



Aid to the  
Church in Need

ACN INTERNATIONAL



»» Because faith  
gives hope. ««

Activity Report 2024

PONTIFICAL  
FOUNDATION



**Imprint**

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ACN Aid to the Church in Need International

Title: A boy at catechism class in the parish of Caluyo in Puno, Peru.



## Dear Friends,

By presenting you with this annual report and providing information on the use of the funds entrusted to us, we aspire to be true *"Pilgrims of Hope"*, in keeping with the motto of the Jubilee Year 2025.

In the face of great need, we have witnessed a remarkable display of true Christian charity and, at times, heroic love for God and neighbour throughout the past year. This we beheld in the escalating developments in the Middle East, in the devastating war in Ukraine that has continued for more than three years, in Haiti, which is sinking into chaos and anarchy and in African countries where jihadist violence is spreading and bringing displacement, suffering and misery to the population.

Thanks to the prayers and generous contributions of our benefactors, who once again opened their hearts wide in 2024, we were able to provide support in more than 130 countries and through over 5,000 projects – spreading the light of hope via the fraternal embrace of the Church community.

Global developments and the dedication of many good people remind us that the struggle between good and evil, light and darkness, is intensifying. In this conflict, I ask you to turn together in hopeful prayer to God, the source and giver of all good, of light and life.

May the blessing of Almighty God descend upon all of you who contribute to making this work a living expression of love and grace. I entrust you and your families to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, who is also our Mother.

Kind regards,



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

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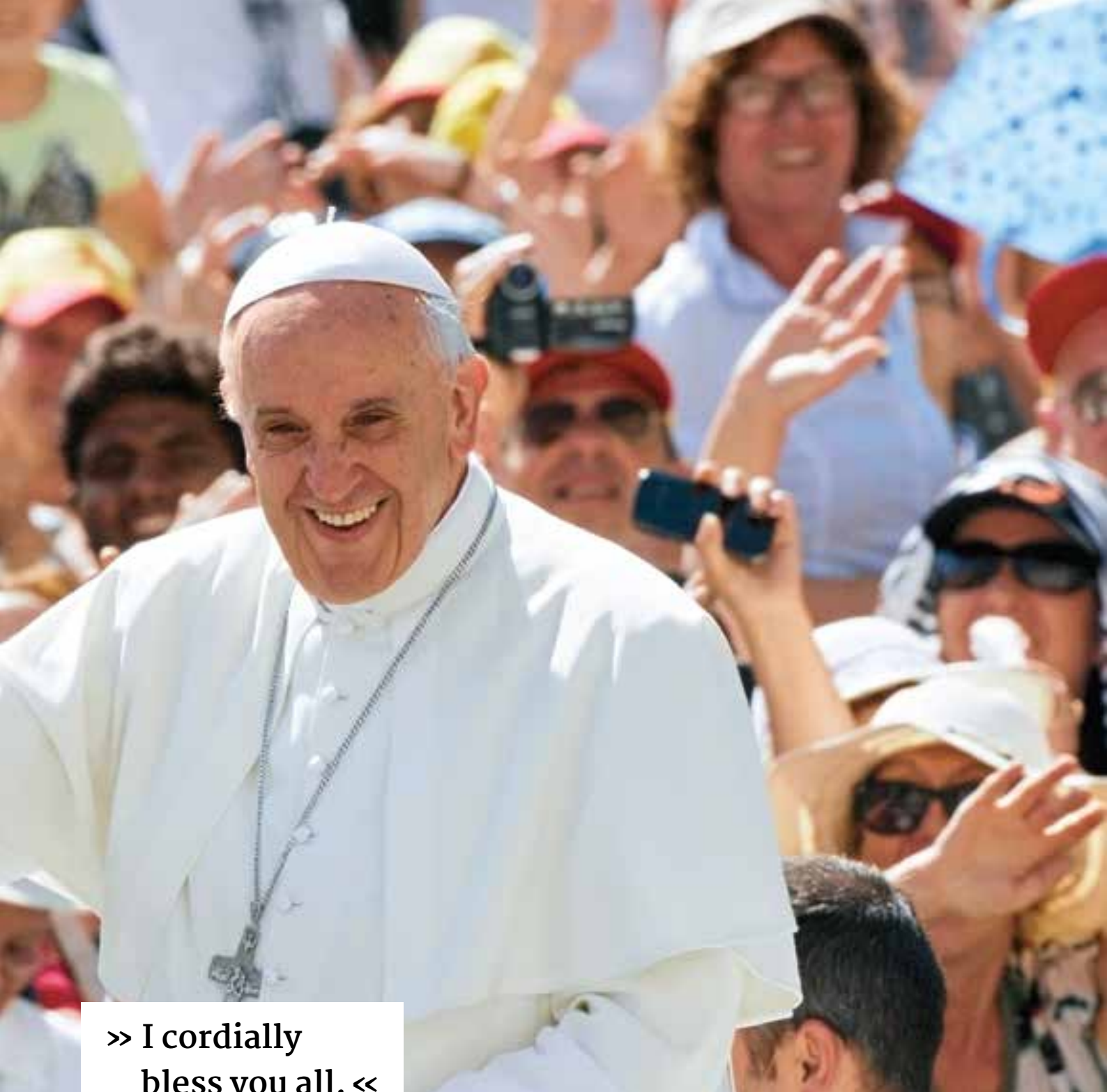
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**» I cordially  
bless you all. «**

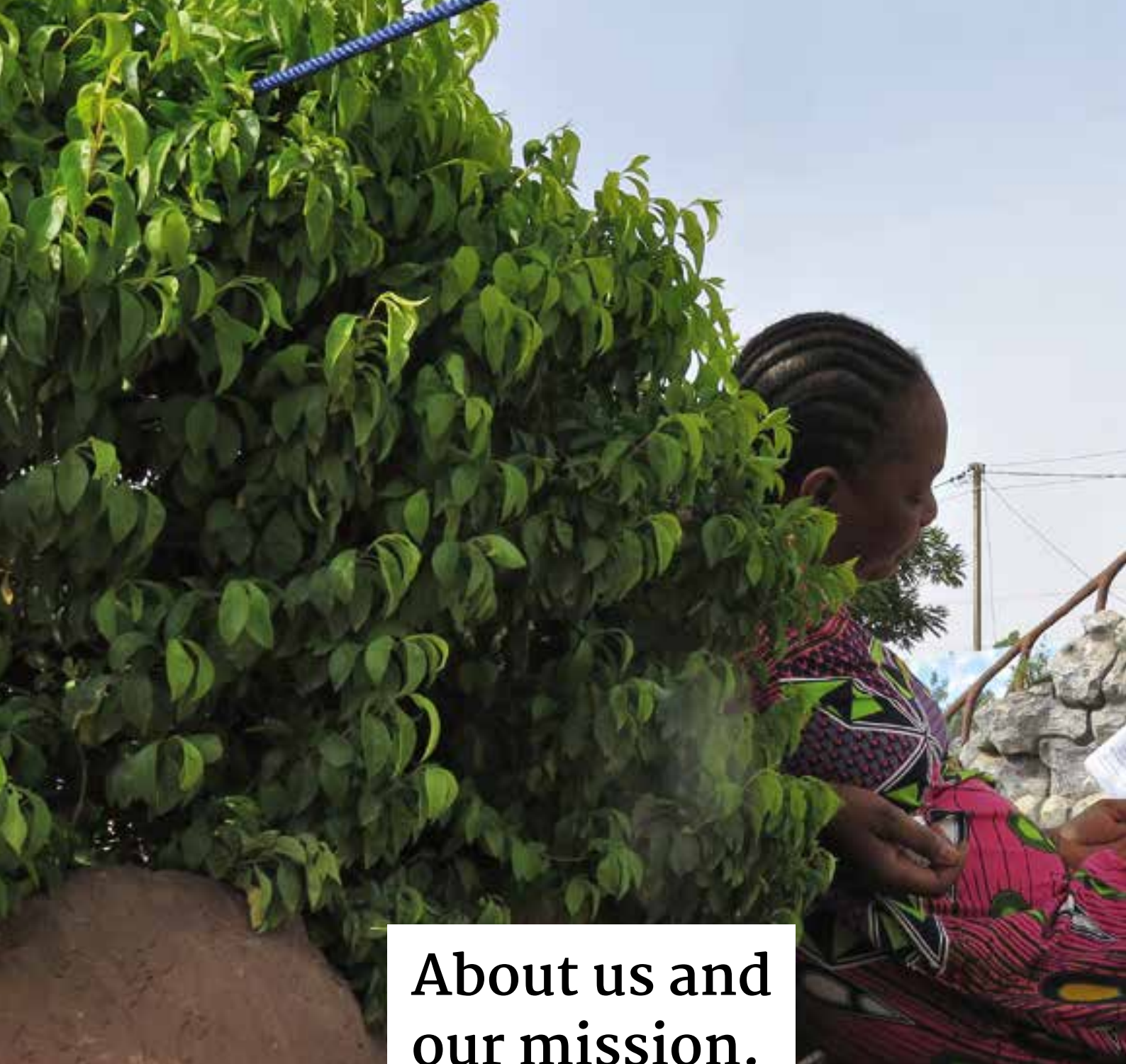
Dear friends, may the Lord make your prayers and your commitment to the mission of the Church always nurture more fruit throughout the world, especially where it is suffering from spiritual and material needs or is discriminated against and persecuted.

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 and our mission.

Get to know Aid to the Church in Need. Our mission, what we are committed to and our funding priorities in 2024.

» 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







Aid to the Church in Need was initially established in 1947 as a Catholic aid organisation for war refugees and has been recognised as a Pontifical Foundation since 2011. Under our guiding principle of “information, prayer and action”, today we are committed to helping Christians across the globe, wherever they are persecuted or oppressed or suffer material hardships.

In addition, we are committed to religious freedom and reconciliation across all faiths. Our foundation does not accept any support from government agencies. However, thanks to hundreds of thou-

sands of benefactors who donate to Aid to the Church in Need, we are now active worldwide with an annual donation volume of 139.3 million euros. This story shows, once again, how practical charity arises from proclaiming one's faith.



## In many countries, Christians are discriminated against and persecuted.

**>> Whatever you did for the least of my brothers and sisters, you did for me. <<** Mt 25:40

From its beginnings, the Church has always provided care for those in need. However, the Church often finds itself in urgent need of assistance, particularly in developing countries and in states where it faces displacement, persecution or disasters.

According to our calculations, 62% of the world's population live in countries

where their faith cannot be practised freely, and half of the world's population live in countries with outright persecution. The fundamental right to religious freedom is not guaranteed in at least 61 countries. Christians bear a disproportionate brunt of the impact.

Where Church life and pastoral care for the faithful are difficult to maintain on their own, the Church is dependent on donations from abroad. Unlike most charities working to alleviate social needs, Aid to the Church in Need – formerly known as Church in Need – concentrates on supporting pastoral care.

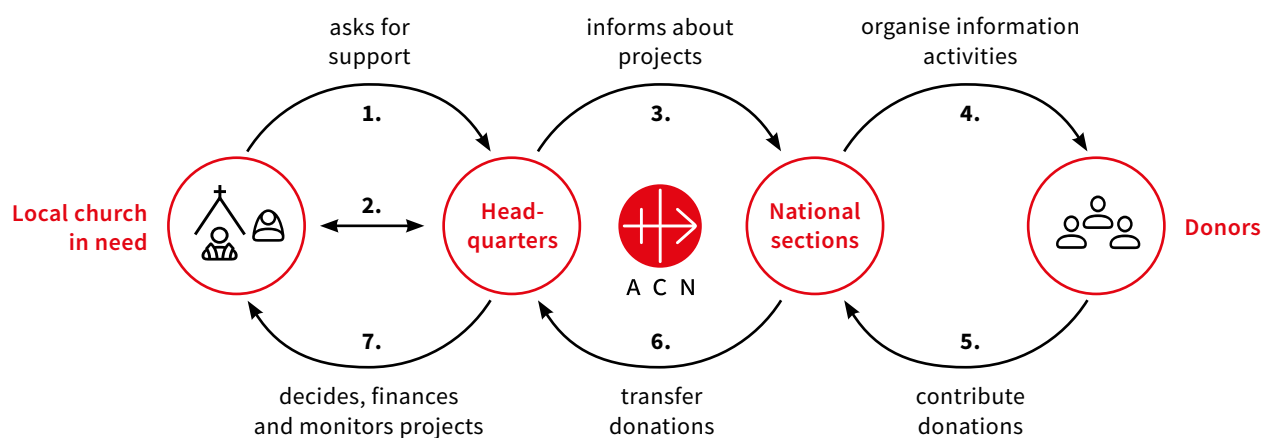
For 78 years, our professionalism, transparency, effectiveness and efficiency have ensured that our benefactors' donations have the best possible effect precisely where they are most urgently needed: among local churches in need.







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



**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 projects for local fundraising and financing through benefactors.

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

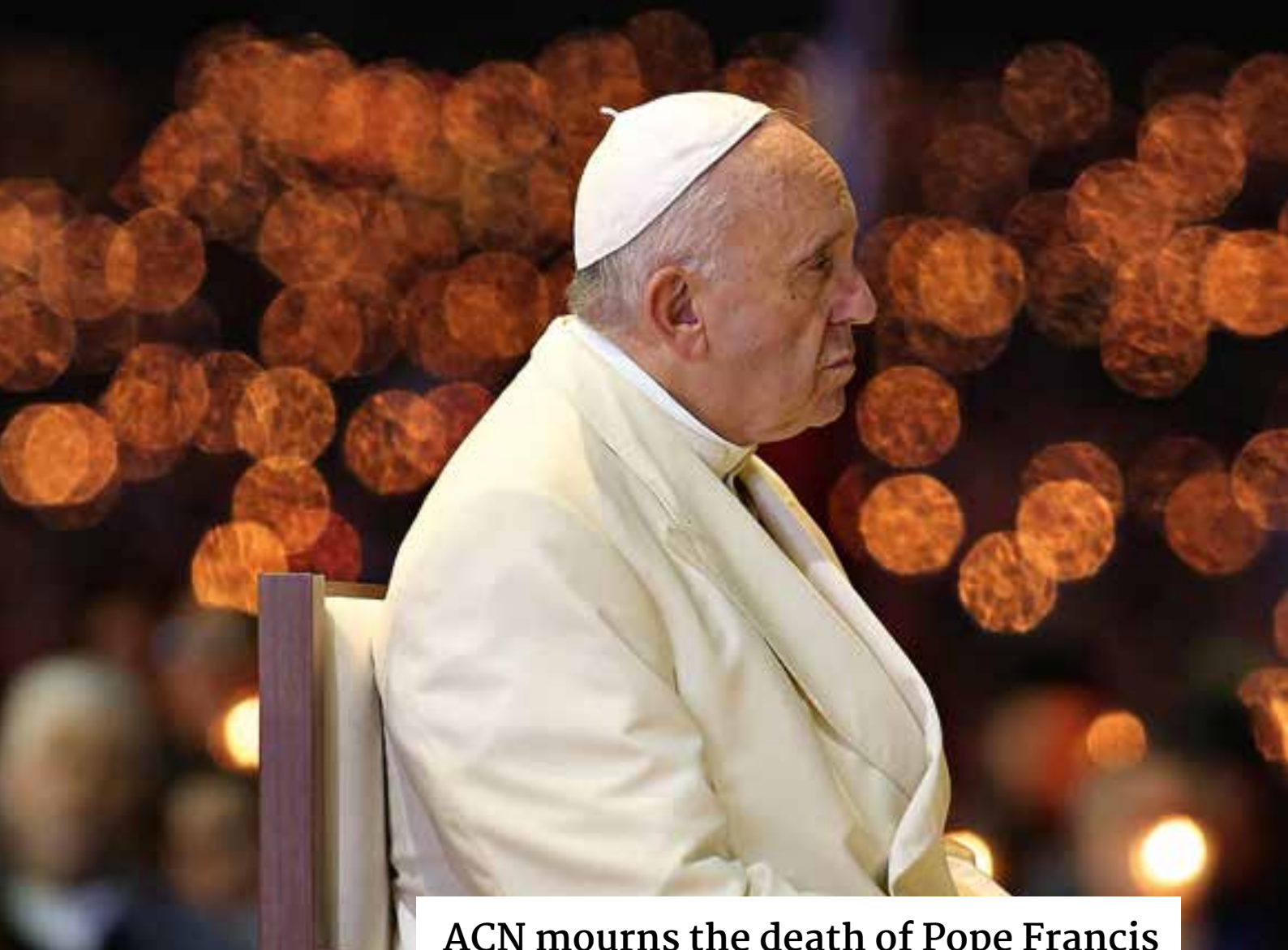
**5.** Benefactors feel called on to join in and donate.

**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.





## ACN mourns the death of Pope Francis



Presentation of the DOCAT on Catholic social teaching in June 2017 at the Vatican.



Address for peace in Syria at the Angelus prayer in December 2018 in Rome.



Former ACN Executive President T. Heine-Geldern in August 2019 at the handover of one of the 6,000 rosaries.

**The Catholic world mourns the death of Pope Francis. We at ACN also extend our heartfelt gratitude as we bid farewell to the pontiff, who died on Easter Monday of the Holy Year 2025 at the age of 88. We remember a pope who was unique and unconventional in many ways, wholeheartedly supporting our Charity and our global efforts to aid persecuted Christians and the suffering Church.**

Despite his pontificate being marked by a dramatic global rise in war, violence and challenges like the Covid-19 pandemic, Pope Francis led his ministry with unwavering courage and confidence. He was the first pope in twelve centuries who was not born in Europe and the first Jesuit on the throne of Peter. He was also the first head of the Catholic Church in history to meet the Patriarch of Moscow and the first pope to travel to Iraq and

Mongolia. He was our highest superior by virtue of his office, as ACN was elevated to the rank of a Pontifical Foundation by Benedict XVI in 2011. He consistently supported us with special benevolence.

Above all, we remember Francis as a pope of dialogue and frank words. In view of the world situation, he repeatedly appealed to the conscience of those in power and responsibility to put a stop to violence, discrimination and persecution of religious minorities and the destruction of nature. As a tireless advocate for peace, he was deeply concerned about the fate of humanity. On the Feast of the Assumption in 2022, for example, he spoke in tears about the war in Ukraine. The consecration of the world, and especially Russia and Ukraine, to Mary on 25 March 2022 is undoubtedly one of the most impressive moments of his pontificate.



**>> With Pope Francis, we are losing a  
tireless fighter for religious freedom  
and oppressed Christians. <<**

Regina Lynch,  
ACN Executive President

His commitment to the Christians in Iraq will also remain unforgettable. In March 2021, the pope visited the Nineveh Plains, where ACN has rebuilt churches, monasteries and Christian homes. Regina Lynch, now Executive President, and then Director of ACN's Project Department, was part of Pope Francis' delegation. She remembers: "He thanked ACN and the benefactors for all we are doing for Christians in the Middle East and around the world."

Pope Francis had already expressed his respect for the work of ACN in 2016. He supported the medical care of Christians displaced from the Nineveh Plains with a personal donation to ACN. Through numerous other actions, he consistently reinforced his support for our foundation's mission. For example, during the Sunday Angelus prayer

in St Peter's Square, Pope Francis lit a candle made by ACN's project partners in Syria, thereby expressing his support for our Advent campaign "Light a Candle for Peace in Syria". In 2019, Francis received a delegation from ACN and blessed 6,000 rosaries and an icon – after which he once again called for prayer for Syria.

Francis continued the path of his predecessors in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and met with several Orthodox patriarchs, including Kirill of Moscow and Bartholomew of Constantinople. He also sought contact with representatives of non-Christian religious communities. Our foundation will always be grateful to Pope Francis for his prayers and for consistently advocating for persecuted Christians and the right to religious freedom. May he rest in peace.



Blessing of the icon "Our Lady of Sorrows, Comforter of the Syrians" in September 2019.



In conversation with ACN Executive President Regina Lynch on the flight to Iraq in March 2021.



Meeting in Iraq with representatives of the three Abrahamic religions in March 2021.





## In 2024, we were able to support 5,335 projects worldwide.

In 2024, we received 7,296 applications for aid from all over the world. Thanks to the generosity of our benefactors, we collected donations of 139.3 million euros. By adding reserves of 2.2 million euros from previous years we have been able to fund activities amounting to 141.5 million euros. As can be seen in the diagram, by far the largest share of our expenditure was devoted to mission-related expenses, i.e. concrete project work, information and prayer activities.

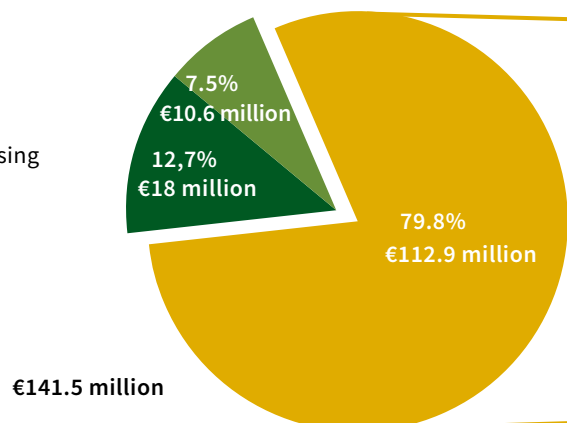
As always, the proportion of necessary expenditures for administration and fundraising was

comparatively low, so that as many funds as possible could reach local Christians. In 2024, we supported a total of 5,335 projects in 137 countries with approximately 95.6 million euros. 17.3 million euros were used for proclamation of the faith, information work and advocacy for disadvantaged and persecuted Christians worldwide.

At 30.2 million euros, or 21.7% of our revenues, bequests made up a significant part of our support for the Church in 2024. Together with our brothers and sisters in need, we therefore not only thank our living benefactors, but also gratefully remember those who support us beyond death.

### Total expenditure (2024)

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



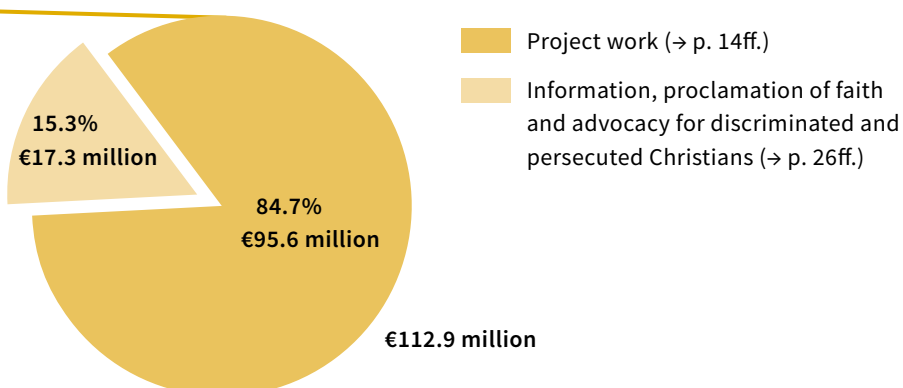


## Facts and figures\*

Offices in **23** countries  
**358,195** donors worldwide  
**139,261,868** euros in donations and legacies  
Project partners in **137** countries  
**5,335** projects supported worldwide  
**79.8** percent of the funds used are allocated to mission-related expenses

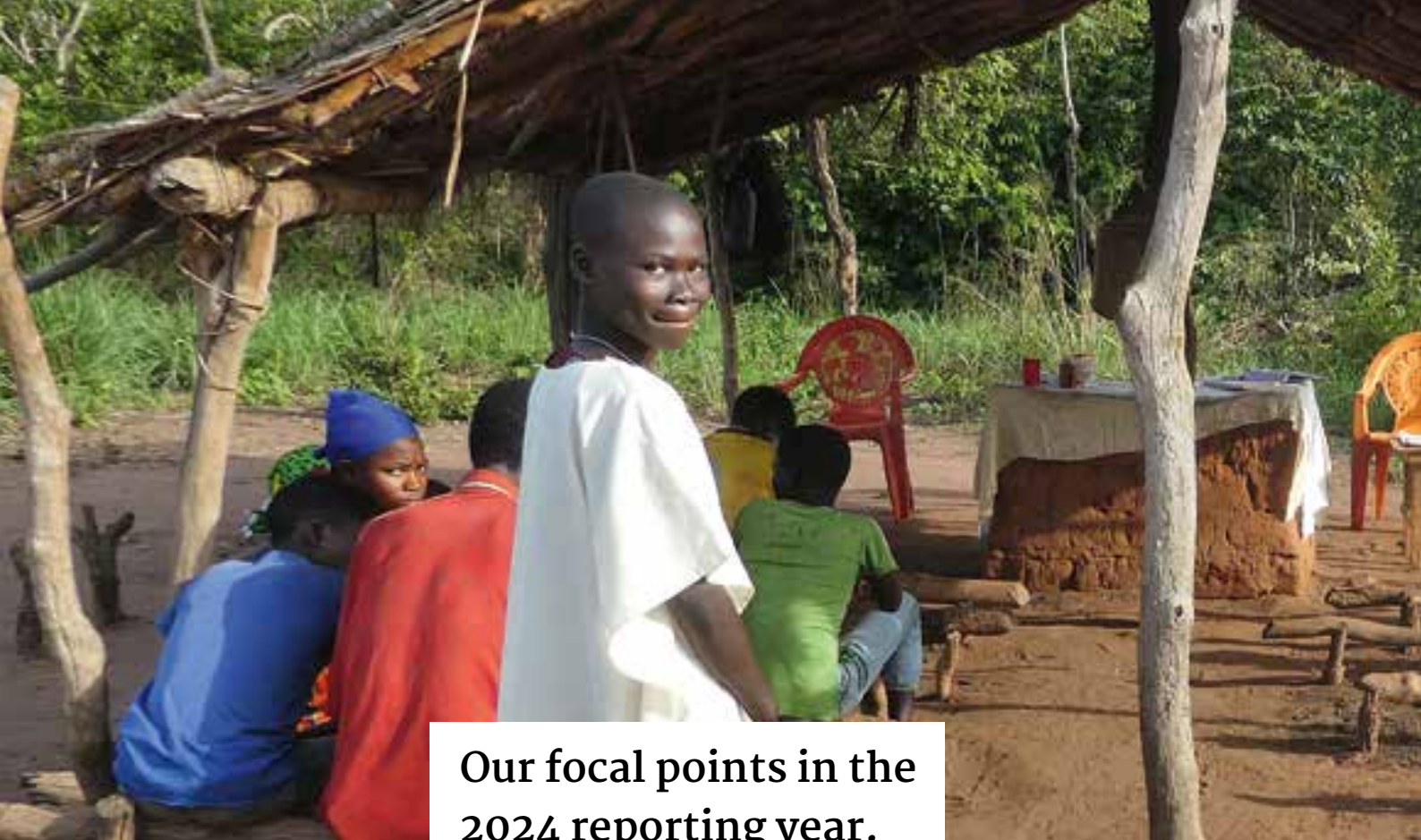
All financial figures are audited by the independent auditing firm PwC.

### Mission-related expenditure (2024)



\*Valid as of 2024





## Our focal points in the 2024 reporting year.

In 2024, we increased our support for the training of priests and religious (16.4 percent) and lay people (11.8 percent), which has always been one of our priorities, to a total of 28.2 percent, representing more than a quarter of our total aid.

At 23.6 percent, projects for the construction, reconstruction or renovation of churches and church buildings also accounted for more than a quarter of our funding.

By providing Mass stipends for priests (17.2 percent) and subsistence aid for religious sisters (6.7 percent), we were once again able to help secure their livelihoods in 2024. A total of 23.9% of our funding was earmarked for these projects.

In addition, we are active in acute crises with emergency aid measures for the suffering population. In 2024, such emergency aid in areas where Christians are threatened by violence and displacement accounted for 10.7% of our total aid.

### Aid granted by type of help (2024)

Construction and reconstruction (→ p. 22)



Mass stipends (→ p. 16)



Training of priests and religious (→ p. 18)



Faith formation of laity (→ p. 21)



Emergency relief aid (→ p. 24)



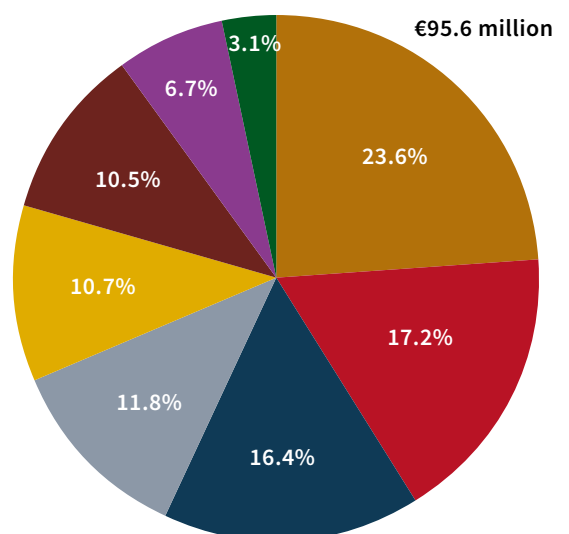
Means of transport for pastoral care (→ p. 23)



Subsistence aid for religious sisters (→ p. 20)



Distribution of Bibles, religious books and media (→ p. 25)







**>> The starting point for our aid is a close dialogue with local churches. <<**

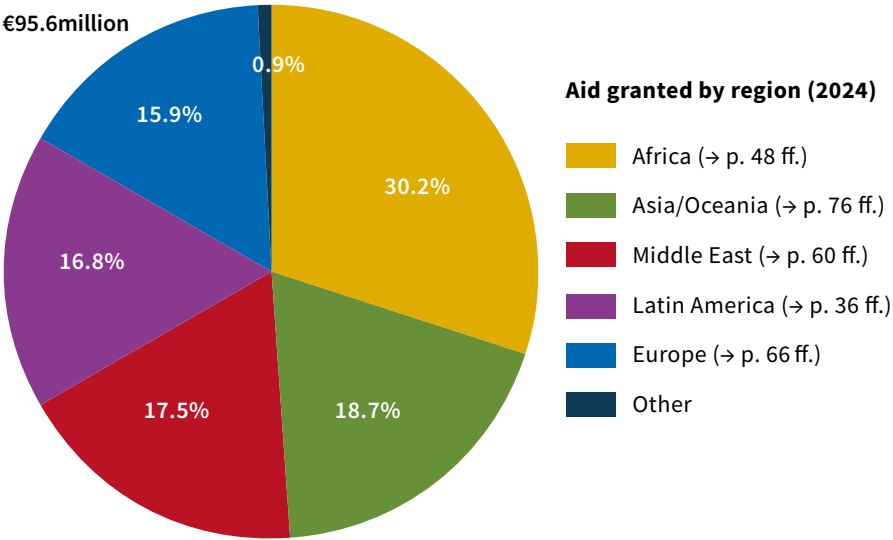
At 30.2%, Africa was once again the priority region for our aid projects in 2024. The situation is particularly dramatic in places where Islamist terror is spreading and Christians are victims of persecution and displacement, such as in Mozambique, Burkina Faso and Nigeria. At the same time, the number of faithful and vocations to the priesthood and religious orders continues to rise.

18.7% of our aid was devoted to Asia (including 0.9% for Oceania), where Christians form a minority in most countries and are discriminated against or even persecuted. For example, we increased the level of our aid to Pakistan.

The funding volume for the Middle East represented 17.5% of our total aid. The focal points in 2024 continued to be Syria and Lebanon. By providing emergency aid and strengthening pastoral care, our aim is to help ensure the survival of Christian communities and counteract the massive exodus of Christians.

Latin America accounted for 16.8% of our total aid, as rural exodus, migration, sects and governments hostile to the Church are major challenges here.

In 2024, we continued to receive a large number of requests for support from Ukraine, where the Church, in the midst of war, is trying to alleviate the spiritual, psychological and material needs of those who have fled and are in need. Therefore, in 2024, 8.9% of our funds went to Ukraine. Our aid for Europe totalled 15.9%.





## Our task areas

**Regardless of whether we are providing subsistence aid for priests and religious sisters, Mass stipends, training for seminarians, emergency 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.**















## Church in Need – our name says it all

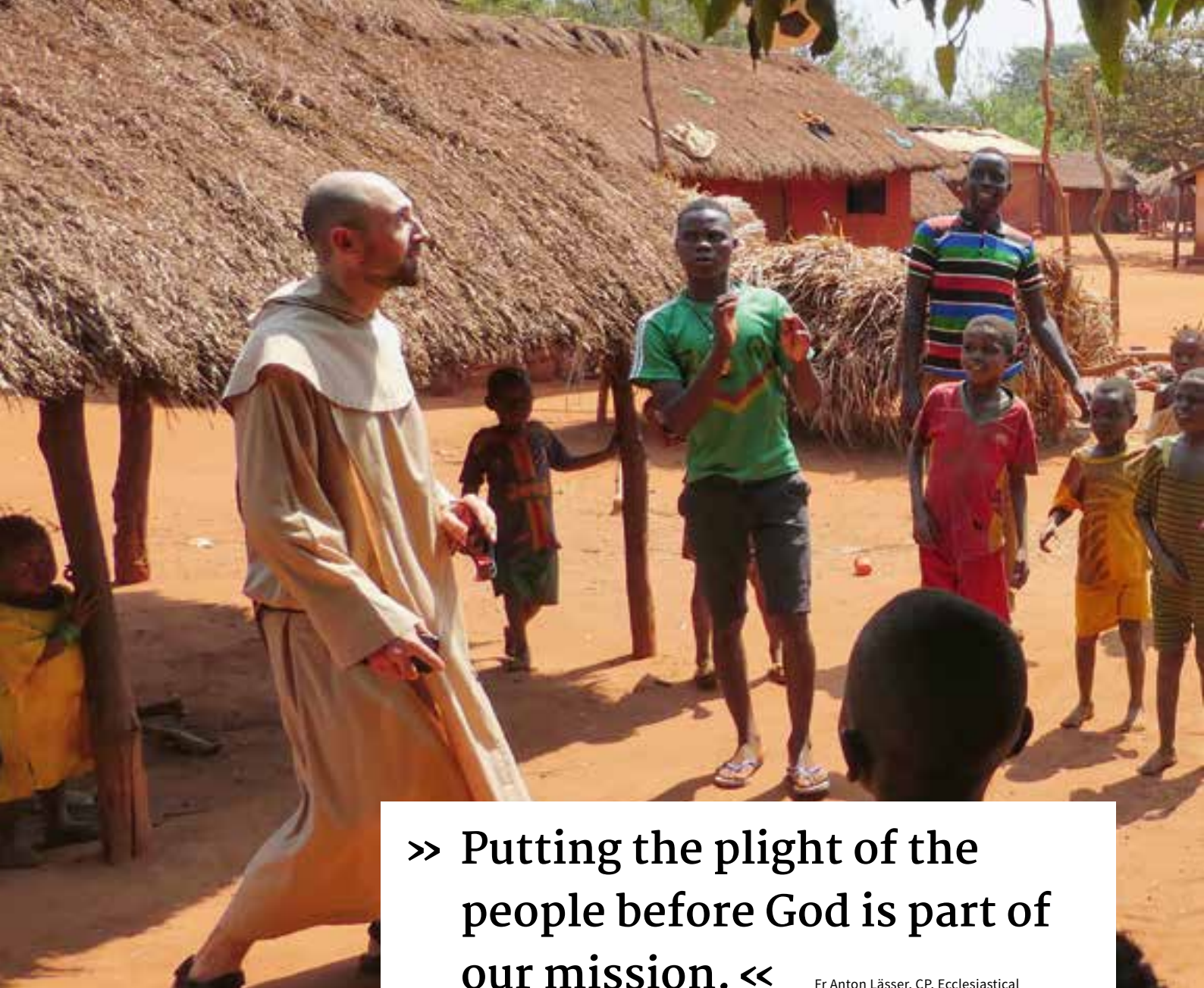
Over the 78 years since its foundation, Aid to the Church in Need has developed into an aid organisation with a broad range of tasks. Today we can rightly claim: our name is our mission. We now support some 5,300 church projects each year in 137 countries – many of these over the long term. In this way, 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 358,100 benefactors throughout the world are we able to fulfil and successfully drive our mission of providing pastoral assistance.

-  Mass stipends (→ p. 17)
-  Training of priests and religious, safeguarding (→ p. 18)
-  Subsistence aid for religious sisters (→ p. 20)
-  Faith formation of laity (→ p. 21)
-  Construction and reconstruction of church facilities (→ p. 22)
-  Means of transport for pastoral care (→ p. 23)
-  Emergency assistance in cases of war, displacement, violence and natural catastrophes (→ p. 24)
-  Distribution of Bibles, religious books and media (→ p. 25)
-  Advocacy, public relations (→ p. 26)
-  Media support for the propagation of faith (→ p. 32)

Near the seminary of the  
Sonsón-Rionegro Diocese  
in La Ceja, Colombia.





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

Fr Anton Lässer, CP, Ecclesiastical Assistant of ACN International

Carmelite friar Igor Joffin in a village of the Bouar Diocese, Central African Republic.

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



Franciscan monk Fadi Azar reports on the aftermath of the earthquake in Lattakia, Syria.



Confession in the parish of St James the Apostle in Sandia, Peru.





## Mass stipends



In many regions, 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 existential help. 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 2024, a total of 1,836,591 Holy Masses were celebrated in the intentions of our benefactors. In this way, we were able to support a total of 42,252 priests – on average, about every tenth priest – worldwide.

The distribution of the Mass stipends reflects the conditions of poverty on the continents. In the reporting year, 39,6% of the Mass stipends went to Africa,

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

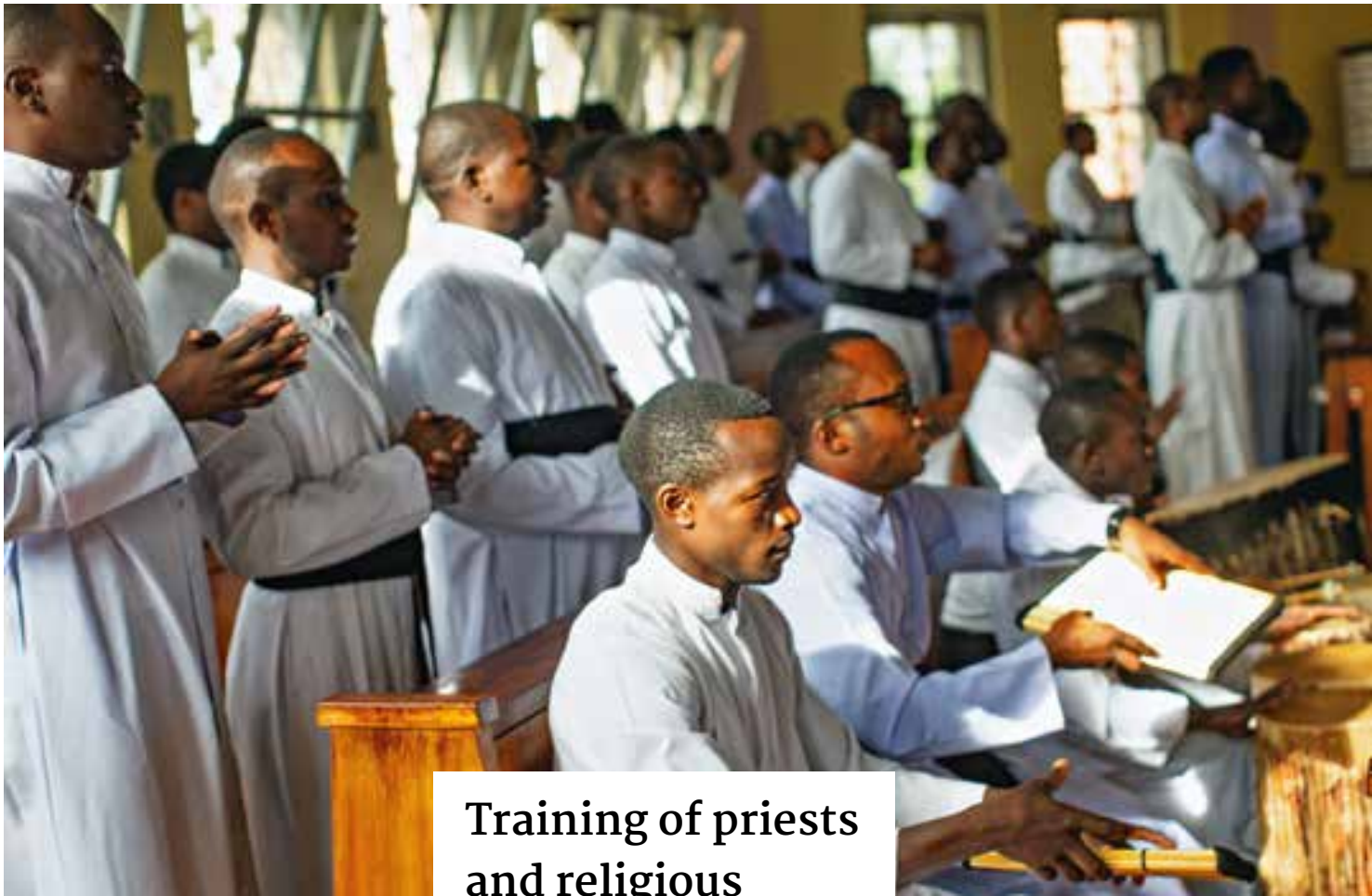
28,5% to Asia and the Near and Middle East, 21,9% to Latin America and 10% to Central and Eastern Europe. By focusing Mass prayers on deceased or sick relatives, on people who are experiencing life crises or on certain issues our donors may be facing, they take part in the Eucharistic celebration in 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.

As a basic principle, 100% of the Mass stipends are forwarded to the intended recipients. On average, a Holy Mass is celebrated every 17 seconds for the intentions of ACN benefactors somewhere in the world.



Seminarians from the Kyiv Greek-Catholic Seminary in Knyazhychi, Ukraine.





The choir of St Augustine's Seminary in Peramiho, Tanzania.

## 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 9,961 seminarians in 2024. The continuing education of God's servants is also an important concern to us. During the reporting year, we sponsored the continuing education of 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. «

The Mother Superior of the Poor Sisters of St Joseph in Buenos Aires, Dominican Republic.



In 2024, we were also able to award 282 scholarships to priests who, for example, are pursuing a doctorate or an additional course of study. In terms of continental distribution, 41% of our scholarship holders came from Africa, 44% from Asia, 13% from Latin America and 2% from Eastern Europe.



## Safeguarding

Sister Silvia playing with children in southern Albania.

ACN supports the Church in its abuse prevention efforts. For example, we promote 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.

To this end, we work closely with the leading Institute of Anthropology – Interdisciplinary Studies on Human Dignity and Care (IADC) at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, among others. A main focus of these courses is the detection of abuse, so that it can be identified as early as possible. The aim is to learn effective measures for prevention and to apply various strategies for dealing with suspected cases.

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).



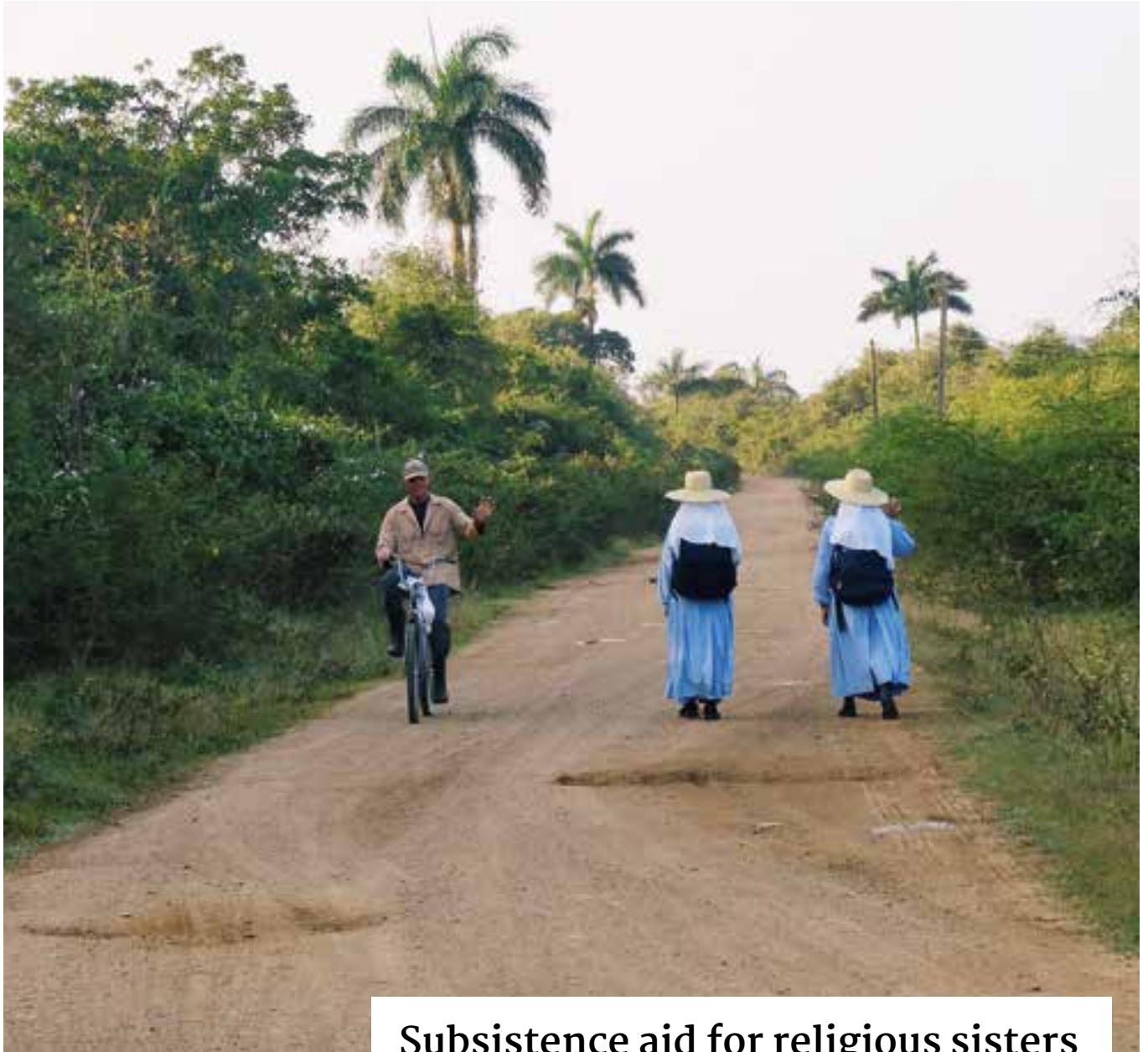
**>> We are working worldwide to improve the protection of minors and other wards. <<**

Regina Lynch, Executive President



Sister Magdalena in the destroyed parish church of Kindimba in southern Tanzania.





## Subsistence aid for religious sisters

Two sisters travelling in the Parish of Corralillo, Cuba.



Spiritual exercises of religious sisters in Tura, India.



Especially in areas with a great shortage of priests, sisters literally look after everyone in the name of God: children and adults, orphans, the sick and dying, those who have failed and those who are searching, as well as traumatised people. These sisters often work under the most difficult conditions. Contemplative sisters, on the other hand, help the suffering through their prayers.

In 2024 alone, with 867 projects, we supported religious sisters from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe in their valuable work.

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

Marco Mencaglia, Director of Projects



## Faith formation of laity

Sister Silvia Papalia and Father Riccardo Scorsone at the Bible study in Vidov, Albania.

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.

In 2024, through 805 projects, we supported the faith formation of laypersons.

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

Dolores Soroa Suárez de Tangil, benefactress, Spain

Pastoral work with the faithful on the island of Marajó, Brazil.







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

Philipp Ozores, Secretary General

At the Shrine of the Lord of Imarrucos in the Prelature of Taraco, Peru.

**Supporting the local Church is the key task of Aid to the Church in Need. This also includes measures such as the construction, reconstruction or maintenance of church buildings. 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, for example 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. We know from 78 years of experience: in slums, even the smallest chapel can offer people a spiritual home.

755 such buildings were constructed or repaired with our help in 2024 alone.





## Means of transport for pastoral care



As early as the beginning of 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. Whether trucks, cars, motorcycles, bicycles, boats, or in particularly difficult mountain regions, mules – in 2024 alone, 478 motor vehicles, 264 motorcycles, 388 bicycles and 11 boats were financed with our help.



A Carmelite in a canoe in the Bouar Diocese, Central African Republic.

ACN supports the parish of Kipatimu in Tanzania with vehicles for pastoral work.



Sister Janette with a poor family in the Vicariate of Guapi in the Colombian jungle.

## 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. At the beginning of the 1950s, ACN was already doing pioneering work in supporting displaced persons.

The bitter truth is: there are more refugees worldwide today than ever before. 122.6 million people are currently fleeing war and violence around the world; of these, several 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 60).

We also support Christians who have been persecuted and expelled for their beliefs in many other parts of the world. Whether in Mindanao in the Philippines or in 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.

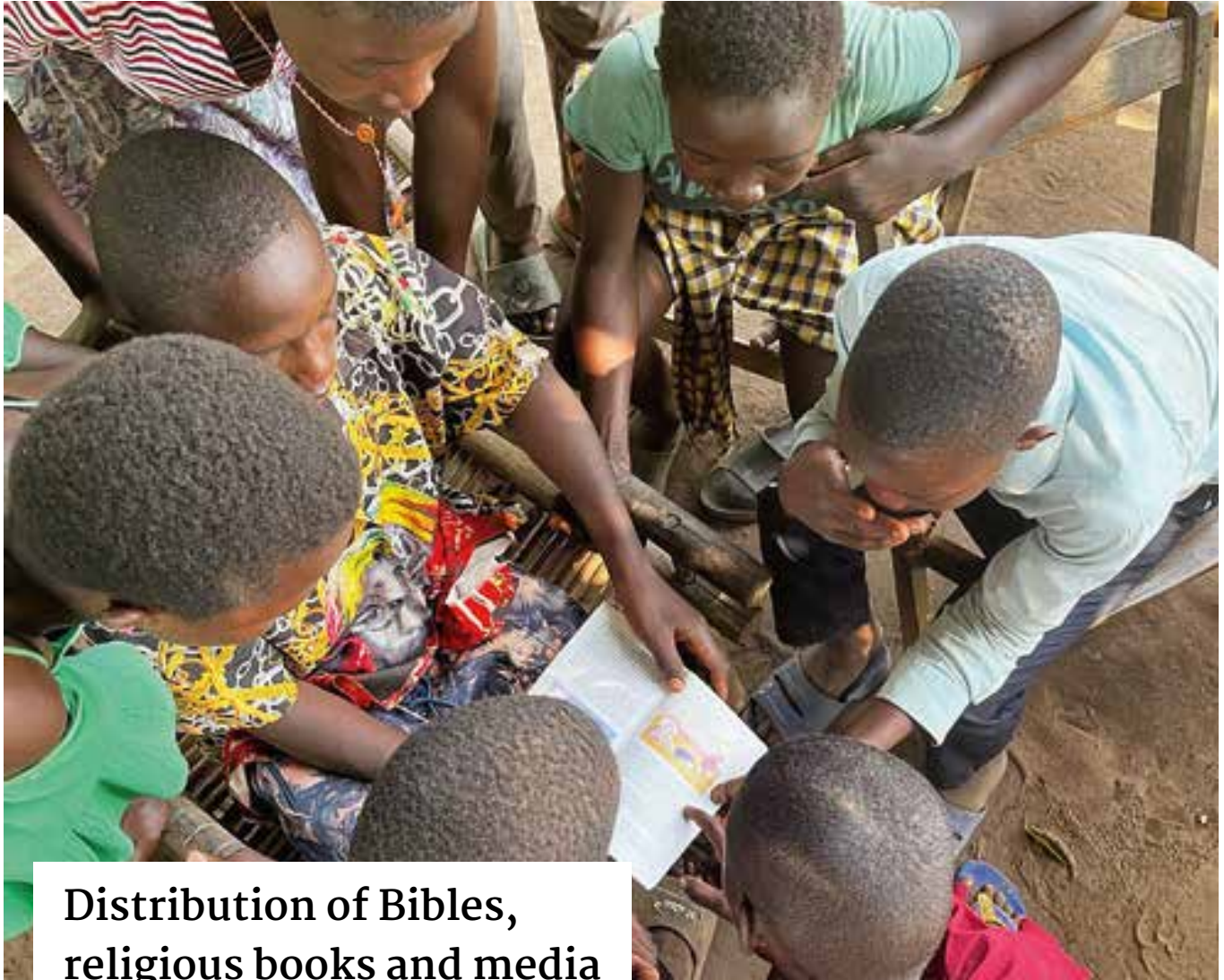
**>> For us, the greatest conceivable catastrophe would be not to act. <<**

Guido Gröning,  
Director of Finance

Sister Elisabeth at the  
Bangassou Infirmary in the  
Central African Republic.







Children in South Sudan reading the children's Bible.

## 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 the publisher and global supplier of the Child's Bible, which has been translated into 194 languages and has already been distributed 51.7 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 2024 alone, 844,200 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 available in 60 languages. Since 2016, DOCAT, a modern translation of the social teachings and doctrine of the Catholic Church, has also been published. You can find more information about YOUCAT and DOCAT on page 33.

**>> For some poor children, the Child's Bible is the only picture book that they can get hold of. <<**

Fr Anton Lässer, CP,  
Ecclesiastical Assistant  
of ACN International



Children in class with the first edition of the children's Bible in Estonian.





## Advocate for persecuted Christians

» We give persecuted Christians a voice. «

Mark von Riedemann,  
Director of Public Affairs  
and Religious Freedom



Through global project work, ACN reaches millions of Christians all over the world. However, more is needed to improve their political environment. ACN advocacy is dedicated to facilitating the exchange of information between the Church, political leaders and society. It arranges visits for bishops, priests and religious sisters to Brussels, Washington and Geneva, where they meet with key political decision-makers.

In this way, politicians receive first-hand reports on conditions in conflict areas where the government has collapsed and from which the United Nations, diplomats and NGOs have withdrawn due to security concerns.

The Catholic Church is often the only institution still providing aid and information in these areas. ACN operates independently of state subsidies and influence, serving as an advocate for charity and Christians in need. In many

cases, we raise awareness among political decision-makers about the growing persecution of Christians worldwide and explain the background behind the issues. ACN was even able to increase its advocacy work in 2024. A significant portion of our commitment was once again focused on Pakistan and Nigeria.

### Europe

During the reporting year, ACN continued its information campaigns in the EU member states. The goal was to draw greater attention to the persecution of Christian minorities in Pakistan. The focus was mainly on the Blasphemy Law, the abduction and enslavement of Christian and Hindu women and girls, and workplace discrimination against Christians. Through presentations by Pakistani Church representatives at EU institutions and regular briefings, ACN was able to raise awareness of the situation among members of the European Parliament. Achievements were also



» The King's ongoing concern is a great source of encouragement to us at ACN. « Caroline Hull, Director ACN UK



King Charles III after the Advent service at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Mayfair, London.

highlighted. One piece of good news from Pakistan, for example, was the introduction of a new law that only allows Christians in the region around the capital Islamabad to marry once they have reached the age of 18. This is a positive step forward, as it safeguards underage Christian girls from forced marriages to Muslims and the resulting conversion to Islam. Previously, a law permitted Christian girls to marry at the age of 13.

Another key aspect of our advocacy work focused on the suffering of Christians in Nigeria. Bishop Wilfred Anagbe and Father Remigius Ihyula, both from the Diocese of Makurdi in Benue State, where Christians are exposed to extreme violence, particularly by militant Fulani extremists, and where two million people have already been displaced, spoke to various target groups in Europe and Great Britain. In Hungary, Bishop Anagbe met with ministers from all EU member states, advocating for Nigeria to remain a priority in foreign policy.

In the Czech Republic, the Bishops' Conference expressed its interest in a closer, structured cooperation with ACN. The Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs promised to provide a budget for the protection of Christians and religious minorities. In the Netherlands, ACN provided information for the preparation of a resolution by the new government calling for measures to protect Christian minorities abroad.

### Great Britain

Thanks to ACN's close cooperation with the British ACN national office, King Charles III was invited to attend an Advent service on 17 December at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Mayfair, London. The service was co-organised by ACN to commemorate the capture of Mosul and the Nineveh Plains by IS ten years ago. The King had previously shown strong concern for the plight of persecuted Christians and had been in contact with ACN.

### USA

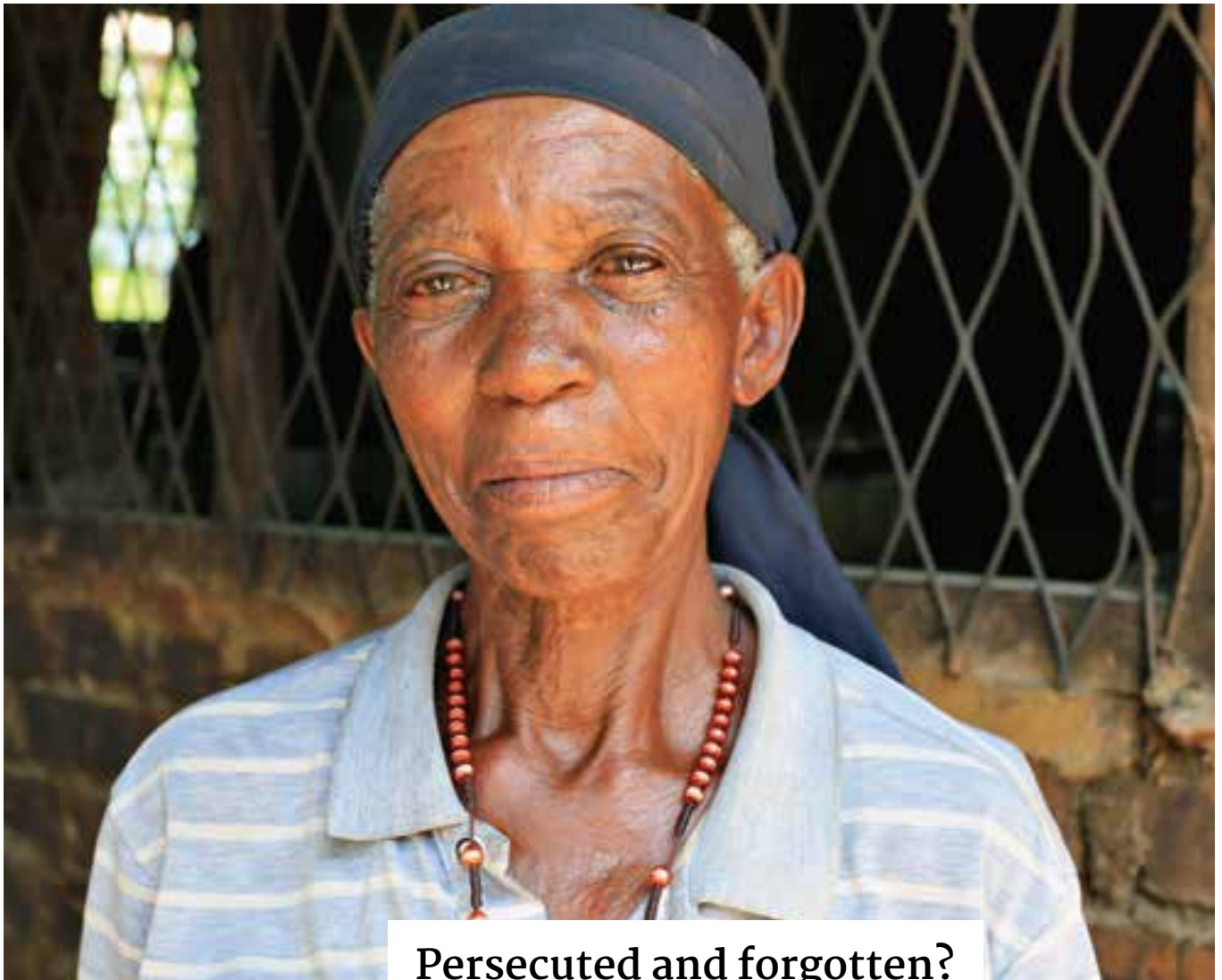
ACN organised a two-week visit to Washington for Bishop Wilfred Anagbe. Through his personal meetings with members of Congress, a vote in support of Nigerian Christians was secured in the House of Representatives on February 6 as US Resolution 82. A solidarity and fact-finding trip to Nigeria was organised for the Africa Subcommittee of the US Congress, which took place on 14 December.



Wilfred Chikpa Anagbe, Bishop of Makurdi, Nigeria (left), pictured here with Father Remigius Shawon Ihyula, campaigning in the EU and the USA on behalf of suffering Christians in Nigeria.

In 2024, ACN published a report of over 50 pages on the dramatic situation in Burkina Faso (find more on this country on pages 50/51).





## Persecuted and forgotten?

Archbishop Bashar Warda of Erbil at the presentation of the new “Persecuted and Forgotten?” report in the British Parliament.



On 16 November, ACN presented the new “Persecuted and Forgotten?” report in countries around the world. The report documents the most striking developments in 18 key countries where Christians suffer persecution and discrimination, including Nigeria, Burkina Faso, China and Pakistan. The new edition comes to the sad conclusion that the situation has worsened in 11 of the 18 countries analysed. It has only improved in one country, the report reveals.

In the foreword to the report, the Chaldean Catholic Archbishop of Erbil (Iraq), Bashar Matti Warda, writes: “Our prayer is that those reading this report, whether governments or others with influence, will do more than just pay lip service to reports of Christian persecution. They must match their words with action – clear and decisive policy commitment – to help those whose only crime is the faith they profess.” The latest report shows that the epicentre of Islamist militant violence has

shifted from the Middle East to Africa. The report makes it clear that aggressive Islamists are the main reason why there has been an increase in the persecution of Christians in all six African countries analysed.

In Egypt and Pakistan, Christian girls are regularly subjected to systematic abductions and rape.

In addition, “Persecuted and Forgotten?” notes that authoritarian regimes, including those in China, Eritrea, India and Iran, have stepped up their repressive measures against Christians. This is carried out either in the name of religious nationalism or state secularism/communism.



<https://acnuk.org/pf-edition-2024/>





## Public relations

Whether media work, events, conferences or campaigns – ACN was once again able to implement a wide range of activities as part of its public relations work in 2024. Here we present some of the events organised by the ACN headquarters or some of its 23 national offices.

» Thank you to all the boys and girls who are taking part! «

Pope Francis, 13 October 2024 at the Angelus prayer in St Peter's Square



### One million children praying the rosary

The initiative “One Million Children Praying the Rosary” was born in 2005 in Caracas, the capital of Venezuela. The aim of this annual prayer campaign, supported by ACN, is to seek peace and unity in the world. At the same time, the prayers are intended to encourage children and young people to trust in God during difficult times.

In 2024, 1,135,945 children from over 150 countries around the world registered to take part via the website alone, although the actual number of participants is likely to have been much higher. The country with the most registered participants was Nigeria with 200,209 children, followed by the Philippines, Poland and Brazil.

Pictures from war-ravaged Kharkiv in Ukraine show children praying fervently despite the danger of

bombings. Children also joined in prayer in the Gaza Strip, Israel and other conflict regions such as Myanmar, Mozambique, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Even in remote areas such as Micronesia, French Polynesia and Antarctica, children took part in the campaign. Colourful processions also took place in countries where Christians are a minority, such as Bangladesh and India.

To accompany the campaign, ACN once again provided free material online for parishes, schools, children's groups and families. These included instructions for praying the Rosary, child-friendly meditations on the mysteries of the Rosary and a consecration prayer to the Virgin Mary for children in more than 15 languages.





## #RedWeek

**#RedWeek, also called “Red Wednesday” in some countries, is an initiative that was launched by ACN in 2015 to draw public attention to the plight of persecuted and disadvantaged Christians. Christianity is the most widely persecuted religious community globally. Christians often live in an environment in which they are discriminated against, violently oppressed or prevented from freely practising their faith.**

#RedWeek 2024 took place from 17 to 27 November in more than 20 countries. Across the globe, more than 1,000 monuments, churches and

public buildings were illuminated in red, and prayer vigils were held to raise awareness of the persecution of Christians and advocate for the right to religious freedom.

In France, the event La Nuit des Témoins (Night of Witnesses) was held for the 15th time during #RedWeek. The highly symbolic Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral, which was set to reopen soon, was illuminated in bright red. In addition to Lourdes and the Sacré-Cœur Basilica, churches throughout the country – including in Bayonne, Versailles and Rennes – held prayer vigils for persecuted Christians. On Corsica, more

than ten churches also took part, including the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption in Ajaccio.

In Spain, the faithful gathered at almost 200 prayer meetings in cities such as Madrid, Zaragoza and Valladolid. Well-known landmarks such as the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, the Almudena Cathedral in Madrid and the Roman Amphitheatre in Tarragona (site of the first Christian martyrs in Spain) were lit up in red. The documentary film “Héroes de la Fe” (Heroes of Faith) was screened in more than 50 parishes, and lectures on the ACN report “Persecuted and Forgotten?” were organised.



Bishop Gerald Mamman Musa from Nigeria at a Mass in Balderschwang, Germany, which was broadcast by the Catholic radio station Horeb.





Left: The Cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris, France.



Augsburg Cathedral in Germany, bathed in red light.

In Germany, more than 200 churches were lit up in red, including in Augsburg and Mainz. An ecumenical service in Fulda Cathedral with 1,300 participants and the music band Koenige & Priester was accompanied by a light show and moving testimonies from persecuted Christians in a powerful demonstration of unity.

An important event in Ireland was the illumination of the world's largest statue of St Patrick in Saul, County Down – a tribute to St Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, who introduced Christianity to the island almost 1,600 years ago. Archbishop Linus Neli from the Indian state of

Manipur spoke about the dramatic situation of the Church in his home country. Numerous churches and cathedrals in Ireland, including the National Eucharistic Shrine in Knock, organised prayer vigils.

Canada counted more than 40 events to celebrate #RedWeek, including services and devotions. The country's major cathedrals – including those in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal – were also illuminated in red.

In Chile, #RedWeek included a prayer vigil in Veracruz Parish in Santiago, where participants prayed for persecuted Christians. In Mexico, the

Cathedral of Puebla was illuminated on 22 November. Auxiliary Bishop Francisco Martínez Castillo of Puebla spoke about religious persecution in Mexico and around the world. In the north of the country, several churches in Nuevo León joined the initiative and took part in the global prayer.

Other countries taking part in #RedWeek included Austria, Portugal, Italy, Switzerland, Colombia, Belgium, the Netherlands, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Australia and the Philippines.



Left: The Roman Amphitheatre in Tarragona, Spain.



Right: Álvaro Chordi, Auxiliary Bishop of Santiago, during the prayer vigil in the Church of Veracruz, Chile.



## CRTN

» In 2024,  
we produced  
160 television  
programmes  
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 provide our productions to TV stations around the world.**

In 2024, the studio produced a total of 160 TV programmes in all language versions, which were then broadcast on 188 channels. With documentaries, interviews and short films, the programmes reach an audience of 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) 25 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 672 productions. In 2024, 336 producers and 192 television stations used this service, which is unique in the Church. A CRTN newsletter, a CRTN Facebook page and the CRTN YouTube channel with 16,600 followers round out our media service.



The CRTN YouTube channel, which currently has more than 3.2 million views.





## YOUCAT

The YOUCAT Foundation is a subsidiary of ACN. YOUCAT provides a broad portfolio of media that contributes to the re-evangelisation and deepening of faith among young Catholics. The offer ranges from catechism editions and attractively designed Bible editions to digital offers, including teaching materials, apps and social media channels.

So far, 60 translations of YOUCAT, the Catholic Church's youth catechism, have been published, with a further 20 in the pipeline. A total of 9 million books from the YOUCAT series have now been sold.

The YOUCAT Foundation has observed a significant rise in interest in its materials for catechesis and

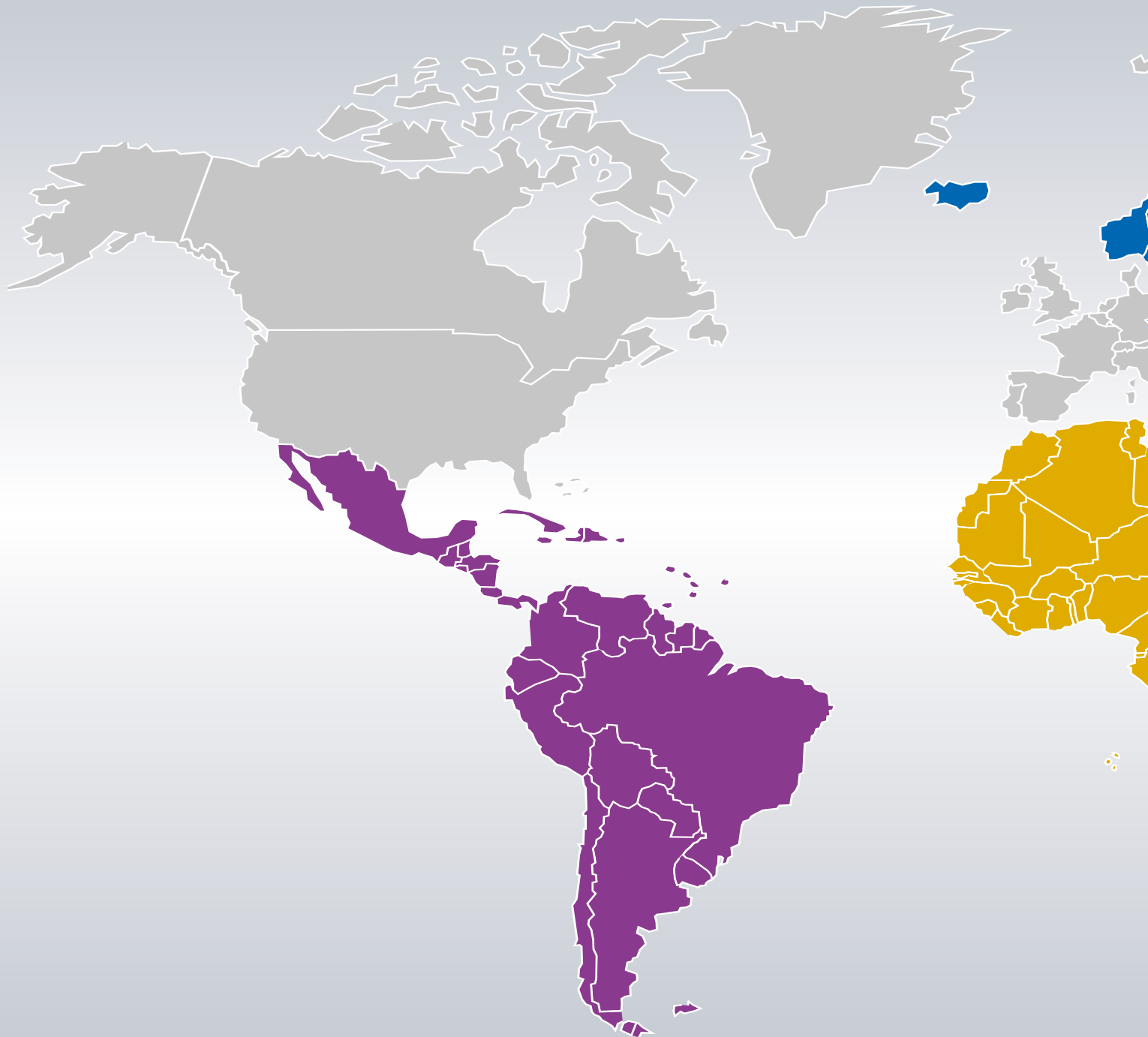
faith formation. The reasons for this include the expanded reach of social media channels, a broader selection of additional materials in various languages and the growing demand for the books.

The YOUCAT Foundation can look back on another successful year in 2024. As in the previous year, the YOUCAT Youth Catechism and YOUCAT for Kids were once again global best-sellers during the reporting year. With the YOUCAT Bible (e.g. in Vietnam, China and Ukraine) and the YOU-CAT Confession Book (e.g. in Korea, Bulgaria and Croatia), two important works were also distributed in countries that had not previously published YOUCAT media. The foundation also concluded a total of 16 new

contracts with 11 different publishing partners. More than 500,000 people were reached via books and digital channels in 2024.



» Interest in  
YOUCAT media  
continues to grow. «



## p. 36 Latin America

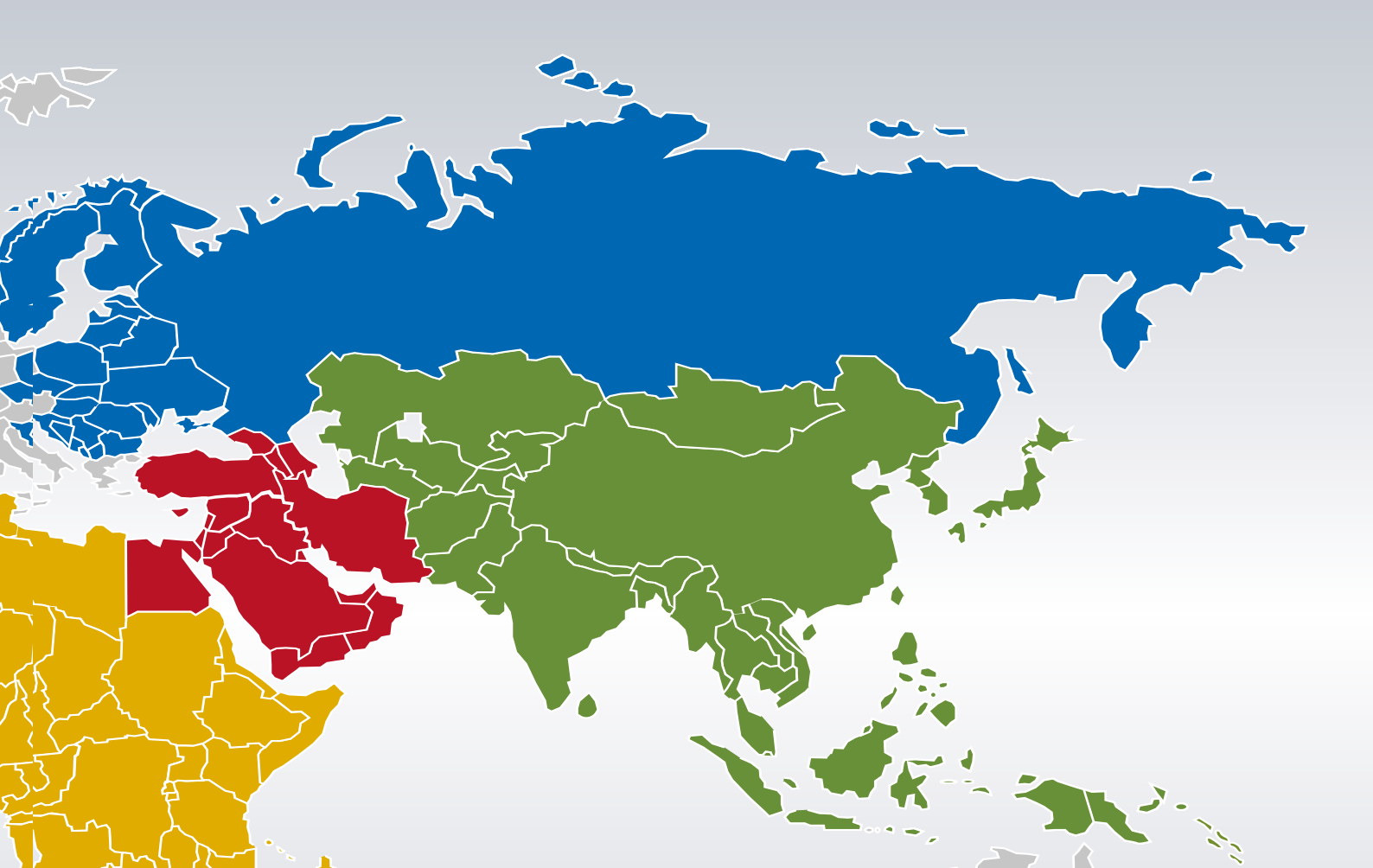
- pp. 38–39 Haiti
- pp. 40–41 Guatemala
- pp. 42–43 Peru
- pp. 44–45 Brazil
- pp. 46–47 Argentina



## p. 48 Africa

- pp. 50–51 Burkina Faso
- pp. 52–53 Nigeria
- pp. 54–55 South Sudan
- pp. 56–57 Tanzania
- pp. 58–59 Mozambique





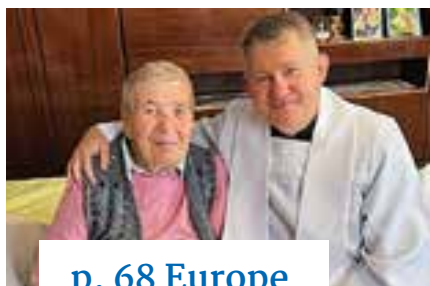
# Our regional activities in 2024

In 2024, ACN received 7,296 requests for aid. In total, we were able to help in 137 countries. On the following pages, we would like to provide you with an overview of our regional funding priorities. Our priority commitment once again centred on the African continent, where the Church is expanding, yet needs remain great and terror continues to spread in many areas. The Church also provides support to local populations affected by the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East. ACN therefore not only provides emergency aid to ensure the immediate survival of Christian families, but also increasingly supports projects aimed at assisting and treating traumatised individuals.



## p. 60 Middle East

pp. 62–63 Syria  
pp. 64–65 Lebanon  
pp. 66–67 Holy Land



## p. 68 Europe

pp. 70–71 Ukraine  
pp. 72–73 Bosnia-Herzegovina  
pp. 74–75 Albania  
pp. 76–77 Northern Europe/  
Baltic States



## p. 78 Asia/Oceania

pp. 80–81 Pakistan  
pp. 82–83 India  
pp. 84–85 Indonesia  
pp. 86–87 Philippines  
pp. 88–89 Papua New Guinea







**With nearly 400 million believers, Latin America is the continent with the highest number of Catholics in the world. But the Church is facing growing challenges. These include extreme poverty in rural areas, migration flows to urban centres and authoritarian regimes that oppress the Church and hinder its work. An increasingly aggressive secularism and the massive spread of sects are also worrying developments. With a total volume of 16 Million euros, ACN was once again able to provide urgently needed aid for the local Churches here in 2024.**

The situation is especially dire for the Church in Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua, where state interference poses significant challenges. In Mexico, Haiti, Ecuador, Colombia and

cannot be present due to a shortage of priests, aggressive evangelical groups and sects are rapidly expanding. Therefore, promoting the training of priests, religious and catechists and strengthening the vocational ministry are among our most important tasks in Latin America. ACN also supports Catholic television and radio stations

» Despite numerous challenges, Latin America is still considered the most Catholic continent. «

Brazil, on the other hand, criminal gangs and drug cartels are terrorising the population. The Church also faces a Herculean task due to the high level of migration. The influx of migrants and the exodus of the rural population to urban centres are leading to rapid growth in the cities. The increasing number of faithful in metropolitan areas has significantly heightened the demand for pastoral care. Another challenge in some countries is the vast size of dioceses, which complicates evangelisation efforts. And in areas where the Church



Communion in the Colombian jungle.

on the continent, as well as the distribution of religious books. The aim is to reach as many people as possible, in order to counteract the anti-Church tendencies found in society to the greatest extent possible.



## Haiti

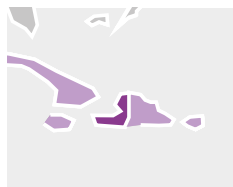
### Number of projects

 76  
Funded projects

### Type of projects

 10 Construction/ reconstruction	 3 Means of transport	 16 Mass stipends
 0 Emergency aid	 3 Media help	 0 Bibles & books
 16 Training of priests	 4 Subsistence aid	 24 Formation of faith

**Head of Section**  
Marco Mencaglia



Haiti is located on the island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean and is the poorest country in Latin America. For years, the population here has been suffering from escalating social, economic and political crises. Insecurity and violence also increased

dramatically during the reporting year. Observers often speak of “civil war-like conditions”. This is compounded by high inflation and the devastation caused by natural disasters. More than most other South American countries, the Church here urgently requires external assistance. This means that our foundation is in constant contact with local project partners.



In Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic, Haitian refugees receive pastoral care.



A sister of the Ministers of the Sick (Camillian Sisters) supports the needy in Port-au-Prince.

>> Without the help of ACN, it would be very difficult for many parishes to continue. <<

Archbishop Max Leroy Mésidor of Port-au-Prince

A priest offers Holy Mass for the intentions of our benefactors.



Training seminarians at Notre Dame Seminary.



Haiti is sinking deeper and deeper into chaos. Large parts of the country are controlled by heavily armed gangs. Robberies, kidnappings, drug and arms trafficking and riots during demonstrations are the order of the day. At the same time, inflation, a persistent shortage of goods and a poor medical infrastructure make life difficult for the people. Due to all these problems, many people are migrating to Central America, the USA and, above all, the neighbouring Dominican Republic. The latter has now erected a border wall to slow down immigration.

The Church also suffers from the general chaos in the country. Many parishes have not been spared violent attacks. At least 18 religious were kidnapped during the reporting year alone. Bishop Pierre-André Dumas, Vice-President of the Haitian Bishops' Conference, was injured in a bomb attack.



## Hope for religious sisters

ACN supports numerous religious sisters who serve the poorest of the poor in Haiti under the most difficult conditions. For example, they look after physically or mentally

disabled children who are often simply abandoned due to poverty. They also care for the sick in their homes, despite the high risk of kidnapping for the sisters, even during the day.



## Guatemala

### Number of projects

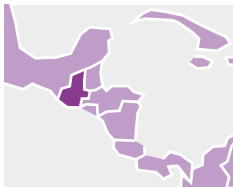
✓ 28

### Type of projects

🔔 4	🌀 6	👤 1
📖 0	🎤 1	📄 4
👥 2	👨 8	👤 2

### Head of Section

Verónica Katz



Guatemala is one of the poorest countries in Latin America. While a few inhabitants have become wealthy, the vast majority of the 17.9 million residents live in abject poverty. Corruption permeates the country's politics and economy. Despite

the authorities' promises to ensure basic supplies, they are failing to fulfil this responsibility. The prevailing poverty poses a major challenge for the Church, as the faithful can hardly contribute anything. We are doing all we can to help the local Church close this gap. The majority of Guatemala's population is Catholic, but the number is falling.

The "Missionaries for Children and Youth" movement has distributed 2,000 children's Bibles in the Diocese of Sololá-Chimaltenango.





In the church Nuestro Patrono Cristo Negro de Esquipulas, Sololá-Chimaltenango.



## Life testimonies to inspire faith

In the Diocese of Quiché in central Guatemala, a beatification process is currently under way for 129 witnesses to the faith who were murdered by left-wing guerrillas during the civil war in Guatemala between 1960 and 1996 because of their religious beliefs. In order to inspire other

believers with these testimonies and to strengthen their faith, ACN supports the publication of illustrated booklets about the lives, deaths and faith of these individuals. Each booklet is dedicated to different groups of people – including young people, catechists, women, families and priests.

## » The Church in Guatemala is young and evangelistic. «

Verónica Katz, ACN International

The Church in Guatemala is dependent on help from abroad, both to sustain its pastoral ministry and to address the specific needs of the people. These needs are great: many children are malnourished, they must be provided with a meal alongside catechesis.

In addition, the shortage of church facilities and the limited Church presence enable sects to spread. However, where the Church is present, many people, especially young people, live their faith with joy and participate intensively in Church life.

A further challenge is that the population is made up of different indigenous ethnic groups – a total of 25 different languages are spoken in the country. This must also be taken into account in the training of prospective priests in the country's two seminaries. This means that training cannot be provided solely in Spanish,

but must also be offered in various indigenous languages. Nevertheless, there is an encouraging number of religious vocations, though they remain insufficient given the large Catholic population.

In order to counteract the shortage of priests in the country, ACN, as nearly everywhere in Latin America, primarily promotes the training of prospective priests and catechists. In addition, priests are supported with Mass stipends and religious sisters with subsistence aid. Further funds are channelled into promoting Catholic media work, the construction of churches, rectories and other church buildings, as well as the purchase of vehicles for pastoral care.



Holy Mass in the Church of St Thomas the Apostle, Paquip.





## Peru

### Number of projects

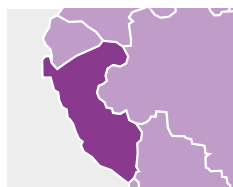
68

### Type of projects

18	6	14
0	1	0
13	6	10

### Head of Section

Luis Vildoso



Peru has a population of 33 million, 76% of whom are members of the Catholic Church. The third-largest country in South America by area is not only marked by its geographical diversity, but also by vast economic and social disparities: while modest prosperity is developing in the cities,

abject poverty often prevails in rural areas. The Church is very concerned about the increasing migration of rural dwellers to urban areas. Broken families and drug addiction are frequent consequences of the rural exodus. As a result, promoting pastoral care is one of ACN's top priorities in Peru.

Due to the strong rural exodus, the population in the urban centres and outskirts

Left: Father Samuel in conversation with a grandmother from the village of Esquina.

Middle: Sister Aury Mancilla in the streets of Chamaca, Andes.

Right: Miguel Ángel Cadenas Cardo, Bishop of Iquitos, at the diocesan seminary "Christ the Saviour", Yurimaguas.





Sisters Celia and Lidia on their way to tend to a sick person in Rosaspata, Puno.



Seminarians of the diocesan seminary “Christ the Saviour”, Yurimaguas.

» ACN supports the training of priests at 25 seminaries in Peru. «

of metropolises such as Lima is constantly growing. Population growth poses major challenges for the Church, as more pastors are required for the growing number of believers.

But more priests are also urgently needed in the remote and nearly impassable areas in the mountains or in the mission areas of the Amazon. And if the faithful in these vast parishes do not receive adequate pastoral care, hopelessness begins to spread.

As in other Latin American countries, sects in Peru often capitalise on the

plight of the people in order to gain new followers. To counter the shortage of pastoral workers, ACN supports the training of priests at 25 seminaries in the country.

One notable example is the Apostolic Vicariate of Yurimaguas in eastern Peru, a region largely covered by jungle. Approximately 285,000 Catholics from various indigenous tribes live here, scattered over an area of 72,000 square kilometres that is difficult to access. Pastoral work is particularly difficult here. For this reason, ACN supports the training of 24 prospective priests who

grew up in the vicariate, ensuring they are well prepared for the region’s climate and the unique challenges of the jungle.

However, the training of catechists is also a matter that is close to our hearts, as they also play an important role in proclaiming the faith. At the same time, we provide many communities with catechetical material to deepen their faith. We also support religious sisters who help the poor and weak under the most difficult conditions and are often the only hope for those affected.





## Brazil

### Number of projects

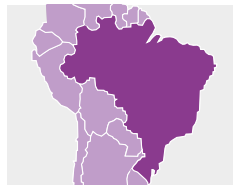
✓ 193

### Type of projects

🔔 40	🎯 34	📡 38
📌 1	🎤 1	📖 4
👥 36	👤 29	👤 10

### Head of Section

Marco Mencaglia



Brazil is not only the largest country in South America, but also home to the world's biggest

Catholic population. However, its number is dwindling: Catholics now only make up around 60% of the population of almost 214 million, and forecasts suggest that the number could soon shrink to as low as 40%.

**Brazil boasts vast natural resources but also struggles with corruption, unemployment, economic crisis and severe environmental degradation. The Church here not only spreads the faith but also serves as a vital advocate for the poorest and most neglected.**

The challenges are particularly great in the extremely poor north-eastern part of Brazil, which suffers from droughts. The Amazon region is also still characterised by great poverty. Although the jungle is rich in resources, the local population hardly benefits from them. Here, the Church often plays a key role in the fight against poverty and hopelessness. However, many remote villages in the jungle can only be reached by water, which makes pastoral work much more difficult. These dangerous journeys take many hours and often even days. During the reporting year, ACN once again



A Capuchin priest evangelising in the Brazilian jungle.



Father Ezequiel Perin in front of the ruins of his church after the floods in Rio Grande do Sul.

» The best way to combat the spread of sects is to strengthen the presence of the Church. «

Pastoral care for people living on the streets in São Paulo.



provided high-powered boats, allowing priests to reach their faithful more easily.

Another problem: as in Guatemala, Argentina and other Latin American countries, the Church in Brazil also faces the widespread expansion of sects. Particularly the poorest and those uprooted are vulnerable to the deceptive promises of salvation offered by these well-funded groups, which are highly active across much of the country. It is therefore important to strengthen the presence of the Church and its pastoral work. With this in mind, ACN continued to support the training of prospective priests, religious and lay employees during the reporting year and provided a wide range of catechetical material for evangelisation work.



### 35,000 euros for pastoral care for the homeless

In 2024, ACN was able to support pastoral care for the homeless in São Paulo with 35,000 euros. This funded the purchase of catechetical materials, which should last for four years. More than 2,200 homeless people will benefit from this. Father Giampietro Carraro from “Mission Bethlehem” wrote to

us: “Only very few people realise what an enormous potential there is in our brothers and sisters on the streets. When they discover Jesus and His Gospel, these people give up violence and addiction and experience the inexpressibly beautiful feeling of being renewed and empowered to live a new life.”



## Argentina

### Number of projects

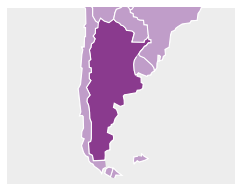
✓ 67

### Type of projects

🔔 5	🌀 9	📡 24
📏 0	🎤 0	📖 0
👥 7	👤 9	👤 13

### Head of Section

Verónica Amador



With an area of almost 2.8 million square kilometres, Argentina is the second-largest country in Latin

America and the eighth-largest in the world. Nevertheless, with 45.5 million inhabitants, it is relatively sparsely populated, with a third of the population concentrated in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area. Pope Francis' home country has been suffering from

a severe economic crisis with high inflation for years. The Church also faces numerous problems here: only 63% of the population still describe themselves as Catholics, sects are spreading and the number of religious vocations is declining. For this reason, ACN primarily promotes the vocational ministry and pastoral care.

In Argentina, we focus our aid primarily on the poorest dioceses, where priests and religious serve in remote, hard-

Bad roads in the Diocese of Orán. ACN helps the Church in Argentina to procure suitable vehicles.

Right: Sister Cristina cares for the needy in the Province of Chaco.





In Humahuaca, ACN is supporting the renovation of the chapel “Our Lady of Guadalupe”.

Bishop José Luis Corral in the San Francisco Coll parish centre, where needy children are cared for and prepared for communion and confirmation.



A child being cared for at breakfast during the visit of the Bishop of Añatuya.



Many children of displaced families in Tres Isletas, in the Province of Chaco, have no access to education.



to-reach areas affected by summer droughts and flooding during the rainy season. The distances are immense. This is also the case in Añatuya, one of the poorest dioceses in Argentina, which is around 1,000 kilometres from the capital Buenos Aires. With an area of 68,000 square kilometres, the diocese is almost as large as Ireland, but only has 200,000 inhabitants. The roads are extremely poor, and the population has minimal access to education and medical care. Unemployment

and broken families are widespread. 81 religious from various communities and seven lay missionaries are active here. Some operate homes for the elderly and orphanages, run soup kitchens or provide care for disabled people. Others serve in parishes without a priest, helping families to strengthen their faith. ACN was able to support them in 2024 with subsistence aid.

During the reporting year, we were also able to provide aid in the newly founded

Diocese of Rawson in Patagonia, a vast and very poor missionary area. Here we assisted priests through Mass stipends and supported religious with subsistence aid. The Church also has a major problem with mobility in many places. With no public transport in remote areas, parishes rely on vehicles and fuel subsidies to provide pastoral care to the faithful. Our foundation also provided financial support to this end.

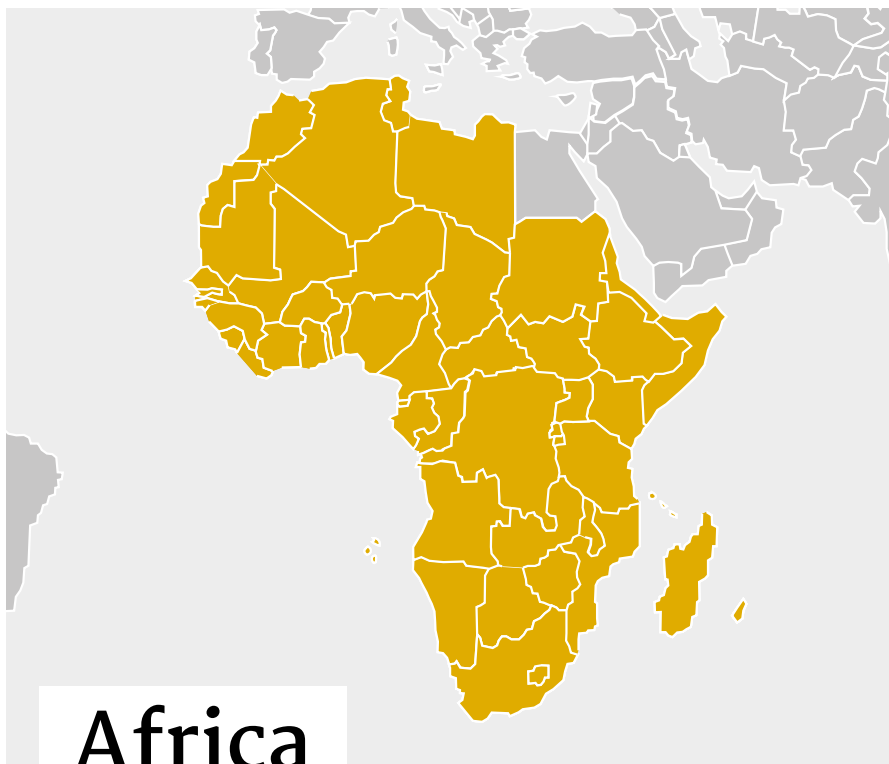
**>> In rural areas, it is common to travel 200 kilometres each way to celebrate Holy Mass. <<**

Bishop Roberto Álvarez of Rawson









**The African continent has been a priority region for ACN for many years and continued to be so in 2024. One of the biggest and persistent trouble spots is the Sahel region, where jihadist terrorist groups have further intensified their activities. Countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, where millions of people are already displaced by terrorist violence, have been particularly hard hit. For this reason, our foundation continues to provide aid to this region.**

The spiral of violence in Africa seems to have no end. In 2024, it was once again the continent with the highest number of murdered priests and church workers worldwide. Furthermore, priests and religious figures in several African countries have again fallen victim to kidnappings in recent times. This is a perfidious means of exerting pressure that terrorists and other criminals often use to advance their demands. Nigeria alone recorded more than 11 abducted priests during the reporting year.

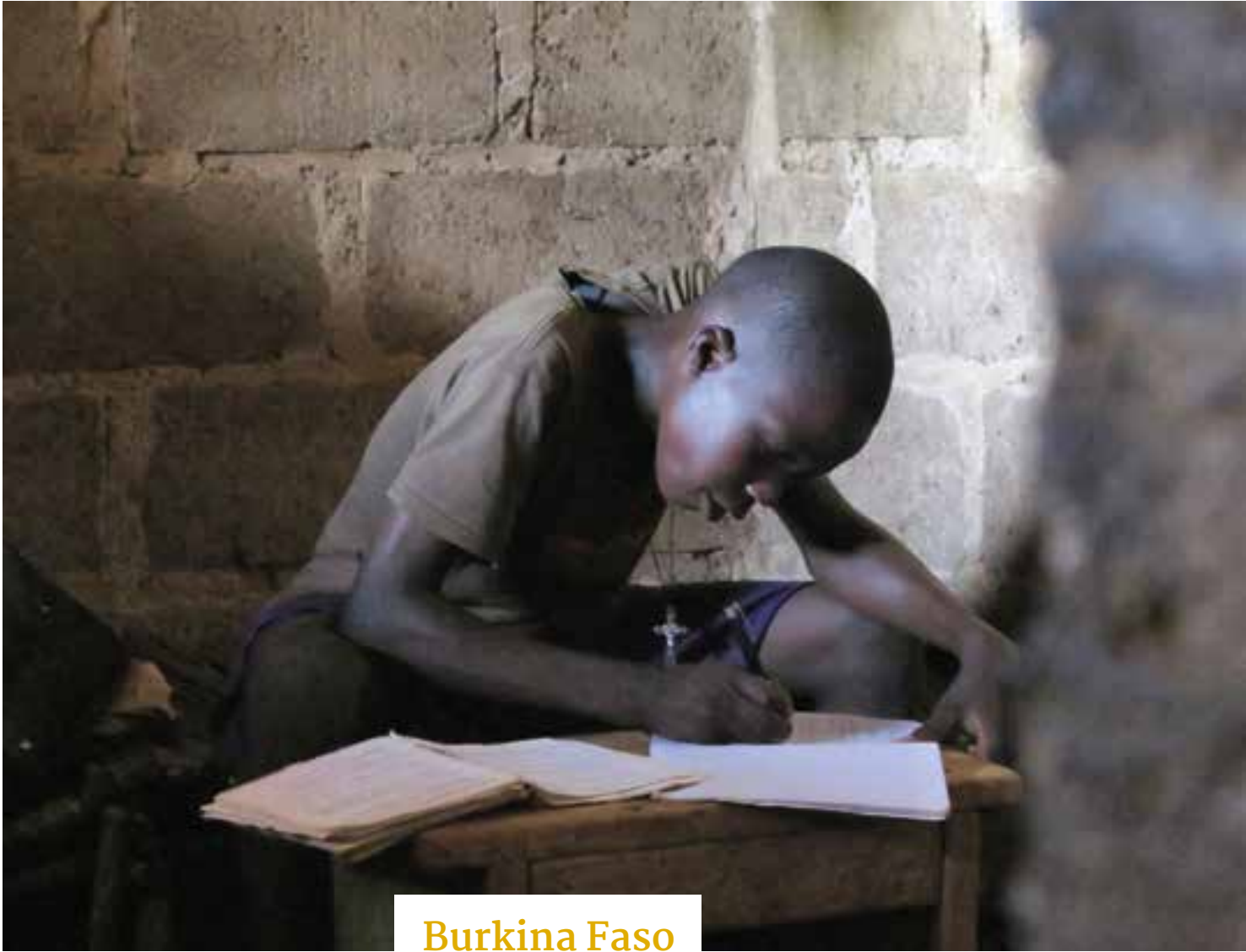
Despite all the dangers and crises, Africa remains a continent of hope for the Catholic Church. This is because the number of believers is growing. Almost one in five Catholics in the world now lives in Africa. The high number of religious vocations also offers hope: more than one in eight priests, almost one in seven religious sisters and almost a third of all seminarians worldwide live on the African continent. All of this is encouraging for the future. After all, the Church remains a steadfast source of support, standing by the people in times of hunger, violence and political instability, and offering aid and comfort where governments fall short.

**>> In Africa, priests are in great danger of becoming victims of murder or kidnapping. <<**

ACN has established a comprehensive framework for its aid in Africa. Our main focus is on promoting the training and further education of priests, religious and lay people. In view of the increasing violence, we are also helping to further develop the skills of priests and religious to care for severely traumatised people. In addition, we provide financial assistance for the purchase of off-road vehicles and support the construction and reconstruction of churches, chapels and church facilities.



The parish hall in the Diocese of El-Obeid, Sudan, destroyed by rocket attacks.









## Burkina Faso




### Number of projects

 70  
Funded projects

### Type of projects

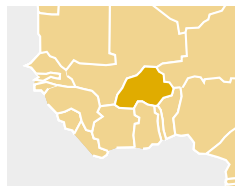
 11 Construction/reconstruction  
 13 Means of transport  
 10 Mass stipends

 19 Emergency aid  
 1 Media help  
 1 Bibles & books

 8 Training of priests  
 4 Subsistence aid  
 3 Formation of faith

### Head of Section

Kinga von Schierstaedt



Around 55% of Burkina Faso's 21 million inhabitants are Muslims and around a quarter of the population are Christians.

For many years, the West African nation was regarded as a model of interreligious harmony, but since late 2015, its northern and eastern regions have become a hotbed of religious conflict. Burkina Faso is now the country most affected by terrorism in the world. With the help of ACN, the Catholic Church supports the suffering population.



Father Urbain  
Kiendrebeogo  
teaching catechism  
in Ouagadougou.



The local cattle market  
in Ouagadougou.



Terror continued to hold Burkina Faso firmly in its grip in 2024. Two-thirds of the country is now affected by violence. In 2019, believers and churches were targeted by terrorist attacks for the first time. Since then, Burkina Faso has become the hotspot of a violent conflict waged by Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State throughout the Sahel region. Across the country, roads are blocked by terrorists, some two thousand schools are now closed and more than two million people are internally displaced.

The situation for the local Church continued to worsen throughout the reporting year. In many places, Christians are being killed or kidnapped. People have been forcibly expelled from many parishes, while church work is severely restricted in others. Our local project partners report that priests, religious and the faithful are increasingly targeted by jihadists and that the frequency and brutality of attacks are increasing. Catechists, priests and dedicated laypeople are especially

vulnerable, with men being particularly targeted for murder. A Christian name or a cross pendant on a necklace is often enough to justify a murder.

In areas under terrorist control, women and girls are forced to wear full veils, regardless of their religious background, in order to avoid becoming targets of attacks and kidnappings.

Nevertheless, the local Church also has some good news to announce: despite the extreme violence in the country, the number of religious vocations increased in the reporting year. Our help is therefore needed even more urgently than before. To this end, we supported the training of priests and religious and secured the livelihood of priests through Mass stipends. We also helped with the purchase of vehicles for pastoral care and provided emergency aid for Christian villages where the local population has had to flee under the pressure of terrorists.

**» When you get up in the morning, you don't know whether you will still be alive in the evening. «**

Father Bertin Namboho  
from the Diocese of Nouna



## Nigeria

### Number of projects

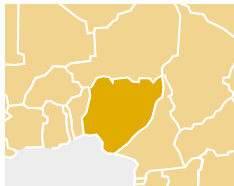
✓ 110

### Type of projects

🔔 21	🎯 4	🏠 27
📍 2	🎤 0	📖 0
👥 46	👤 2	👤 8

### Head of Section

Kinga von Schierstaedt



Nigeria is home to around 206 million people, making it the most populous country in Africa. The country is roughly half Christian and half Muslim, although the distribution varies greatly from region to region. In the north, Christians and moderate Muslims have been suffering from persecution by Boko Haram for years. While the situation there has improved somewhat,

violence against Christians is increasing in other parts of the country. It is mainly perpetrated by Muslim nomadic cattle herders, the Fulani. In 2024, the local Church once again relied on ACN's assistance in numerous ways.

The problems in Nigeria are complex. A rapidly growing population, the effects of climate change and the struggle for the country's resources are compounded by the interests of extremist groups like Boko Haram and the Fulani. Around Easter, for

On the road from Maiduguri to Jos.





Refugee victims  
of a Fulani attack.

In 2018, two priests and  
16 worshippers were murdered  
in Mbalom, Ayati during a  
Mass. The site has been a place  
of pilgrimage ever since.



Destroyed church  
building in Kaduna.

example, dozens of Christians were killed  
in towns and villages in Nigeria's Middle  
Belt. Terrorists had already massacred over  
300 Christians in this region during the  
Christmas period in 2023.

Priests and religious are particularly at risk.  
At least 11 priests were kidnapped during  
the reporting year alone.

However, the challenges facing the Church  
in the West African country tend to strength-  
en people's faith. The high number of  
priestly vocations is particularly encour-  
aging. In 2024, ACN therefore once again  
prioritised supporting the training of future  
priests and provided assistance to needy  
priests through Mass stipends. Priests serve  
as the primary and immediate caregivers for  
the suffering population. In view of the high  
number of severely traumatised victims  
of violence, ACN also promotes additional  
psychotherapeutic training for priests and  
religious sisters so that they can offer quali-  
fied help to those affected.

In areas where the situation has improved,  
we help the Church to rebuild destroyed  
buildings. In crisis regions, we also aid in  
implementing essential security measures,  
including the construction of protective  
walls and fences or the installation of tech-  
nical equipment to protect monasteries and  
seminaries from violent attacks. In Septem-  
ber 2024, ACN also provided assistance to  
the Diocese of Maiduguri in northern Nige-  
ria, which had been severely impacted by  
the worst flooding in 30 years, offering food,  
hygiene products, medicines and materials  
for emergency shelters.

## » These attacks are now part of daily life. «

Father Andrew Dewan, Director of  
Communications for the Pankshin Diocese



## How many more victims will the Church have to mourn in Nigeria?

Two acts of violence serve as a  
stark example of the suffering  
the Nigerian Church continues to  
endure. In October 2024, the small  
seminary of the Auchi Diocese in  
southern Nigeria was attacked.  
The gunmen took two seminarians  
hostage. The seminary's rector,  
Father Thomas Oyode, then  
offered to exchange himself for

the two young people. The two  
seminarians were released and  
the priest was abducted. He was  
only released after 11 days. On the  
evening of 26 December, Tobias  
Chukwujekwu Okonkwo (see  
photo), a priest from the southern  
Nigerian Diocese of Nnewi, was  
shot dead in the street by a group  
of gunmen.



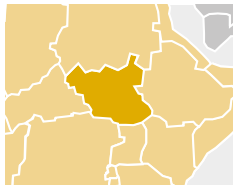
## South Sudan

### Number of projects

31

### Type of projects

8	4	5
2	0	0
3	2	7



country has rich natural resources such as gold and oil, it ranks last on the Human Development Index. The

After decades of war, there has only been relative peace in South Sudan since 2018. Although the

country struggles with corruption, illiteracy, famine and a high maternal mortality rate. It is also frequently tormented by droughts, floods and plagues of locusts. The Catholic Church is virtually the only organisation that gives the population hope and mediates in conflicts between the various ethnic groups.

### Head of Section

Kinga von Schierstaedt

A missionary sister from Uganda in Rumbek.





The church in Terekeka is so small that Holy Mass is celebrated in a shed.

Displaced persons from the civil war in a large refugee camp in Juba Province.



After two civil wars, South Sudan only gained its independence from Sudan in 2011. The war lasted almost 35 years and claimed millions of lives. However, just two years after independence, a new civil war broke out in the country, primarily caused by tribal conflicts. The results are devastating: 450,000 people lost their lives, 13,000 children were exploited as child soldiers and 4.5 million people were forced to flee. These figures represent around one-third of the population of 13.6 million. Although the refugees are gradually returning home, they have hardly any prospects for the future. There are almost no schools, clinics or staff.

In this struggling country, the Church is the most important point of contact for the suffering population. However, the priests and religious sisters there are often exhausted from the many years of war. This makes the aid we provide to strengthen the local Church even more urgently required. We support the training of priests and focus on long-term

family pastoral care, so that families who have been displaced for years and have struggled to rebuild can look to the future with greater hope.

We also assist with reconstruction, as many places of worship were destroyed during the war, forcing the faithful to gather under trees in numerous locations.

**» If we focus on this country now, many things can change for the better. «**

Kinga von Schierstaedt,  
Head of Projects Africa at ACN

Bishop Stephen Nyodho Ador Majwok of Malakal on his way to remote communities.





## Tanzania

### Number of projects

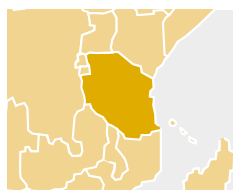
✓ 169

### Type of projects

🔔 26	🎯 43	👤 29
📌 0	🎤 0	📖 2
👥 61	👤 2	👤 6

### Head of Section

Estefanny Organista



**Tanzania is located in East Africa on the Indian Ocean. Its nearly 63 million inhabitants belong to some**

**130 ethnic groups who speak over 120 different languages. Christians – mainly Catholics – make up the majority of the population at 55%. Muslims make up just under a third of the total population. ACN supports the young and vibrant Church in Tanzania, which often lacks the resources to adequately care for the faithful, and also assists it in areas where Christians form a small minority.**

Religious conflicts have increased significantly in Tanzania in the recent past. Many Christian communities are under pressure from radical Islamists, whose presence varies significantly across different regions. For example, 98% of

the inhabitants of the Zanzibar Archipelago, which forms an autonomous republic of the country, are Muslim. The Islamic separatist movement Uamsho, which sees itself as an “alliance for Islamic mobilisation and propagation”, has been gaining political influence there for around 15 years. The proportion of Muslims along the former caravan routes is also higher than in the rest of the country. In recent years, hate sermons and religiously motivated attacks and assaults have increased on both Zanzibar and the mainland, with terrorist attacks particularly frequent along the border with Mozambique.

Despite the challenges of poverty and vast distances, the Catholic Church in Tanzania remains vibrant and continues to enjoy numerous religious vocations. We therefore focus on supporting the training of prospective priests and religious. We support poor priests with



Sister Magdalena in the destroyed parish of Kindimba, southern Tanzania.

>> The Church in Tanzania, which is still very young, enjoys numerous religious vocations. <<

Current condition of the 50 km-long road from Kipatimu to the next tarred road.



Mass stipends. In 2024, we were once again able to assist with the construction and renovation of church buildings, as well as help the local Church acquire vehicles for pastoral care.



A bus for 300 seminarians

More than 300 young men are currently being trained at the seminary in Peramiho. By providing 56,000 euros, ACN was able to support the purchase of a bus. This is of great help for the entire seminary, as it is

located in a relatively remote area. A vehicle was urgently needed to transport groups of seminarians to external events and to their parish assignments, where they gain practical experience for their future ministry.



Sister Odetta teaches a girl in Peramiho.



## Mozambique

### Number of projects

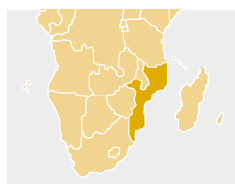
57

### Type of projects

8	16	11
2	1	0
7	9	3

### Head of Section

Ulrich Kny



Mozambique, located in south-east Africa, is one of the poorest countries in the world. The conse-

quences of the civil war that raged in the country between 1977 and 1992 can still be felt today. Almost 60% of Mozambique's 35 million inhabitants are Christians and just under 19% are Muslims. Although coexistence was peaceful until a few years ago,

jihadi groups have been active in the northern part of the country since 2017. ACN supports the local Church, which is facing significant pressure due to rising attacks on Christian communities.

Unlike in other parts of Mozambique, Muslims make up the majority of the population in the northernmost province of Cabo Delgado. Targeted attacks on Christians and Christian communities have increased here in recent years. In some cases, the jihadists have separated Christians from

>> I ask you to continue to open your hearts to the cries for help from our brothers. <<

Bishop Diamantino  
Antunes of Tete

Meeting of Christian couples and families in the Archdiocese of Beira.





Muslims and executed the former. After easing somewhat in 2023, the violence escalated once again in 2024. According to the IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix, the number of internally displaced persons in the reporting year was over 716,000. More than two million people are in urgent need of help.

The conflicts in the northern region of Mozambique are not primarily religious, but also socially and economically motivated. A large proportion of the population is excluded from sharing in the region's wealth of resources, and many young people have few prospects for a better future. As a result, many of ACN's project partners are deeply concerned about a widespread outbreak of violence across the northern part of the country, with an increasingly significant Islamist component. The fears are justified: since the presidential election on 9 October, which was overshadowed by allegations of manipulation, there have been bloody protests in several regions, resulting in more than 270 deaths by the end of the year. Church buildings were also vandalised during the unrest.

Thanks to our close cooperation with local project partners, we are aware of the most urgent needs of the Church in Mozambique. In the reporting year, we supported the evangelisation and pastoral work of the Church throughout the country. This includes the training of priests and religious sisters, as well as providing numerous vehicles to ensure that bishops, priests and sisters can regularly visit and support communities in the hinterland and displaced families. We were also able to support priests with Mass stipends and religious sisters with subsistence aid. A particular focus of our aid was in the Diocese of Pemba, which was severely affected by terrorism. Here, we were able to assist the Church with emergency aid, pastoral care projects and psychosocial support for the population. We also supported religious radio programmes, which are especially vital for believers in remote areas of the country that are difficult to access.



## A letter from Mozambique

In the year under review, we received a letter from Bishop António Juliasso from the Diocese of Pemba. His letter serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of our support and reassures us that our mission, both in the past and today, is on the right path: "The Church continues to do

what is in its nature, to be with the people, to help those we can help and to offer what aid we receive. For us in Cabo Delgado, ACN has always come to our assistance at the most critical times, and is always ready to help us to save the lives of our brothers and sisters."



A priest on his way  
to remote parishes.

من دموا لمن رغبة لحم







**Due to the ongoing dramatic developments in the Middle East, aid in the region remains a priority for ACN. A key objective is to offer hope to the Christians living here and to support them in their efforts to remain in their homeland. Even before the situation in the Holy Land escalated, many Christians had already lost hope for a future in their own countries. However, since the brutal Hamas attack on 7 October 2023, and the ensuing fighting in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon, which has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and devastating humanitarian consequences, the situation in the region has significantly deteriorated.**

The pressure to migrate among Christians in the Middle East continued to grow during the reporting year. This undoubtedly undermines the unique, millennia-old Christian presence, with its rich diversity of forms and traditions throughout the region. Our focal countries in the Middle East continued to be Syria and Lebanon. We also supported suffering Christians in the Holy Land – particularly in the Gaza Strip – with extensive emergency aid.



Gathering emergency aid for Christians in the Gaza Strip.

**>> What the Christians here need is a future perspective that encourages them to stay. <<**

ACN strives to assist Christians of all denominations and rites as much as possible in addressing their pastoral and humanitarian needs. To achieve

this, Christian communities in the region must be strengthened to offer the faithful a hopeful future, encouraging them to stay and fostering greater unity among them. If we move closer to this goal, the potential for reconciliation and peace across the region will grow, as Christians are viewed by many as mediators between the various ethnic and religious groups.



## Syria

### Number of projects

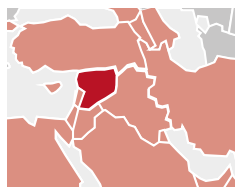
 153  
Funded projects

### Type of projects

 12 Construction/ reconstruction	 3 Means of transport	 12 Mass stipends
 38 Emergency aid	 0 Media help	 0 Bibles & books
 0 Training of priests	 12 Subsistence aid	 76 Formation of faith

### Head of Section

Reinhard Backes



**After thirteen years of war in Syria, which has left hundreds of thousands**

**dead, millions displaced and cities destroyed, the economic and social crisis was greater than ever during the reporting year. With wages of around 20 to 30 US dollars per month, the majority of the population lives in extreme poverty. Most families cannot even cover their basic needs. For the Christians who remain in the country, the Church is often the only hope. ACN continued to support them with numerous aid projects in 2024.**

Today, it is estimated that no more than one-third of the 1.5 million Christians who lived in Syria before the war remain. One objective of our aid is to encourage Christians who no longer see a future in Syria to stay. In order to offer them a positive perspective in their home country, we are once again supporting Church

microcredit programmes. These programmes provide families and young people with funds to start their own businesses. We also provided support to secure basic needs and medical care for families. Other funds were used for the benefit of children, enabling them to go back to school. At the same time, our regular pastoral projects continued, including the Church's summer camps for children and young people.

On 27 November 2024, shortly after the ceasefire in Lebanon, political tensions in Syria began to escalate rapidly. The troops of HTS (Hayat Tahrir al-Sham) began to move towards Aleppo, and within days, the situation took a dramatic turn when the Assad regime unexpectedly fell on 8 December. The collapse of the regime and the abrupt shift in power paved the way for change, which hopefully will lead to improvement. But for many, especially in the Christian community, there is considerable uncertainty about how the situation will develop.



Holy Mass with young people from different parts of Syria at the summer camp in Maaret Saidnaya.

>> If we don't provide the remaining Christians with future prospects now, soon they will all be gone. <<

Sister Annie Demerjian,  
project partner

Children praying the rosary in the Archdiocese of Homs.



Thanks to ACN,  
dentist Majd Deeb  
received a microloan  
for his practice.



Young people  
playing music  
at a pastoral  
summer camp.



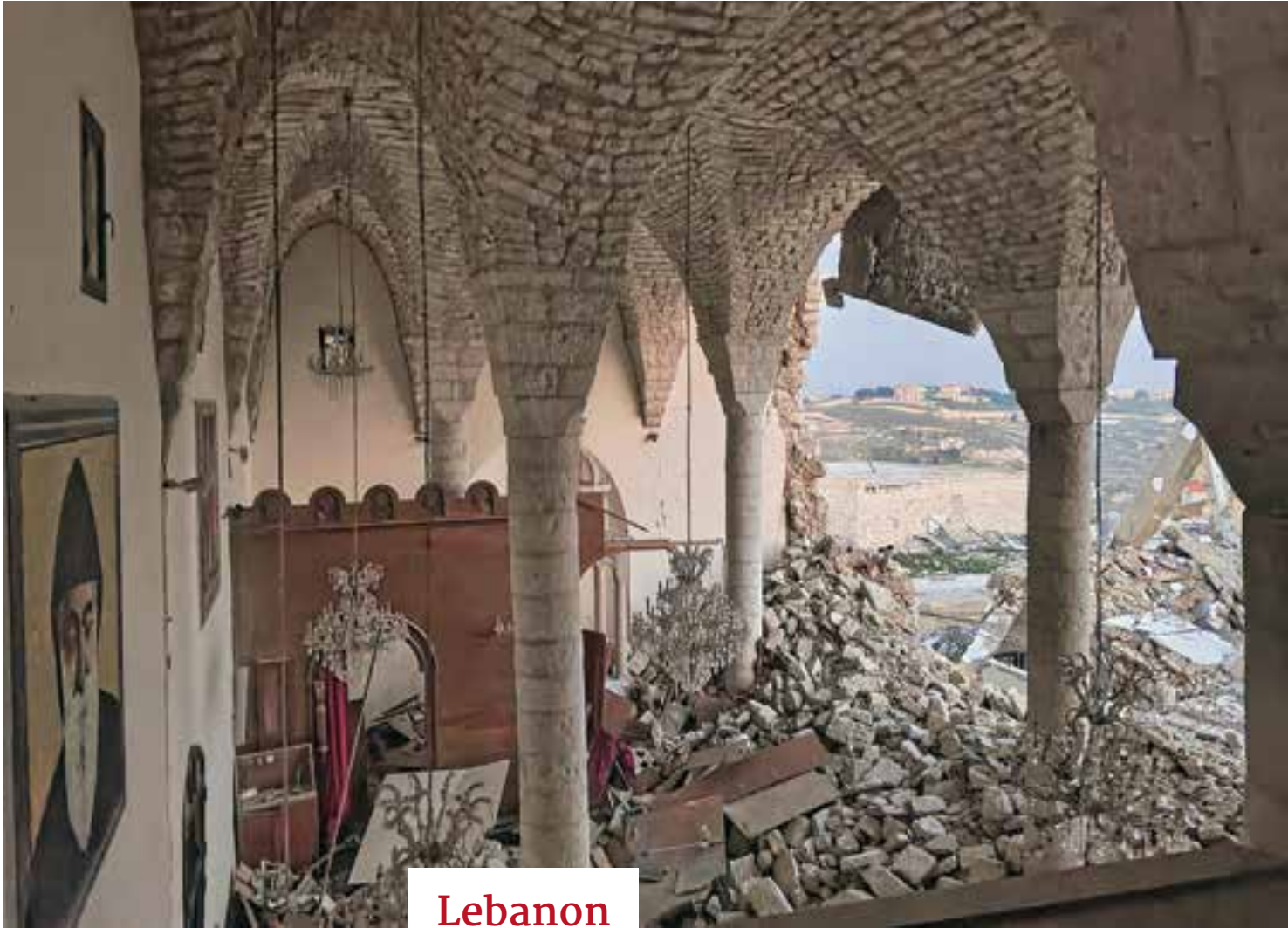
Father Fadi Najjar  
with school children  
at the Al Inaya  
School in Aleppo.



### Vital help for Christians in Dwel'a

The parish in Dwel'a is looked after by Father Basilios Gergeos and two other priests. Among other initiatives, ACN supports a psychiatric day clinic, summer camps, scout activities and a kindergarten within the parish. We also provide financial support for a soup kitchen and for the monthly distribution of milk to poor families whose children frequently suffer from stunted

growth due to malnutrition. Father Gergeos wrote us the following words: "Without you, we cannot be as close to the people as we would like. You help us to serve the people. All of these schemes show the families that the Church cares for them and is here to help. The projects play a major part in determining whether they remain in Syria."



## Lebanon

### Number of projects

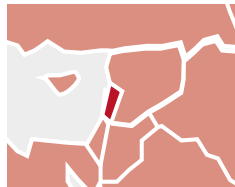
✓ 229

### Type of projects

🔔 12	📍 2	👤 16
📖 84	🎤 4	📄 2
👥 20	👨 22	👩 67

### Head of Section

Reinhard Backes



For a long time, Lebanon was the only country in the Middle East with a Christian majority. Today, Christians have become a minority, and their numbers continue to decline. Many are still leaving the country or are considering emigration

due to the political and economic crisis that has been escalating for years. The conflict in the Gaza Strip has exacerbated the situation for Lebanon. The Catholic Church faces a herculean task in encouraging its faithful to stay. For this reason, emergency aid and relief efforts were a priority for ACN during the reporting year.

» The situation is simply terrible. Thank you for your prayers, thank you for your support. «

Sister Maya El Beaino,  
project partner





Left and below: Destroyed church buildings in Dardghiya and Safad El-Battikh as a result of daily rocket attacks on southern Lebanon.



## Emergency aid for 800 people seeking protection

The town of Jabboulé is located in the north-east of Lebanon. In September, 800 people sought shelter from bomb attacks in the local convent of the Sisters of Our Lady of Good Service. The sisters immediately made all available rooms in the convent, school and orphanage available, but were overwhelmed by the large number of people seeking

assistance. ACN immediately helped the convent to procure food, mattresses, blankets and medicines. Mother Jocelyne Joumaa, the Superior General, wrote to us: “We are very grateful that ACN helped us immediately. Please stay by our side. If we tackle the problem together, we can achieve great things. May the Lord bless you.”

2024 was another dark year for Lebanon. With the outbreak of the conflict between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, tensions quickly spread to the southern regions of the country. In September, minor skirmishes ultimately escalated into a full-blown war that engulfed the entire country. By October, one million people had fled within the country, making up nearly a fifth of the population. People sought refuge in churches, parish halls, monasteries and schools. Although the Church did its best to meet the needs and requirements of both the displaced people and the locals, it was overwhelmed by the continuing influx of those who had been displaced. ACN provided emergency aid totalling 4.7 million euros.

After almost two months of intense fighting, a 60-day ceasefire was

announced towards the end of November 2024, giving the population a brief respite for the first time. However, a solution to the crisis was still not in sight. To encourage Christian families to stay in their home country, ACN provided emergency aid to ensure that at least their basic needs were met. We also aim to bring hope to young people, who often struggle to see prospects for their future. To this end, we are increasingly supporting youth work. Additionally, we continue to support Church organisations, especially Catholic schools, to prevent them from being closed permanently. At the same time, we continue to carry out projects in support of pastoral care, including Mass stipends, spiritual retreats, vehicles for priests and subsistence aid for religious sisters.



A sister of Our Lady of Good Service cares for displaced families in Jabboulé, Lebanon.

Participants in the university pastoral care programme, which is offered to 1,000 students at universities across Lebanon.












## Holy Land

### Number of projects

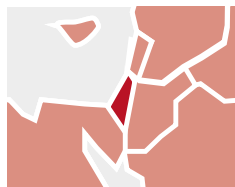
 48

### Type of projects

 5	 3	 0
 3	 0	 0
 0	 31	 6

### Head of Section

Tony Zender



**Although Christians in Israel form a minority of only around 2% of the total**

**population, they still represent a significant community. Whilst many local Christians have emigrated, the overall number is increasing, as many, mostly young people, come to the Holy Land to work in caring for the sick and elderly. In this way, up to 100,000 Christians have moved to Israel in recent years. The Church is particularly concerned about the situation of migrants. The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem has set up vicariates for the pastoral care of migrants. ACN works closely with the local Latin Church.**

The crisis in the Gaza Strip has further exacerbated the difficult situation for Christians in the Palestinian territories. Due to the closure of the border between Israel and the West Bank, many have

lost their jobs. Pilgrims, once an important source of income for Christians in the Holy Land, have also stayed away. Unemployment among Christians rose to a record 78% during the reporting year.

Following the brutal attack by Hamas on 7 October 2023, ACN quickly launched extensive emergency aid to support Christian families directly impacted by the humanitarian crisis in the wake of the attack. These aid packages included life-saving medication, food vouchers and grants towards school and tuition fees, as well as subsidies for housing costs.

In order to stabilise the country's Christian community in the long term, the future of young Christians is very important to us. To this end, we also support training initiatives for young people, enabling them to gain the required qualifications and later earn a living. Once again, those who envision a future in their country have no reason to emigrate.



Destroyed streets in Gaza  
after the bombing.

» I am deeply dismayed by the un-  
speakable violence that has shaken  
the Holy Land in the past year. «

Regina Lynch,  
Executive President of ACN

Palm Sunday procession  
from the Mount of Olives  
to St Anne's Church in  
Jerusalem's Old City.



The reconciliation work that Christians can do in the Holy Land is particularly important. The Christian community in the Holy Land places compassion and forgiveness at the heart of its message, aiming to bring peace to areas currently marked by hostility. Benedictine Abbot Nikodemus Schnabel from the Dormition Abbey on Mount Zion in Jerusalem summarises the Church's position: "I am neither pro-Israel nor pro-Palestine. I am pro-human being."



Children before their  
First Communion  
in the Parish of the  
Holy Family in Gaza.

In the Parish of the Holy Family in Gaza, 36 members of the community died – most of them from bombing and shelling, but some also from a lack of medicine. Father Gabriel Romanelli, who works there, wrote us a letter in March 2024: "The situation in the cities is terrible, without a single structure that has not been damaged. Here in the parish, we have around 500 refugees. Of these, about 50 individuals, primarily

children, are under the care of the Sisters of Mother Teresa. Additionally, we provide assistance to thousands of people in the neighbourhood, offering water, food and medicine. We thank ACN's benefactors for all that they do, and encourage them to continue providing spiritual, existential and material aid. Thank you again for everything."









**In 2024, our aid to the Church in Europe once again primarily focused on addressing the impacts of the war in Ukraine. In the third year of the war, our organisation continued to provide a high level of support to the local Church, so that priests and religious could continue to stand by the people who are suffering severely from the war and are increasingly sinking into hopelessness. During the reporting year, we helped the Church in Ukraine with 8.4 million euros. But the Church in other countries of Eastern, Central and Northern Europe is also still dependent on help.**

It is foreseeable that the Church in Ukraine will continue to need significant amounts of aid in the coming years – not only for reconstruction efforts, but also and above all for the spiritual healing of the people. Our local partners stress the importance of supporting those in need, helping them to overcome their inner exhaustion and resist despair. For this reason, ACN maintains close contact with the representatives of the local Church and will continue to support them in the future in assisting traumatised people and refugees by responding to their emotional and material needs.



Subsistence aid for religious sisters in the Ukrainian Diocese of Odessa-Simferopol.

and parishes, especially in those places where the Catholic Church is a minority. By way of an example, the sharp rise in energy costs, in particular, is making it increasingly challenging for them to remain financially stable.

Whether in Ukraine, the Baltic states, Northern Europe, Albania or Bosnia and Herzegovina – during the reporting year, we were once again able to help religious in many countries with subsistence aid and priests with Mass stipends. Additional funds were also allocated for essential renovations to church buildings. And in places where priests and religious sisters have large areas to look after, we were able to assist them with the purchase of vehicles.

**>> The war in Ukraine has significantly increased the need for aid. <<**

However, even before the war in Ukraine, local Churches in some European countries needed additional support. Our aid is deeply appreciated by religious communities



## Ukraine

### Number of projects

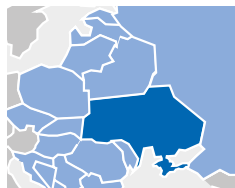
 312  
Funded projects

### Type of projects

 63 Construction/ reconstruction	 52 Means of transport	 54 Mass stipends
 1 Emergency aid	 1 Media help	 5 Bibles & books
 36 Training of priests	 47 Subsistence aid	 53 Formation of faith

### Head of Section

Magda Kaczmarek



**For Ukraine, 2024 was the third year of war. According to the United Nations, 6.86 million**

**Ukrainians have now fled abroad, while a further 4 million are internally displaced within the country. Both the Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic Churches continued to tirelessly support the suffering population during the reporting year. From the start of the war in February 2022 until the end of 2024, ACN has supported the Catholic Church of both rites with altogether 967 projects totalling 25.2 million euros.**

The need for aid for the Church of Ukraine was still enormous during the third year of the war. In 2024 alone, we financed 312 projects totalling 8.4 million euros. With the war devastating the energy infrastructure in many areas, heating projects and the acquisition of generators and heat pumps became top priorities. At the same time, supporting priests and religious was crucial, as they remained steadfast with their faithful amid the chaos of war, often facing hardship themselves, both materially and emotionally. To help them cope with the immense challenges, we provide support through Mass stipends

A Benedictine sister in Mykolaiv packing relief supplies for the victims of the war.





Houses in Borodianka, destroyed during the occupation of the Kyiv region.

**>> We're not focused on the future. We're focused on how we can address the current hardship. <<**

Bishop Vitaliy Kryvytskyi  
of Kyiv-Zhytomyr

The traces of war are omnipresent in the Diocese of Odessa-Simferopol.



Sister Faustyna in front of the emergency chapel in Mykolaiv.



A religious sister doing pastoral work in Odessa.



and subsistence aid, as well as opportunities to attend spiritual exercises, retreat days or seminars with psychological assistance.

In most dioceses, we were able to help many religious sisters with subsistence aid. We also continued to support the training of all 768 seminarians currently in the country. Additionally, we provided 58 vehicles to support pastoral care and assist in aiding refugees.

Along with its pastoral task, healing the psychological wounds of war has become a priority for the local Church. To this end, we increasingly supported psychological training for priests, religious and lay people in 2024. During the reporting year, ACN funded four centres dedicated to providing psychological and pastoral care. In 2024, the main focus of all holiday camps for children and young people was also on overcoming the trauma of war.



### ACN supports a therapy centre in Sharovechka

ACN had originally built a seminary and diocesan pastoral centre in Sharovechka near Khmelnytskyi. The war made it urgently necessary to create spaces to support traumatised individuals. The seminarians have moved in and, as well, the psychological work in the centre is in full swing. Retreats and rehabilitation courses are offered

for priests and religious sisters, as well as lay groups. In addition to spiritual care, the centre also focuses on various therapies for widows, mothers and people whose relatives have died or are missing. Children's holiday camps can also be organised here. ACN supported the centre with 250,000 euros during the reporting year.



## Bosnia-Herzegovina

### Number of projects

22

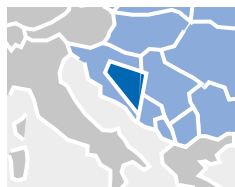
### Type of projects

2	11	0
0	1	0
2	3	3

### Head of Section

Eike Petersen

A religious sister in Sarajevo reads the ACN-supported "Catholic Weekly".



**Bosnia and Herzegovina has about 3.5 million inhabitants. Religious**

**affiliation is based on ethnicity: Bosniaks are Muslims, Serbs are Orthodox Christians and Croats are Catholics. Muslims form the largest religious group with 47.5% of the population. Christians make up 49% of the total population, but only a small proportion of them are Catholic. In this multi-ethnic state, the Church is committed to greater social participation for Catholics and is also a reconciling voice in society.**

Of the 820,000 Catholics who lived in Bosnia and Herzegovina before the war between 1992 and 1995, only 400,000 remain today. Even thirty years after the war, the wave of emigration continues, and most of the families who fled during the war have not returned. The situation in the south-eastern European country,

once part of Yugoslavia, is becoming increasingly challenging for Catholics. Many only find the courage to return once Church life is restored in their home villages. The presence of priests and the active life of the parishes are, therefore, essential for many to consider returning.

However, it is not only the decreasing number of believers, but also the increasing Islamisation of the country that is causing the local Church great concern. In recent years, Muslim centres and mosques have been built in many places with petrodollars from Saudi Arabia. Wahhabis, followers of a radical Sunni denomination that is the state religion in Saudi Arabia, are increasingly seeking to expand their influence in society.

At the same time, Church representatives lament the systematic discrimination against Catholics in the labour market, in schools and in other spheres of social life. In addition, many church properties and buildings that were confiscated during the communist era have not been



Holy Mass at the Archbishop's Seminary in Sarajevo, which was renovated with the help of ACN.

The Servants of the Child Jesus run an orphanage and a kindergarten in Sarajevo.



returned to the Church. But that is not all, building permits for new churches are often delayed for years.

For ACN, Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to be a priority country in south-eastern Europe. We aid the Church in providing pastoral care by equipping priests with vehicles and supporting Catholic media projects. We also support the construction and renovation of church buildings.

Additionally, our assistance focuses on the training of future priests and supporting contemplative communities of religious sisters by providing them with subsistence aid. This also includes the Poor Clares in Brestovsko. In 2024, the sisters celebrated the 35th anniversary of the foundation of their convent, which was established with the help of ACN, among others. Although it is a strict life of prayer and penance, the order continues to attract young women – seven of the twelve sisters are currently under 40 years old. ACN regularly supports the sisters.

» The Catholic Church is committed to the equal and peaceful coexistence of different ethnic groups and religions. «

The Poor Clares in Brestovsko celebrated the 35th anniversary of their convent in 2024.





## Albania

### Number of projects

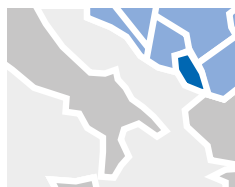
✓ 13

### Type of projects

🔔 4	🎯 3	📺 2
📍 0	🎤 0	📖 0
👥 0	👤 3	👤 1

### Head of Section

Eike Petersen



With 10% Catholics of some three million inhabitants, the Catholic Church in Albania is merely a small flock among the predominantly Muslim population. To this day, most priests and religious come from abroad, as the local vocations

are far from sufficient. During the communist era, all religions were persecuted, even more cruelly here than in other communist-ruled countries. Albania declared itself the ‘first atheist country in the world’ in 1967. Religious freedom has only been restored since the political turnaround in 1990/91. Nevertheless, much work remains to be done to nurture the faith of new generations.

are far from sufficient. During the communist era, all religions were persecuted, even more cruelly here than in other communist-ruled countries. Albania declared itself the ‘first atheist country in the world’ in 1967. Religious freedom has only been restored since the political turnaround in 1990/91. Nevertheless, much work remains to be done to nurture the faith of new generations.

>> The Albanian Church lacks material resources and vocations. <<



Cell of Zef Pllumi, a Franciscan priest who was imprisoned for decades and one of the 38 martyrs beatified in 2016.



At the beatification of two Albanian martyrs on 16 November 2024 in Shkodër.

The Franciscan sisters of Bilisht at prayer.



The country is currently experiencing a deep crisis, which has led to a wave of emigration, particularly among the younger population. The exodus is having a dramatic impact on the country's economic growth, which is also being felt by the Church. The local Church not only suffers from material hardships, but above all from a lack of local priests and religious vocations to ensure pastoral care. For this reason, the Church is still urgently dependent on help from abroad.

ACN supports all six dioceses in the country, for example, by promoting the training of prospective priests, by providing vehicles for pastoral care, through renovation aid and through Mass stipends for priests and subsistence aid for religious sisters. We also support youth pastoral care to help young people better understand their faith, deepen it and build a solid foundation for their lives.



## Unwavering in faith: Beatification of Albanian priests

On 16 November, the church in the city of Shkodër beatified two priests, Luigi Paliq and Gjon Gazulli, who had suffered martyrdom during the communist era. ACN representatives also took part in the ceremony. Bishop Simon Kulli of Sapë emphasised, "These two Blessed, along with 38 other Albanian martyrs, are a great example of living faith, and of how nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Their resistance to persecution has been an inspiration for the Church in Albania, which is back on its feet after years of oppression and suffering of priests, religious sisters and laypeople."

Pastoral work of the Christian scout movement "Scout Europa".





## Northern Europe/Baltic States

### Number of projects

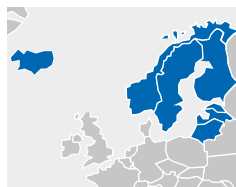
9

### Type of projects

1	3	0
0	1	0
0	0	4

### Head of Section

Eike Petersen



**In 2024, the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were the focus of our Northern**

**European aid. These countries became independent in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union and have been members of the EU since 2004. Many Christians here are still searching for orientation and support in their faith. In other Northern European countries such as Iceland, Norway, Finland and Sweden, most of the faithful come from abroad. Although these are predominantly rich countries, the diaspora situation means that the local churches find it difficult to fulfil their tasks on their own.**

With 2.8 million inhabitants, Lithuania is the largest of the three Baltic states. 80% of the population are Catholics. This makes it the only predominantly Catholic country in the former Soviet Union. During the Soviet era, however,

several generations grew up without any religious instruction, which means that many people today are looking for guidance. Low-threshold initiatives are important to answer their questions and enable them to come into contact with the faith for the first time. To this end, ACN has regularly supported the Catholic radio station “Mažoji Studija” (“Small Studio”) in Vilnius since



Philippe Jourdan, Bishop of Tallinn, the first Catholic diocese in Estonia.





In the very large parishes of Iceland, pastoral care can only be maintained with the help of vehicles.

1993, which broadcasts a dedicated programme on the radio. ACN also supports youth pastoral initiatives and the work of religious sisters.

Catholics make up 25% of Latvia's 1.9 million inhabitants. The largest denomination is Lutheran with 34%. During the reporting period, ACN provided vehicles and renovation aid and supported Catholic radio work, as it did in Lithuania.

In Estonia, however, Catholics form a very small minority of less than 2% of the population of 1.24 million, the majority of whom are non-denominational. The largest Christian denomination is made up of Orthodox Christians – mainly ethnic Russians – at 16%, followed by Lutherans at just under 10%. Here, ACN in 2024 primarily supported pastoral work for Ukrainian war refugees and assisted priests through Mass stipends. We also regularly support the parishes' youth work.

**>> Many people from the states of the former Soviet Union are still looking for orientation and support in their faith. <<**



Children in class with the first edition of the children's Bible in Estonian.







**The Church in Asia and Oceania faces a wide range of challenges that vary significantly from region to region. Poverty, natural disasters, rural exodus and migration are making life difficult for the population and also for the Church in many places. In most Asian countries, Christians are in the minority. Faith-based discrimination and attacks have risen sharply in recent years. During the reporting year, Pope Francis' visit to Asia and Papua New Guinea was undoubtedly a strong gesture of confidence for the region. The local Churches also receive hope through the reliable aid provided by ACN. In 2024, we supported the Church in Asia/Oceania with a total of 17 million euros.**

In many Asian countries, Christianity is seen as a harmful influence from abroad. The Church is often accused of threatening the dominance of the leading party or the supposed religious unity of the nation. Nationalist movements and authoritarian governments frequently respond with discrimination and social marginalisation.

in the region. The Pope also spoke with representatives from other religious groups and ordinary citizens to promote interreligious dialogue and advocate for peace, justice and the integrity of creation.

During the reporting year, ACN supported the local Churches in Asia, particularly for the training of priests, religious and lay people, and promoted pastoral care for families and young people. The latter remains a top priority for the Church, as the disintegration of families, along with the uprooting and disorientation of young people, is a global issue that also affects Asia and Oceania. However, ACN also supported the construction and renovation of church buildings, the provision of catechetical materials and the purchase of vehicles for pastoral care. Additionally, our foundation supported initiatives promoting interreligious dialogue, enabling the Catholic Church to contribute to peaceful coexistence in countries with Muslim or other faith majorities.

## **>> The Pope's visit was a blessing and a source of hope. <<**

Sister Cristina Macrino,  
project partner from East Timor

From 2 to 13 September 2024, Pope Francis embarked on his 45th apostolic journey, visiting Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, East Timor and Singapore. The Holy Father's primary goal was to inspire the local Churches to confront the growing challenges with determination. The Pope's trip to Asia and Oceania was a highly visible signal of confidence for Christians



## Pakistan

### Number of projects

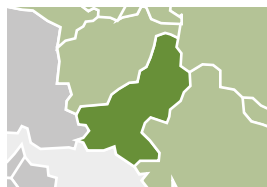
 132  
Funded projects

### Type of projects

 48 Construction/ reconstruction	 25 Means of transport	 6 Mass stipends
 8 Emergency aid	 3 Media help	 4 Bibles & books
 14 Training of priests	 4 Subsistence aid	 20 Formation of faith

### Head of Section

Marco Bachmann



The Islamic Republic of Pakistan has 225 million inhabitants, 96.4% of

whom are Muslims. Christians and other religious minorities face

intense pressure from both the state and Islamist extremist groups. The majority of ordinary people also believe that only Muslims are fully-fledged Pakistani citizens. In this challenging situation, it is crucial to advocate for oppressed Christians in the country and to protect them as much as possible from discrimination and violence. ACN stands by the Church in Pakistan in this endeavour.

The continued rise in cases of abduction, forced marriage and forced conversion of Christian and Hindu girls was a concerning issue during the reporting year. Although this phenomenon is not new in Pakistan, it has intensified in the recent past. The state is also responsible for this. Underage girls and women from religious minorities lack adequate legal protection, and even the existing legal measures are not fully enforced. On the contrary, the perpetrators generally go unpunished.

Bishop Samson Shukardin, President of Pakistan's Catholic Bishops' Conference,



During a Mass in the Parish of St Luke, Baldia Town, near Karachi.



Holy Mass in the Catholic Church of St John in Youhanabad.

Children from Ghartal Parish pray the Rosary in Chak Jhumra Town.



## » Many Christians in Pakistan are falsely accused of blasphemy and imprisoned. «

Shagufta Kausar, victim of false blasphemy accusations

Visitors to a parish in Lahore being forced to undergo a security check.



viewed the Supreme Court's rejection of a government report on the attacks in Jaranwala on the grounds of inadequacy as a positive development. It was the first time that anti-Christian attacks have been taken so seriously. On the basis of false blasphemy accusations against two Christians, a mob of over 7,000 people destroyed 26 churches and chapels and hundreds of Christian homes in Jaranwala in Punjab Province on 16 August 2023.

Despite being a minority, Pakistani Christians possess a strong faith. The local Church is very lively and is developing dynamically. The churches are full of predominantly young believers. In addition to priests, catechists also play an indispensable role in proclaiming the faith. ACN supports their training and promotes various pastoral programmes aimed at strengthening the faith, such as in the youth ministry. ACN also provides Mass stipends to many priests and enables them to participate in spiritual retreats, ensuring they do not experience burnout amidst their numerous challenges. Further funds were channelled into the procurement of vehicles for pastoral care and the construction and renovation of church buildings during the reporting year.



### ACN helps to build protective walls against violence

Unfortunately, attacks on churches, in which angry crowds storm church properties and wreak havoc, occur repeatedly in Pakistan. In order to better protect the faithful, security measures need to be expanded and strengthened. Due to the particularly

dangerous situation, ACN is providing exceptional financial aid to implement more effective security measures in churches, monasteries and seminaries. This includes the construction of protective walls.



## India

### Number of projects

✓ 420

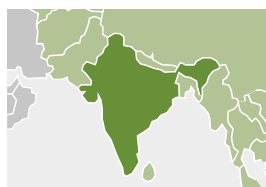
### Type of projects

🔔 61	🎧 41	📡 138
📌 1	🎤 4	📖 7
👥 109	👤 2	👤 57

### Head of Section

Véronique Vogel

Barbara Rettig



With 1.4 billion inhabitants, India has now become the country with the

**largest population in the world, surpassing China. Over 70% of the population profess Hinduism. Religious minorities such as Muslims (14.5%) and Christians (4.8%) are often discriminated against by Hindu nationalist groups. Church representatives have repeatedly called on the government to protect**

**Christians and other religious minorities from attacks. ACN supports the local Church with numerous projects.**

Despite repeated calls from the Church to put a stop to discrimination and violence, militant groups have increased their hostile actions against Christians in the country. Strict anti-conversion laws are still in place in several federal states, requiring any change of religion to be declared and authorised by the authorities. Christians here live in a

The Diocese of Bettiah invites young Christians to take part in joint activities.





>> Christians face systematic, discreet and ongoing oppression. <<

A project partner from the Indian state of Jharkhand

state of permanent tension and fear spontaneous violent attacks. Time and again, Christian churches have been vandalised and priests, religious and the faithful attacked.

The prospects for a better future are poor for the local Christians and other religious minorities. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi won the parliamentary elections for the third time on 4 June 2024. The BJP’s aim is to establish India as a Hindu nation. In doing so, it radically follows the nationalist ideology of Hindutva, which in instrumentalising religion for political purposes, wants “Hindu identity” to be the country’s only true culture and religion.

ACN recognises the difficult situation of Christians in India and supports the local Church in its challenges. The priority regions for our aid are the north and north-east of the country. Many of the believers there belong to disadvantaged social groups and ethnic minorities. ACN primarily supports priests and religious in the region with Mass stipends and subsistence aid, provides vehicles for pastoral care in expansive areas that are difficult to reach, and helps with the construction and renovation of church buildings. In addition, we support the training of future priests and the continuing education of priests, religious and lay people. We also strengthen marriage preparation in the Church and provide catechesis for children and young people.



Seminarian at St Charles Seminary in Nagpur, Buxar.

Novice (right) from The Congregation of St Joseph of Cluny in north-east India.



A new place of worship for the Sontang community

The Parish of the Immaculate Conception in Moharpara is located in eastern India in the border region with Bangladesh, which is difficult to access. It comprises 31 villages, one of which is Sontang. Until recently, there was

only a small chapel made of clay here, which was in a poor state of repair. With the help of ACN, a new church was built. Pastor Lyngdoh writes: “Your help is a great blessing for the people of Sontang.”





## Indonesia

### Number of projects

✓ 20

### Type of projects

🔔 5	🎯 1	🏠 6
📍 0	🎤 0	📖 0
👥 7	👤 1	👤 0

### Head of Section

Marco Bachmann



With 272 million inhabitants, the island state is the largest Muslim

**nation in the world. Christians make up only 10% of the population, and 3% of the Christians are Catholics. As most Muslims identify with moderate Sunni views, coexistence between the religions has so far been largely peaceful. Only recently have there been repeated attacks against the**

### Church by violent Islamists.

**The Pope's trip to Indonesia in September 2024 was therefore also marked by interreligious dialogue.**

The rise in conservative and sometimes violent Islamist movements is a major concern for the local Church. Particularly in the wake of military victory over militias of the "Islamic State" in Syria and Iraq, the terrorists have shifted their activities to other countries, such as

Holy Mass marking the laying of the foundation stone for a training centre for the Camillian Sisters in Kupang.





» The Church is very concerned  
about increasing attacks  
on religious minorities. «



Holy Mass under provisional conditions: ACN is supporting the construction of a new chapel for Golo Popa in the Diocese of Ruteng.

Indonesia. There have been repeated attacks in recent years – including on churches. It is not without reason that Pope Francis placed the exchange between religious communities at the centre of his visit to Indonesia.

Our support for the Indonesian Church is diverse and far-reaching. It includes Mass stipends for priests, the training and continued education of religious sisters, support for retreats organised by religious congregations and financial aid for construction projects, including for parishes or monasteries in need of further space. However, ensuring good mobility for priests is also essential in this vast island nation. For instance, we were able to support the Redemptorist Fathers, who work in the Parish of St Andrew Ngallu in the eastern part of the island of Sumba, with the purchase of an all-terrain vehicle. This is necessary because the parish spans a large area, encompassing 21 chapel communities. The new four-wheel-drive vehicle makes the pastoral work of the priests much easier.



### Pope Francis promotes interreligious exchange in Jakarta

Pope Francis' three-day visit from 3 to 6 September 2024 brought a sense of renewed confidence to many Christians in Indonesia. Not least because the Pope was advocating interreligious exchange. He met with

various religious and government representatives in the capital Jakarta and signed a declaration with the Grand Imam of the largest mosque in Asia on the shared concern of Christians and Muslims for peace and the integrity of creation.



## Philippines

### Number of projects

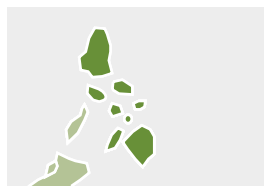
43

### Type of projects

2 0 9  
0 1 0  
16 1 14

### Head of Section

Véronique Vogel



Alongside East Timor, the Philippines is the only predominantly Christian country in Asia. More than 80% of the 109 million inhabitants are Catholic. Faith plays a major role for most Filipinos. However, the country faces numerous challenges: natural disasters such as typhoons, earthquakes and floods pose a permanent threat. Violence is also a growing concern. This relates to issues

such as drugs, prostitution, abuse and domestic violence. Materialism in society is also on the rise. All in all, these challenges call for a strengthening of faith and a solid inner compass of values. ACN supports the local Church in these endeavours.

The Philippines has a high migration rate: almost two million Filipinos live abroad. The absence of parents leads to broken families and serious educational problems. In addition, material and intellectual poverty frequently paves the way for animistic beliefs, which provides

» Due to the many social problems, pastoral care needs to be strengthened. «



Distribution of the ACN Children's Bible in Tagalog.



Graduation ceremony of the catechist training programme in the Diocese of Masbate.



### ACN supports the Silsilah Centre on the island of Mindanao

Father Sebastiano D'Ambra founded the Silsilah Centre in Zamboanga on the island of Mindanao in 1984. In 2024, the centre celebrated its 40th anniversary. In this terror-stricken region, it plays an important

role in Christian-Muslim dialogue. The centre has been supported by ACN for more than 20 years. Several thousand people have already been trained here for interreligious dialogue.

Typical landscape in the Archdiocese of Zamboanga on the island of Mindanao.



grounds for numerous sects to expand on.

For this reason, the Church must intensify catechesis and pastoral care to ensure that the faithful are deeply rooted in the faith. There is an enormous amount of pastoral and social work to be done here.

Another ongoing problem is the hotspot on the Mindanao archipelago, where many Muslims live. Various Islamist terrorist groups are active in the region, seeking to establish an Islamic state. Increasing radicalisation can also be observed. The Church here relies on interfaith dialogue with “moderate” Muslim groups.

ACN primarily supports the Filipino Church in the pastoral care of young people and families and in the training of seminarians, novices and catechists. We also assist the priests in the country's poorer dioceses with Mass stipends and religious sisters with subsistence aid.












## Papua New Guinea

### Number of projects

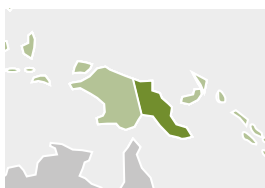
 35

### Type of projects

 3	 10	 6
 1	 0	 1
 5	 0	 9

### Head of Section

Marco Bachmann



In some parts of Papua New Guinea, the Catholic Church has only been

**represented for a few generations. Nevertheless, more than a quarter of the eight million inhabitants are already Catholics. Almost 30 years after Pope John Paul II's second visit to Papua New Guinea, Pope Francis' three-day visit in September 2024 was once again a historic highlight for the Christians of this island**

**nation. The focus was on issues relating to the integrity of creation and social justice. ACN has been committed to the local Church for many years.**

In the run-up to Pope Francis' visit, Papua New Guinea made international headlines with negative news. At the beginning of the year, serious unrest broke out in the capital, Port Moresby. In the Province of Enga, there were also tribal conflicts resulting in dozens of deaths as well as a severe landslide that claimed more than 2,000 lives.

ACN supported the new parish in the jungle of Sandaun Province with an all-terrain vehicle.





>> Thanks to the help of ACN, we can bring the love of Christ to more people. <<

Father Martin Prado,  
project partner

Holy Mass with Pope Francis on 8 September 2024 at the Sir John Guise Stadium in Port Moresby.



In addition to the problems of the recent past, the country has been struggling with numerous social challenges for many years. Rapid technological progress, digitalisation and globalisation have also reached Papua New Guinea, leaving parts of the population feeling left behind and increasingly uprooted. There is also great economic hardship. The prices for many goods are disproportionately high, as the country has virtually no industry and many goods have to be imported. Although most people still live from subsistence farming and can feed themselves from what they grow, money continues to be scarce. For many, financing a school education is only possible at great sacrifice or is even unaffordable.

The Church in Papua New Guinea is also facing major challenges, particularly with regard to pastoral work. Many parishes are extremely remote. The terrain in the rugged country is barely passable and there are only a few roads. To make matters worse for the priests and

religious sisters, a myriad of different languages are spoken in Oceania's largest and most populous country.

Despite the difficult situation, the Church offers people guidance and supports them in all their needs. The priests and religious are usually confronted with immense social and pastoral problems. It is therefore a particular concern of ACN to support priests and religious through Mass stipends and subsistence aid. We also enable them to take part in spiritual retreats, fostering inner strength that enables them to sustain their demanding ministry. In addition, we regularly support the training of prospective priests. Moreover, during the reporting year, we were once again able to assist the local Church by providing vehicles for pastoral care that are capable of navigating what is often barely passable terrain.

Celebrating Mass in a new parish in the jungle of Sandaun Province.





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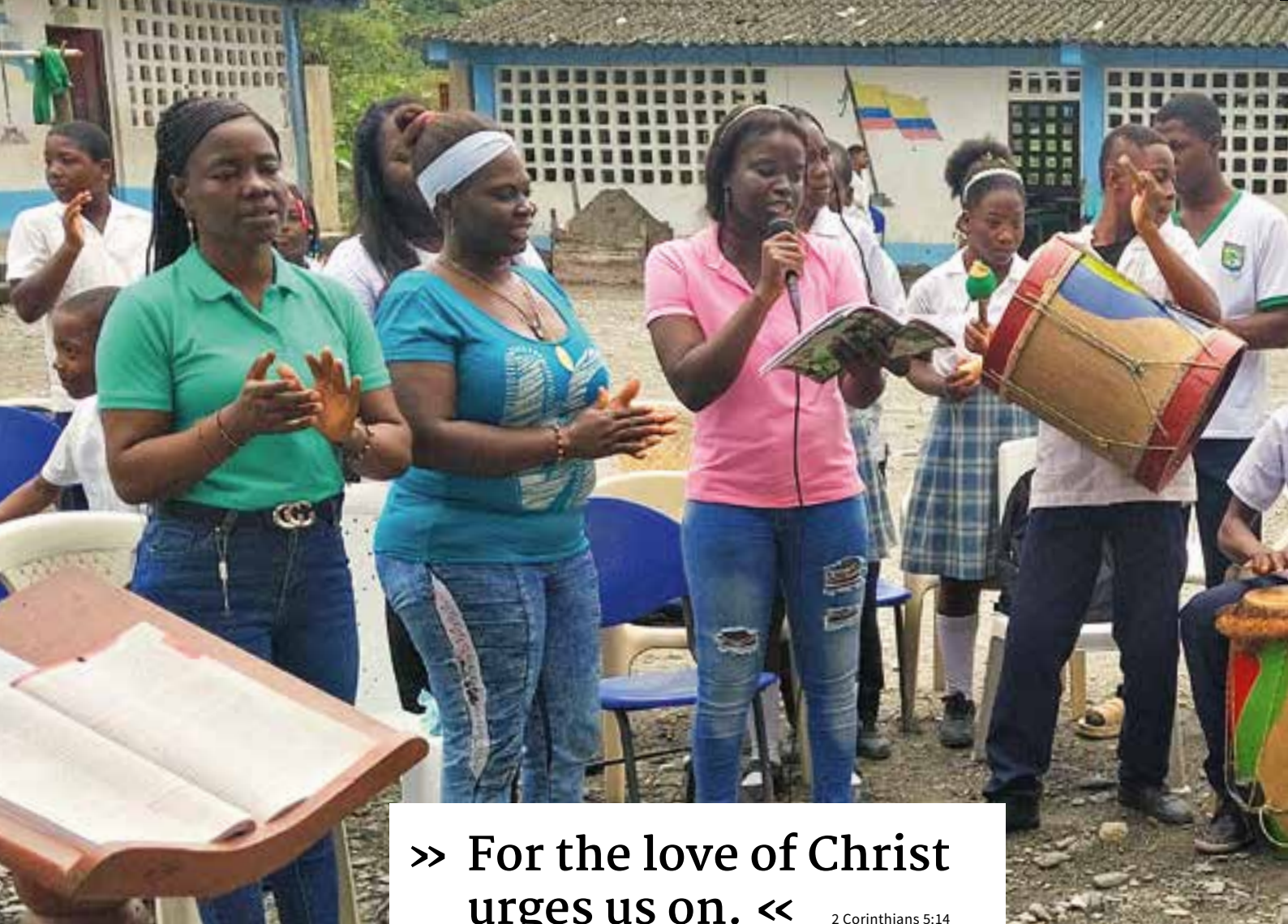
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>> For the love of Christ  
urges us on. <<

2 Corinthians 5:14

### Our mission

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



**>> 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.

**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.

**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".

**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.

**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.

**1979** With the Children's Bible, we launch a major project for boosting evangelisation efforts worldwide. To date, the book has been translated into 194 languages and printed and distributed over 51 million times.

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

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

**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.

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

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

**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 60 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.

**2022** Immediately after the start of the war in Ukraine, our aid organisation launches a large-scale relief operation to enable the local church to assist those who had fled their homes, suffering people and to continue pastoral care.

**2023** Immediately after the outbreak of the war in Gaza, ACN launches a relief operation for Christian families in the Holy Land, especially in the Gaza Strip.

**2024** Due to the further escalation of the war in the Holy Land, ACN steps up its relief efforts in cooperation with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Additionally, extensive emergency aid is provided in Lebanon, which is also severely affected by the war.





## 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.

**Regina Lynch**  
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.

**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.

**Guido Gröning**  
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.



**Father  
Anton Lässer, CP**  
International  
Ecclesiastical Assistant



**Marco Mencaglia**  
Director of Projects



**Mark von  
Riedemann**  
Director for  
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Aid to the  
Church in Need

ACN INTERNATIONAL



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