated in the city of Marawi. In May 2017, hundreds of them almost razed the city to the ground. They killed people, severely damaged the Catholic St Mary's Cathedral and took many hostages, most of whom were Christians. Thousands of the city's inhabitants managed to flee, however, and have been living in refugee camps ever since.

However, a ceasefire between the government and the New People's Army agreed during the pandemic has not been respected. ACN learned from Church representatives on the ground that fighting had continued. However, the military presence was somewhat less visible.



Refugees from the city of Marawi, destroyed by Islamist terrorists, have been living in several refugee camps since 2017 and are in desperate need of help. To this end, the local Church founded the interfaith initiative "Youth for Peace", in which Christian and Muslim students help the Marawi refugees. Up to and including

2020, 175 students have participated in the initiative. With their commitment, they want to bear witness, regardless of their religious affiliation, to the fact that peaceful coexistence is possible again, even after the terrible events of 2017. ACN has supported the project with a total of 75,000 euros since 2018.



## Solomon Islands

### Number of projects

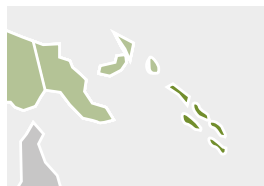
□ 4    ☒ 4

### Type of projects

🔔 1    🎯 0    📶 1  
 📍 0    🎤 0    📖 2  
 👤 0    👤 0    👤 0

### Head of Section

Irene Eschmann



**The Solomon Islands are a group of islands in the South Pacific Ocean, located about**

**720 kilometres east of New Guinea. Many of the more than 1,000 islands in the Solomon Islands are threatened by rising sea levels. The Catholic Diocese of Gizo, which is based here, has 118 mission stations. The area served extends over 40 islands with a radius of 300 kilometres. Today, almost all the inhabitants of the Solomon Islands are Christians, mainly Protestant, and**

**about 20% are Catholics. ACN supports the priests of the diocese with Mass stipends.**

Until a few years ago, most of the priests on the Solomon Islands were foreign missionaries. It is all the more gratifying that now the majority of the 16 priests in the Diocese of Gizo are locals. And the number of local vocations is increasing, with two young men receiving priestly ordination in 2020 as well. But caring for the 11,000 Catholics in the Diocese of Gizo is a major challenge. This is because the faithful live scattered on various islands, some of which are far away

The priestly ordination of Thomas Patavolomo in his home town Voruvoru on North Choiseul.



**» Thank you for your help and for not letting the Diocese of Gizo down. «**

Bishop Luciano Capelli

The boat of the Sacred Heart Parish on Wagina Island received a new outboard engine.

Two priestly ordinations formed the highlight of the golden jubilee in the Diocese of Gizo.



from each other. Hours of boat trips between the islands and arduous walks through the bush are unavoidable.

More priests are therefore urgently needed on the islands, but the diocese is poor. The priests' livelihood and ensuring the next generation of priests are a major financial burden for the Church, especially formed the local Church is also still faced with the herculean task of repairing damaged churches and church buildings destroyed by the earthquake and tsunami of 2017. In 2020, ACN therefore supported priests in the Diocese of Gizo with Mass stipends to financially relieve the local bishop.



## The Diocese of Gizo celebrates its golden jubilee

2020 is a milestone in the history of missionary work in the Solomon Islands. This is because the Diocese of Gizo was able to celebrate its 50th anniversary last year. At the big celebration, two young men were also ordained as priests. Today, the diocese is active with

118 mission stations on 40 islands of the archipelago. 16 priests tirelessly fulfil their mission, although the isolation of island life also brings many hardships. ACN's help is not only valuable in financial terms, but it is also a spiritual "incentive" and a "source of inspiration" for the priests.



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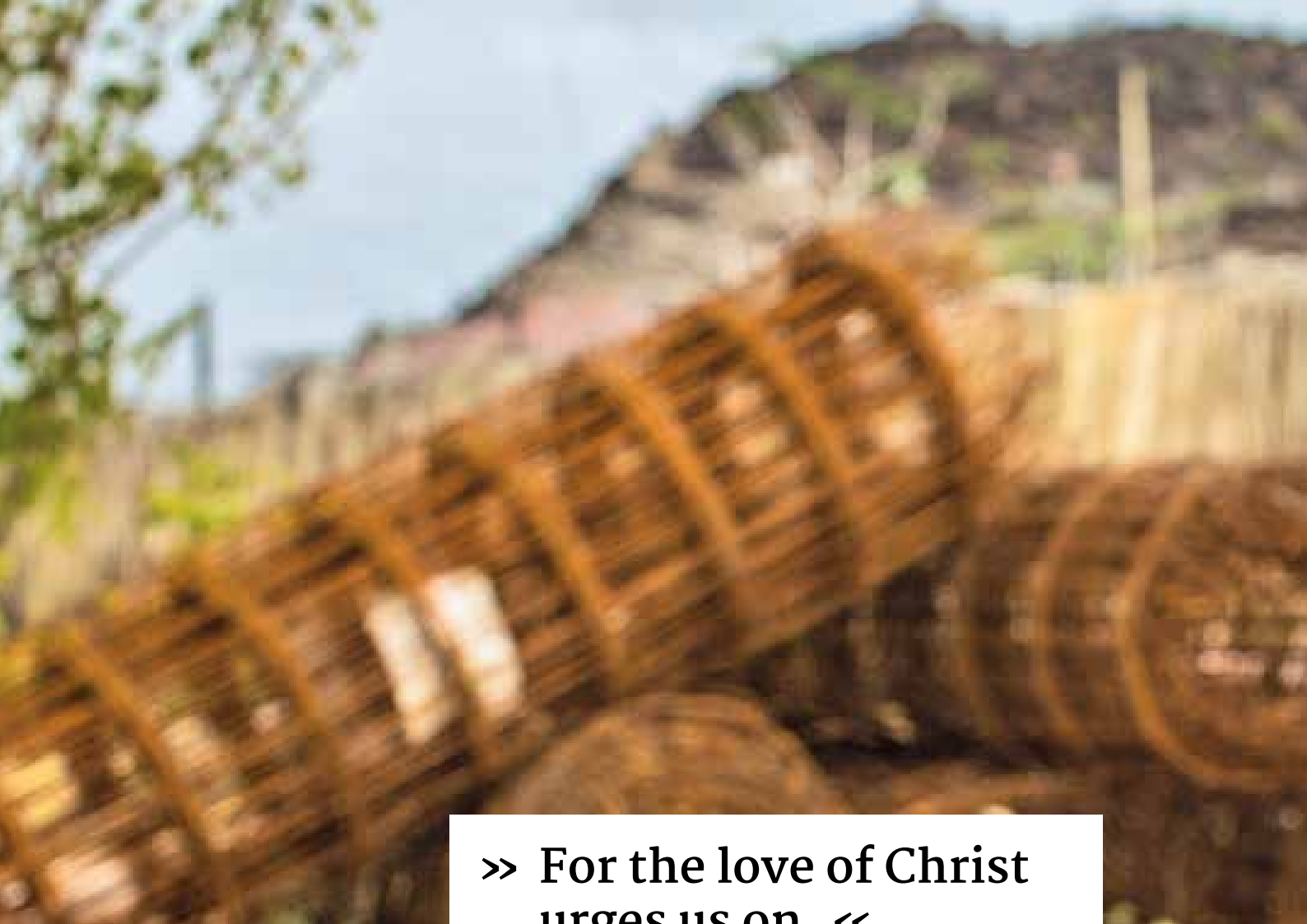
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## >> For the love of Christ urges us on. <<

2 Corinthians 5:14

### Our mission

As a Catholic charity, we support the faithful wherever they are persecuted, oppressed or in need, through information, prayer and action.

### Our vision

A world in which Christianity can thrive everywhere.

### Our guidelines

- 1.** We are loyal to the Holy Father. As a Pontifical Foundation, we participate in the universal mission of the Church.
- 2.** We serve the cause of evangelisation. We respond courageously to the challenges of the time following the teachings of the Church.
- 3.** We are committed to the persecuted Church. By sharing testimonies of faith, we build a bridge of charity between our benefactors and beneficiaries.
- 4.** We are custodians of our benefactors' generosity. We run modern, transparent and effective fundraising and administration.



## Our values



### Faith and Christian love

The foundation of all our activities is Christian faith and love. This includes our fidelity to the Holy Father and the adherence to both the teachings and institutions of the Catholic Church.



### Prayer

Regular prayer, personal and common, animates our daily work and strengthens our missionary spirit. It moves us to offer assistance to those who are suffering because of their loyalty to Christ and His Church – on whose prayers we rely as well.



### Pastoral commitment

We strive to proclaim the Gospel, be it “welcome or unwelcome” (2 Timothy 4:2), responding courageously to the challenges of the time. We do this when engaging our benefactors and by financing pastoral projects with their contributions.



### Unity

Conceived as a “bridge of love” from its origins, ACN serves for unity and reconciliation. We create communion with and between both our benefactors and beneficiaries through prayer, providing information and expressing gratitude.



### Service

We fulfil our mission through mercy and humble service, listening carefully to the needs of our partners. We aspire to be a personal source of comfort and strength to our beneficiaries and benefactors.



### Openness

Through our support of the Universal Church we promote a respectful dialogue with many cultures around the world. We live this openness ourselves in our manifold encounters both within and outside the Catholic Church.



### Accountability

We handle the funds we receive with the highest care, seeking efficiency and measuring impact both in our funding activities and within our internal organization. We work transparently, showing the sources, uses and achievements of the funds we receive.



### Trust

Our unshakeable trust in Divine Providence guides us into the future and enables us to place trust in others and, in turn, to be trusted by them. Consecrated to Our Lady of Fatima we are filled with hope and confidence.



## This is how donations become concrete aid for Christians in need.

**For more than 70 years, Aid to the Church in Need has supported churches in need, as well as Christians suffering from discrimination and persecution around the globe. From the very beginning, we have been guided by values such as professionalism, transparency, effectiveness and efficiency. These are values that we have stood by uncompromisingly in the past and continue to do so today, ensuring that our benefactors' donations have the best possible effect precisely where they are most urgently needed: among local churches in need.**

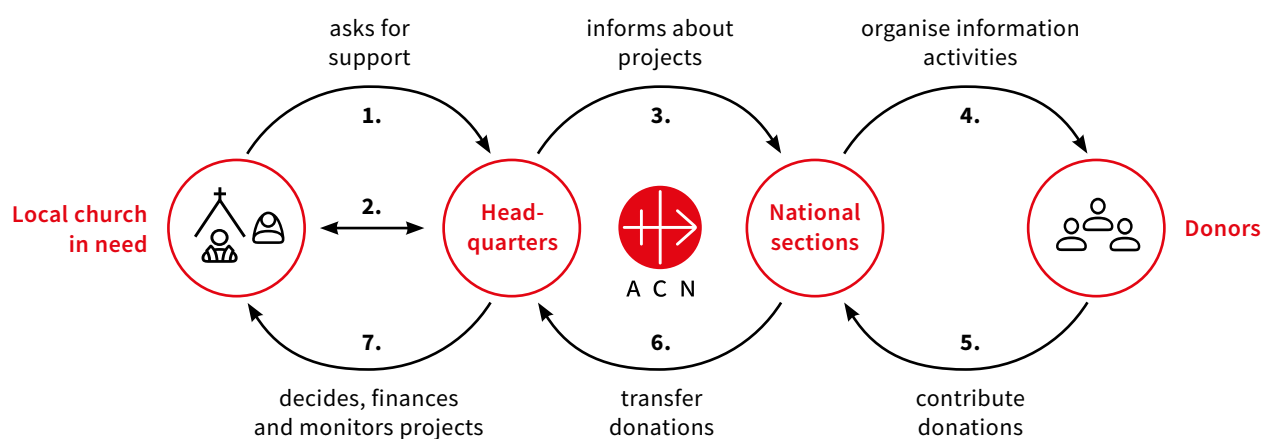
It is our moral duty to channel the donations we receive with the utmost care. For it is our mission to promote ecclesial and spiritual communion between those who suffer for their faith in Jesus Christ and those who possess a compassionate and generous heart. And we will remain faithful to this credo in the future. The following diagram provides an overview of how the donation cycle at ACN works.

» It is our moral duty to use donations in a responsible manner. «

Clear organisational structures between our headquarters, our global national offices and our project partners ensure that the entire process, extending from project application and needs assessment to project approval and funds provision, can be designed conscientiously and efficiently. As a rule, only three months elapse between the time that an aid application has been received and our decision to approve or reject it.



## Donation cycle



**1.** The need for project aid arises in a place where the Church suffers from poverty or persecution. The diocese or parish forwards the project to ACN (Aid to the Church in Need) headquarters in Königstein, Germany, with a recommendation from the local bishop or supervisor.

**2.** The head of section for the region analyses the project. If necessary, he or she then asks for further information. Within a maximum of three months,

ACN headquarters confirms whether the project has been approved or not.

**3.** ACN headquarters informs the national offices about local fundraising projects and financing through benefactors.

**4.** The offices organise information and awareness-raising measures so that donors support the projects.

**5.** Benefactors feel called on to join in and donate.

**6.** ACN's national offices transfer the charitable contributions to ACN headquarters.

**7.** ACN decides on projects and their funding, tracks and monitors their implementation.

Between one and six months after the approval of the project has been granted, ACN assumes the costs for the approved project. In emergencies, ACN headquarters provides immediate funds.





**>> May the Lord make your prayers and commitment to the Church bear fruit throughout the world. <<**

Pope Francis to the benefactors of Aid to the Church in Need



**Ever since its earliest days, ACN has been geared towards charity and reconciliation, providing assistance to Christians in need. With the support of our bene-**

**factors, we will remain true to this spirit in future with a view to helping the Church where its believers are threatened most by persecution, discrimination and poverty.**



**1947** At Pope Pius XII's request, Father Werenfried van Straaten founds ACN (then "Aid to the Eastern Priests") at the Premonstratensian monastery in Tongerlo, Belgium. In a unique reconciliation campaign, donations are collected in Belgium and the Netherlands for displaced Germans, including 3,000 priests.

**1950** To provide pastoral care to displaced Germans, 35 buses and trucks are converted into "chapels on wheels" as part of the highly original "chapel truck campaign".

**1952** ACN comes to the aid of persecuted Christians behind the "Iron Curtain". The projects range from helping to renovate churches and train priests to funding radio broadcasts and the book apostolate.

**1956** After the bloody suppression of the Hungarian uprising against the Stalinist system, ACN helps the local Church get through the crisis.

**1961** We launch our aid projects for the beleaguered Church in Asia. Following this, the first meeting between Father Werenfried and Mother Teresa takes place in the Home for the Dying in Calcutta.

**1962** We step up our aid for persecuted and threatened Catholics in the "Catholic continent" of Latin America.

**1965** Petitions also reach us from the Church in Africa, which we proceed to assist with the same commitment as on other continents.

**1966** ACN is consecrated to Our Lady of Fatima. The following year, a large international pilgrimage takes place to mark the 50th anniversary of the apparitions.

**1970** We launch our aid campaign to assist the Church in Haiti, one of the world's poorest countries.

**1975** ACN relocates its international headquarters from Rome to Königstein/Taunus.

**1979** With the Children's Bible, we launch a major project for boosting evangelisation efforts worldwide. To date, the book has been translated into 191 languages and printed and distributed over 51 million times.

**1984** ACN is recognised by the Holy See as a Universal Public Association of Pontifical Right.

**1989** Following the political turning point in Eastern Europe, ACN provides aid for reconstruction and new evangelisation in the former Eastern bloc countries.

**1992** By order of Pope John Paul II, our aid organisation begins to work towards a dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church.



**1997** The 50th anniversary of ACN's efforts on behalf of the Church in need worldwide – an occasion that is celebrated fittingly.

**2003** Father Werenfried van Straaten, founder of our aid organisation, dies on 31 January at the age of 90 in his place of residence, Bad Soden/Taunus.

**2007** The Middle East conflict causes more and more difficulties for the Church in the region, prompting Pope Benedict XVI to ask ACN to intensify its activities for Christians in the Middle East.

**2011** An eventful year for ACN: our aid organisation is re-founded as a Foundation of Pontifical Right by Pope Benedict XVI and subsequently restructured. When the Syrian war breaks out, ACN begins extensive aid and solidarity campaigns, including the "Light a Candle for Peace in Syria" initiative.

**2014** ACN initiates an emergency campaign to allow Christians in Iraq to remain in their homeland. The project is still going strong to this day, with more than 5,000 houses having already been renovated. ACN also becomes the sole shareholder of the YOUCAT Foundation and therefore its publisher. The work is very popular in Catholic youth work all over the world, with translations into no fewer than 58 languages. ACN opens its first Asian office in South Korea. This is followed by further offices in Mexico, Malta, Colombia, Slovakia and the Philippines up until 2019.

**2017** To mark the 70th anniversary of our aid organisation, ACN invites benefactors from all over the world on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Fatima in Portugal. In the same year, Aid to the Church in Need assumes responsibility for the annual One Million Children Praying the Rosary campaign.

**2019** With the Safeguarding project, ACN is helping the church to introduce measures to prevent abuse and is encouraging safeguarding courses for priests and religious worldwide.

**2020** Our foundation helps the Church worldwide in their efforts to combat the coronavirus pandemic and grants special assistance to cushion the impact of the coronavirus crisis for local churches. Following the explosion in Beirut's harbour, ACN is launching a major aid campaign for Lebanon.





## Aid to the Church in Need and its organisational structure

**Mauro Cardinal  
Piacenza**  
President



The **Superior Council**, under the chairmanship of its President, is responsible for the basic content and guidelines of the charity.

On behalf of the Superior Council and under the chairmanship of the **Executive President**, the **Administrative Council** ensures the statutory management of the charity.

**Thomas  
Heine-Geldern**  
Executive President



In the **General Council**, the presidents of the 23 National Sections advise the foundation and vote on all the significant decisions of the Superior Council.

In cooperation with the Ecclesiastical Assistants of the National Sections, the **International Ecclesiastical Assistant** is responsible for the spiritual life of the foundation.

**Father  
Martin Barta**  
International  
Ecclesiastical Assistant



**Philipp Ozores**  
Secretary General



The **General Secretariat** in Königstein/Ts. centrally manages the entire funding activities and the financial, technical and administrative needs of the foundation. It supports the National Sections in providing media material and produces press and social media content and sound and video productions.

**Regina Lynch**  
Director of Projects



**Guildo Grönig**  
Director Finance  
and Administration



The **23 National Sections** inform the benefactors and the public on the situation and needs of suffering Christians. They initiate prayer campaigns, acquire new donors and are responsible for the foundation's relations with its benefactors.

**Mark von  
Riedemann**  
Director for  
Public Affairs and  
Religious Freedom



## Notes

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Aid to the  
Church in Need

ACN INTERNATIONAL



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