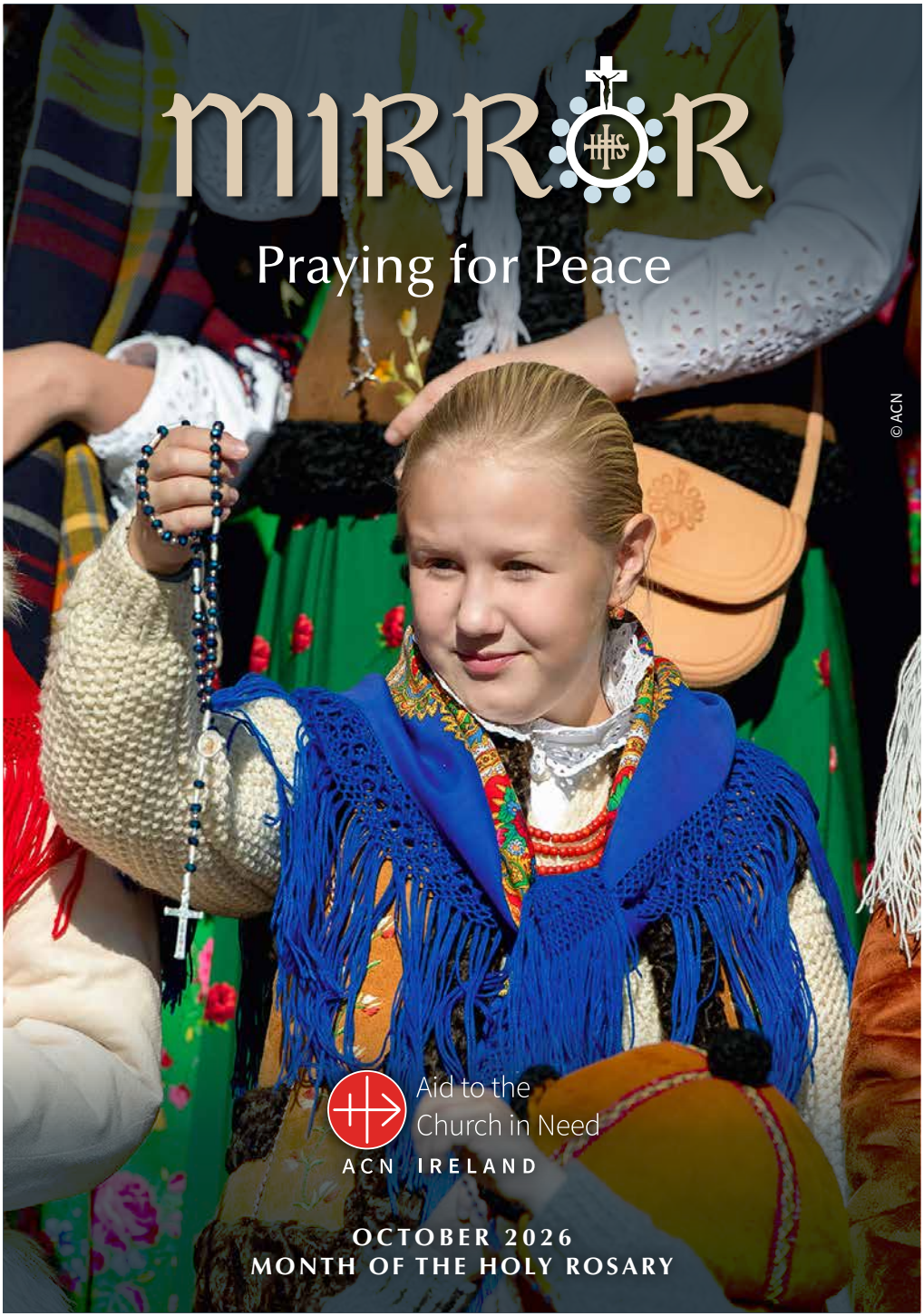
MIRROR

Praying for Peace



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Aid to the
Church in Need
ACN IRELAND

OCTOBER 2026
MONTH OF THE HOLY ROSARY

ACN IRELAND

WEEK OF WITNESS

FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

NOVEMBER 15 – 22, 2026

Shining a Light on Christian Persecution Worldwide



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Aid to the Church in Need
ACN IRELAND







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Cover image: Children from Poland taking part in the global prayer campaign One Million Children Praying the Rosary for Peace in the World.

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INTRODUCTION

Will you be a Witness for Persecuted Christians?


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MICHAEL KELLY,
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS



Dear Friends,

Next month, November, Aid to the Church in Need will – again – shine a light on the fact that millions of Christians continue to be persecuted for their faith, all across the globe.

The **Week of Witness**, which this year falls between **November 15 and 22** – has become an important feature in our calendar, when we highlight the fact that the followers of Christ still suffer for their faithfulness. This year, **Red Wednesday** will be marked on **November 18**.

Aid to the Church in Need Ireland is encouraging as many parishes as possible to participate in the Week of Witness, and Red Wednesday. We have put together a set of carefully-prepared resources and fact sheets that lay out the scale of the problem of persecution and religious discrimination against Christians.

Today, some 413 million Christians live in countries where they are denied full religious freedom. Of these, 220 million Christians – about one in ten of all Christians in the world – live in countries where they actively experience persecution.

In **Ireland**, we know the bitter moments in our own history when to be a Catholic was to have a target on your back, and when the Mass was outlawed.

It's sobering to think that this is still a reality for so many of our brothers and sisters around the globe – but it's also a call to action.

Will you be part of that call to action?

This year, we are asking the benefactors, friends and supporters of ACN to join in a special effort to highlight the Week of Witness and Red Wednesday.

When I speak in parishes about the reality of Christian persecution, many parishioners approach me afterwards and say they had no idea the problem was as bad as it is. Others say they felt that Christian persecution was a thing of the past – something they associated with the catacombs, or the gulags of the Soviet Union.

We will commence the Week of Witness this year with a special Mass in St Mary's Church, Chapel Lane in Belfast city centre on Sunday November 15 at 11am. This Mass will also be broadcast live on RTÉ One television, and on RTÉ Radio One.

I would really appeal to you to try to make a special effort to attend this Mass, or if you can't, please do tune in and join with us spiritually.

We will also launch our latest report *Persecuted and Forgotten?* during the Week of Witness, more details of which will be provided in due course.

But, above all, I would dearly love for the cause of our suffering brothers and sisters in the faith to be at the heart of each and every parish community this Week of Witness.

Will you help me achieve this? Might you be willing to take on co-ordinating the Week of Witness in your parish, with the permission of your local priest?

I know from speaking to priests, many of them would dearly love to do more to highlight the Week of Witness, but they are simply too busy with ever more demands on their time. Might you consider easing their burden, and working with ACN to make the Week of Witness a success?

If your answer is *'yes',* I would dearly love to hear from you. At ACN, we will be on-hand to provide you with all the material and support that you will need.

Whether it is a special liturgy to mark the occasion, lighting your church up red, organising a fundraiser, an awareness event or getting the local school involved – I would love to hear from you.

After all, if we Catholics don't speak up for our brothers and sisters who are suffering who will? They are being tested in faith, we are being tested in love.

Please do email me if you think you could help at **michael@acnireland.org**

God bless you,

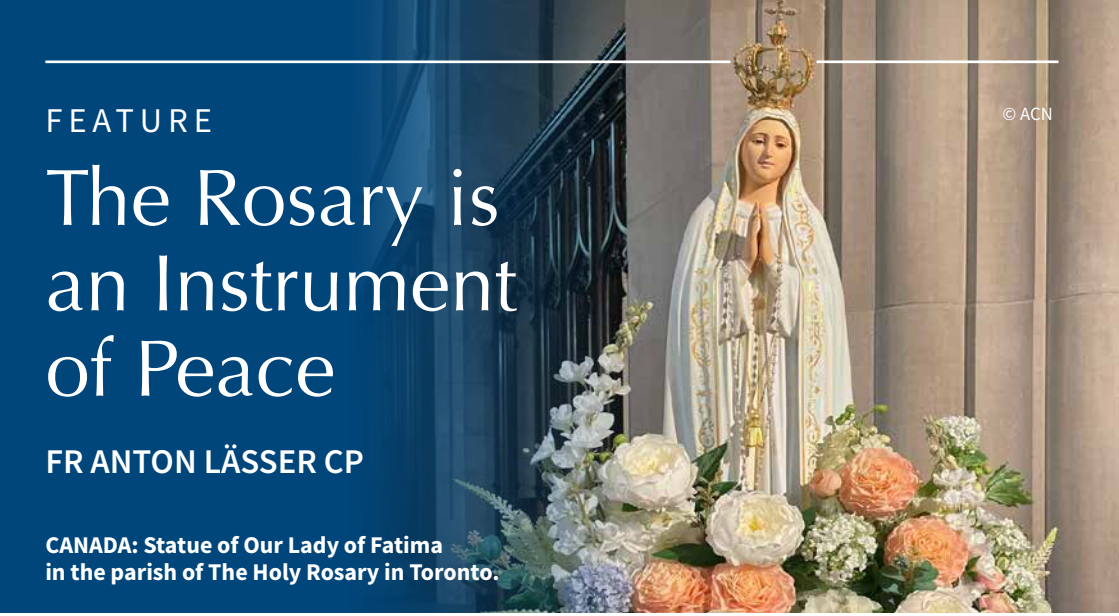


MICHAEL KELLY
Director of Public Affairs, ACN Ireland

FEATURE

The Rosary is an Instrument of Peace

FR ANTON LÄSSER CP



© ACN

CANADA: Statue of Our Lady of Fatima in the parish of The Holy Rosary in Toronto.



Dear Friends,

October, the month of the Holy Rosary, reminds us once again to entrust ourselves to **Mary, the Mother of God**, together with the Church and the entire world, by praying the Rosary. In doing so we are fulfilling the urgent requests she made to us through her various Church-recognised apparitions around the world.

In Fatima, on May 13, 1917, she urged the three little seers, **Lucia**, **Francisco** and **Jacinta** to *"Pray the Rosary daily for peace in the world and an end to the war."*

And on November 28, 1981, in Kibeho, **Rwanda**, she said: *"I am the Mother of the Word…I care for the world and turn to help it…The world is rebelling against God… Many sins are being committed…If you do not convert and repent from your hearts, you will all plunge into an abyss…People must pray the Rosary daily."*

Seeing the state of things in the Church and the world today, how can we possibly reject this invitation from Mary, who as a loving mother cares for us, her children?

For over 20 years now, wishing to respond generously to Our Lady's requests and give her joy, as Mother of Divine Grace, in this month of October, ACN has been supporting the worldwide campaign ***'A Million Children Praying the Rosary'***, in which well over one million children now take part, all around the world.

This year, **Pope Leo XIV** has given us special reason for rejoicing. For on October 1, at 6pm, he will be launching

the month of the Holy Rosary by praying and meditating on the Holy Rosary in the Lourdes Grotto at the Vatican, together with a group of children who are participating in the *'one million children'* campaign.

We cordially invite you to follow us via the media or in whatever way you can, and join with us in this prayer for peace, as a gift of love for the Mother of God. Perhaps you can even gather together with other believers, in a church or chapel or indeed in your own home.

Permit me to conclude with a few personal words to you: these lines will be the last I will be writing to you in the Mirror. My superiors have asked me to return to our ecclesiastical province and assume new duties there. And so, I will be saying goodbye to ACN.

These years with ACN have been a time of great blessings for me, in which I have been privileged to learn a great deal about the life and sufferings of the Universal Church and have met with many outstanding witnesses to the Faith. All these things have leant lasting strength to my faith and my love for the Church.

And so, I offer my deep and heartfelt thanks to all of you who are supporting this work of love with your prayers and your offerings.

May the Lord richly reward you for what you are doing for so many suffering Christians.

I remain forever united in prayer with you all.

P. Anton Lässer OP

FATHER ANTON LÄSSER CP
Ecclesiastical Assistant, ACN International



UKRAINE: Children with disabilities praying the Rosary in Lutsk.

NEWS

Christian Schools in Jerusalem Protest Non-renewal of Entry Permits for Teachers

MARIA LOZANO



ISREAL: Bro. Daoud Kassabry addressing pupils of the Collège des Frères in Jerusalem.

© ACN

Christian schools in **Jerusalem** were forced to suspend all classes just days into the new school year, after Israel refused to grant entry permits for key staff members.

The schools announced the suspension of classes on September, 1. However, the strike was supposed to be indefinite, but was called off after just one day, after Israeli authorities relented and renewed some of the permits.

The headmaster of the Collège des Frères in Jerusalem, warned of the consequences of this situation for students, families, and the future of the Christian presence in the Holy Land.

Speaking to ACN, **Bro. Daoud Kassabry** said: *"The start of the school term should be a moment of joy, reunions, and hope. For Christian schools in Jerusalem, the beginning of the 2026–2027 academic year is unfortunately marked by a new crisis."*

The General Secretariat of Christian Educational Institutions in Jerusalem formally announced the suspension of school activities in its schools starting Tuesday September 1.

The decision followed the non-renewal of entry permits into the city for over 70 teachers and staff members. Their absence hinders teaching as well as administration, technical, and sanitary services, affecting a total of more than 8,500 students.

The difficulty stems from Jerusalem's special status and the restrictions governing access to the city for Palestinians

from the West Bank. The affected teachers and staff require Israeli permits to enter. However, as the new term approached, their entry permits were not renewed.

Bro. Kassabry added that *"this suspension fits into a broader context of restrictions concerning the recruitment and qualifications of Palestinian teachers."*

In his view, the problem cannot be reduced to a simple administrative difficulty. *"For us, a teacher cannot be replaced overnight. They bring expertise, experience, an understanding of the students, and a relationship of trust with families."*

The crisis is also a human one. *"Behind every non-renewed permit, there is a person, a family, and a livelihood threatened,"* Bro. Kassabry insisted. With the support of ACN, Christian schools in Jerusalem welcome both Christian and Muslim students.

They are places for learning mutual respect, which holds particular importance in a city where communities live in a state of division. At the Collège des Frères, in Jerusalem, this mission is rooted in a 150-year history.

For Christians, these schools also represent an essential element of their presence in the Holy City. A family needs to be able to work, but also to offer its children a stable, high-quality education. When these two conditions are undermined, the very possibility of remaining in Jerusalem can be compromised as well.

Confronted with the current situation, Christian schools called for the necessary permits to be swiftly *"reissued and renewed."* In their statement, they also requested that such measures cease and not recur in the future, in order to preserve the stability of educational institutions and guarantee students *"a regular and safe education."*

The decision to call the strike, as well as the appeal of the Christian schools, appears to have borne fruit, as Israeli authorities renewed some of the permits on September 1.

"Some for one week, some for a month and some until the end of this year," said **George Akroush**, director of development at the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. However, *"this means that over 70 teachers did not get their full permits until the end of the academic year. Church authorities will continue to apply pressure to the authorities concerning these teachers, and are hopeful that the full permits will be issued soon, perhaps after Christmas,"* Akroush added.

Bro. Daoud said: *"We call on the relevant authorities, Church leaders, and international partners to support a swift and lasting solution. The children of Jerusalem need stability, confidence, and an open future."*

PROJECT NEWS

Finding a Voice through Faith in Syria



"God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them" (1 *John* 4:16).

God holds each one of us in His heart with infinite love. As Christians, we recognise the immense love that Our Lord holds for all of our brothers and sisters. As followers of Christ, we are called to emulate this love. And this is exactly what you have done through your support of families and people with disabilities in **Syria**.

The organisation *Faith and Light* works to help people with disabilities participate fully in both the Church and society. Just like you, they are driven by the belief that everybody is loved by God, deserves to be treated with respect, and should be able to participate fully in Church life.

This belief is just as true for people with disabilities in Syria as it is anywhere else in the world. Life has been very hard for people in Syria over the last few years, especially for those with disabilities.

War and economic hardship have made normal life next to impossible. In these conditions, the isolation and exclusion that people with disabilities experience even during the best of times becomes even greater as families struggle to cope with daily challenges.

This is where you step in to offer a helping hand and encouragement to those who need it most. *Faith and Light* are present in 48 communities in Syria, and with your loving support they hold pastoral summer camps every year for families of people with disabilities.

These camps offer much more than a

break from daily struggles. They provide a meaningful human and spiritual experience. Participants engage in communal and spiritual activities that allow them to grow in fellowship, deepen their relationship with God, and experience love and belonging. The fruits of these experiences can last a lifetime.

This was certainly the case for **Therese** and her family. Last year, they attended one of the camps. Therese has an intellectual disability and had long been quiet around others out of fear of how they might react to her.

However, when the camp sang *"I Love You, Lord Jesus,"* Therese suddenly joined in and sang the entire hymn while tears rolled down her face as she looked to the Cross. Her family and the camp participants were amazed and deeply moved by the witness of her faith.

Thanks to your loving support, Therese no longer remains quiet out of fear and is better able to live her faith to the fullest. Faith and Light will once again hold these pastoral camps this year, bringing hope, friendship, and spiritual nourishment to families across Syria.

We hope that you will continue with us on this journey, helping our brothers and sisters experience God's love and take their rightful place in both the Church and society.

One of **Rola**'s children has autism and the other suffers from a neurological illness. The crosses that Rola has to carry are many… and are heavy. It is very hard to be a mother in Syria in the best of circumstances, but it is even more difficult to be a mother of children with special needs.

Through your generous support of Faith and Light, you helped Rola carry these crosses. Faith and Light works to enable people with disabilities to take part in the Church and society. At a pastoral summer camp run by Faith and Light, Rola saw her children filled with delight as they took part in a water game. She still treasures this memory: seeing her children laugh, play, and simply be children again.

Thank you for giving parents like Rola these moments of joy. We hope and pray that you will keep lifting up the hearts of parents and children in Syria through your faithful support.



SYRIA: Faith and Light summer camps for people with disabilities.

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from ACN Ireland

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Be assured all proceeds from sales will go to the persecuted and suffering Church.

PROJECT NEWS

Seeds of Hope

LEBANON



LEBANON: Novices from the Saint Joseph de Lyon Congregation.

© ACN

"I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for having hidden these things from the wise and the prudent and have revealed them to babes" (*Luke* 10:21).

God reveals His greatness and wisdom to the least of these... And only with a generous heart like yours, can you see the small shoots of Hope growing in the middle of the night in **Lebanon**.

In many passages of the Bible, the beauty of Lebanon is praised, *"its tall cedars"* (cf. *Ps* 104:16), as is the aroma of that land (cf. *Song* 4:11), a beauty now overshadowed by poverty and war. The dark smoke from the explosion in the port, the financial collapse, the crisis and the war – they can lead you to think that all is lost.

However, there are eight sisters of the *Congregation of St Joseph of Lyon* working in the most vulnerable areas of the country, who are not resigned to evil and continue to spread the message of peace. They do so through perhaps the only great treasure that an impoverished Lebanon still has left: education. They have a small Catholic school.

In addition to the above challenges, new challenges were added for Catholic schools: regional instability, the emigration of families, psychological traumas and insecurity in students... Poverty continues to spread, families emigrate in search of a better future. This all puts Catholic schools in Lebanon at risk. However, Catholic schools are how the Faith is passed on to the next generation in Lebanon.

It is your generosity that enables the sisters to provide pastoral, human and spiritual formation to the children. In Lebanon, catechism is received almost exclusively in Catholic schools. There, children not only acquire academic knowledge, but also receive an education based on Christian values such as fraternity, respect and listening. These values help them to learn to live with others, to recognise others as their brothers and sisters and to become true messengers of peace.

A young Lebanese man recalled innocently: *"It was only at university that I found out that some of my school friends were Muslims."* Their memory reflects the goodness and greatness in the hearts of children, capable of living friendship beyond any difference.

"Little lights shining in the night, little buds sprouting, little seeds planted in the barren garden," said **Pope Leo XIV** in Beirut, in December 2025.

As the protector of these little ones, you are the one who decides to let their light shine in the darkness. And it is your generosity that renews and makes the Faith of Lebanese children sprout.

Thank you for sowing hope. In God's hands, your help will bear many fruits of Peace.



LEBANON: Novices from the Saint Joseph de Lyon Congregation at play.

PROJECT NEWS

Our Faith is a Home

UKRAINE

"I will never leave you or forsake you." (*Hebrews* 13:5)

Our Faith transforms lives. All around the world, the Holy Spirit is at work, bringing people together and closer to God. You, through your loving support, are a co-worker in building the Kingdom and transforming people's lives. Your faith is a refuge for people living in some of the most difficult conditions and circumstances around the world.

One of these people is **Anna** in Simferopol, **Ukraine**. Like many others, Anna has been suffering from the desperation and economic strife in her region. Anna often felt like an outsider as she struggled with addiction and sought to live her faith.

At times, Anna thought that she was alone. But God was always with her, and through our Catholic Faith and the Church, you were there too. And with your faithful support, **Sr Julia** was there to accompany Anna and to remind her that she is never alone.

Thanks to your generosity, Sr Julia is able to offer pastoral care to the local faithful. Along with her sister, she teaches the Faith and the catechism to children and families. Sr Julia is also a psychologist and is responsible for organising and implementing psychological care in the local Church. As part of her responsibilities, Sr Julia often visits the sick and the lonely and conducts group and individual sessions.

This support was a lifeline for Anna. With Sr Julia's help, Anna was able to look more closely at the struggles in her life, better understand herself, and begin to overcome her addiction. Together, they explored Sacred Scripture and deepened Anna's prayer life. While with Sr Julia and the sisters, Anna feels like she is at home.

It is thanks to your loving care that Sr Julia was able to help Anna fight addiction, find a home in the faith, and deepen her relationship with God.

You have changed lives, and we hope that you will continue to help Sr Julia to show others that they are never alone.


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Aid to the Church in Need
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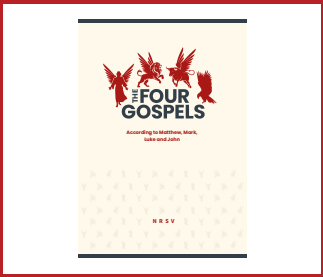
Online Shop



The Four Gospels
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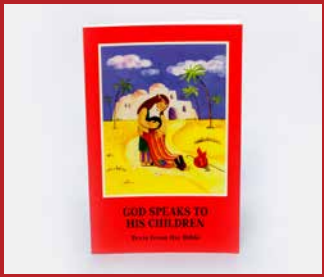

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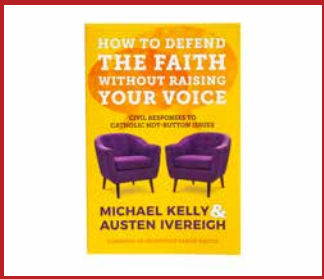

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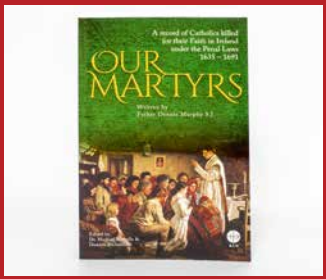

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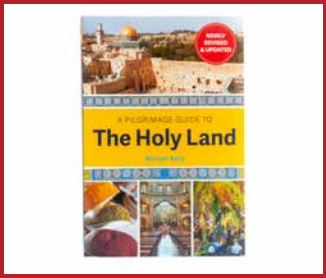

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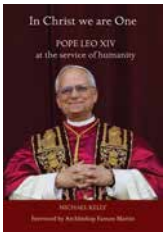

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Olive Wood Crucifix on stand or Olive Wood Crucifix for wall – €20



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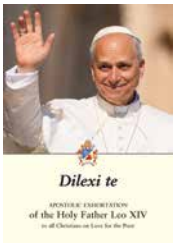

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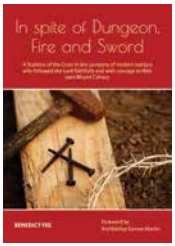

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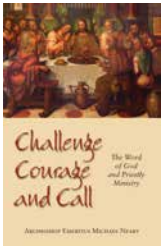

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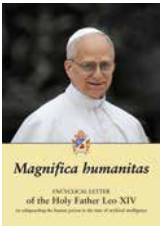

Magnifica humanitas – €6.99

PROJECT NEWS

The Road is Built as You Walk it

ECUADOR

For three missionary sisters in Napo, the path first exists in their hearts, with Jesus as the way, the truth and the life.

In the Amazon region, the roads are either dirt tracks or non-existent. Nonetheless, three Lauritas missionary sisters travel through a vast territory to reach 21 communities. With every step they take, they forge a path and bring the Word of God, a message of love and salvation, to children and young people.

Thanks to your love, those steps are not walked alone. You walk with them through the difficult terrain. Your generosity helps them fulfil their calling and reach those who most need their presence.



ECUADOR: Subsistance aid for three Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Mary.

Thanks to you, God's message of love is sown in the hearts of children through catechesis. Thanks to you, they prepare the catechists and the community to receive the sacraments.

Many of these communities suffer from violence and poverty. Your love makes the sisters' presence possible. Because of you, they can reach them, embrace them and remind them that they are not alone, that God is there. The sisters are the arms that embrace, and you are the reason those hands can reach out to them.

The gift you offer makes every step of this mission possible: transport, food and healthcare. You provide the essentials for a vibrant mission that opens up new paths and sows the seeds of faith in the Amazon region. Through your generosity, they lay the foundations, sow the seeds, tend to and water the tiny shoots of faith.

You are part of every path they walk, every community they visit and every heart in which faith is sown.

Keep paving the way of faith with them. Let's walk together some more!

SUCCESS STORY!

Faith in Colours

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

"One thing I ask of the Lord… to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord." (*Psalm* 27:4)

Imagine opening the Bible and recognising only dark smudges. In the small village of M'baiki in the **Central African Republic**, illiteracy keeps children in the dark, separated from the Faith. But love is creative, and thanks to people like you, it always finds a way to reach them.

The catechists of M'baiki have found a wonderful way to teach the Bible to these children: through colourful stained-glass windows of their cathedral. These 96 windows, painted by a local artist, are inspired by biblical images from the ACN Child's Bible. Each window tells three stories from God's Word.

You also make possible for the catechists, during their formation, to contemplate the story of God's Love in the Bible and pass it on to those cannot read it.

In ancient times, the Gospel was carved into stone so that the people could access the Word of God. Today, at the Cathedral of M'baiki, children and adults access the story of salvation and God's Love through the stained-glass windows and colourful images of the catechesis.

Light, colour, and your generosity are intertwined to bear fruit in every child. By choosing to help them, you prove that your Love is stronger than any barrier.

Thank you for being the light that paints the Faith of these children with colours.



CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: Stained glass windows for M'Baiki Cathedral.

SUCCESS STORY!

ACN-supported Summer Camps benefit over 30,000 Youths Worldwide



Every year the pontifical foundation Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) supports the organisation of youth summer camps by local churches.

This year, ACN is supporting 407 summer camps, through 46 projects in 11 countries, reaching 33,631 children and young people. The impact is particularly significant in countries marked by war, displacement and instability.

Syria, **Lebanon** and **Ukraine** alone account for more than 85 per cent of all participants in summer camps supported by ACN.

Syria accounts for 17,855 participants across 230 camps – more than half the total – followed by Lebanon, with 7,465 participants across 61 camps, and Ukraine, with 3,518 participants across 74 camps.

Many of these camps are specifically aimed at children with disabilities and refugees.

These initiatives are much more than recreational activities, they offer protection, pastoral care, healing and hope for children and young people who have grown up in contexts of conflict, poverty or exile.

ACN's support is not merely limited to camps. Other pastoral activities with children in **Egypt**, **Jordan**, **Lebanon**, **Togo** and **Venezuela**, have benefited a further 5,230 participants across nine initiatives, meaning that overall, ACN's support has

reached 38,861 children and young people through 416 camps and pastoral activities worldwide.

Behind the numbers are concrete examples of how the Church remains close to the younger generations precisely where they most need to feel accompanied, listened to and supported.

Claude Semaan, coordinator of Faith and Light in Syria, an international movement fostering spiritual growth among people with disabilities, explains that *"the camp gives us tremendous energy for the year ahead. It is a space of hope, a space of real life."*

Syria has been going through more than a decade of instability, civil war and episodic persecution, and for many children the summer camps are an important oasis of tranquillity. *"It is the kind of life that we are no longer able to live in our homes. We are losing what a normal life should be, but at the camp we are able to live it with complete freedom, with joy, and even through our pain, which we share together,"* she tells ACN.

The local Churches remain grateful to the benefactors who make these initiatives possible, as explained by **Fr Fadi Azar**, from Syria.

"I would like to thank ACN for helping us with our summer camps. Were it not for your help – which is so vital for our Christians – they would not be able to take part in these gatherings of prayer, meditation and joy. Thanks to you, they are able to eat well and travel to the mountain location where we hold our camp. The families look forward to this; they look forward to it every year with great joy. Without your financial support, it simply wouldn't be possible. I cannot find the words to thank you enough at this moment. We are praying for you, truly; our camps would not have taken place without your generosity. Thank you, ACN."



EGYPT: Pastoral summer camps promote spiritual growth for youths of all ages.

TRAINING OF PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS

Our aid has always focused on the theological training and qualification of seminarians. 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 not adequately ensured due to poverty, war, or persecution.

10,991 SEMINARIANS SUPPORTED

One in every ten candidates training for the priesthood was supported by ACN in 2023. Most of these were in Africa (5,793) where priestly vocations are the most numerous, followed by 2,103 in Latin America, 1,996 in Asia and 1,099 in Europe, including over 600 seminarians in Ukraine.

Your support is essential to continue this vital mission. By donating to Aid to the Church in Need, you can help ensure that future priests receive the training they need to become the spiritual leaders their communities desperately need.

Every contribution makes a significant difference. Please consider donating today to support the theological education of seminarians and strengthen the Church's presence in regions affected by poverty, war, and persecution.

Please donate what you can at

acnireland.org/donate

or call [RoI] +353 (0)1 837 7516

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TANZANIA
A seminarian walks down a corridor of St Augustine's Major Seminary in Peramiho.

© Ismael Martínez Sánchez

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION

The Power of Jesus and Mary

DAVIDE BARBIERI



VENEZUELA: A Carmelite tertiary prays in the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Petare. Ismael Martínez Sánchez / ACN

© Ismael Martínez Sánchez



Follow Mary and Jesus, and your faith will overcome any difficulty. Faith is something we must take care of, and at the same time, it takes care of us.

God can move mountains - but do not forget your shovel. The example of millions of persecuted Christians should make us stop, think, and pray for courage drawn from their witness.

Faith is not something magical: ***"I believe, so God must give me the miracle I am praying for," or "I pray - why hasn't God given me what I asked for?"***

I ask you to focus on the example of Mary's faith: a solid, sure, and strong faith. We can hardly imagine how much she suffered. I wonder what her reaction was when no one opened the door to her, even though she was about to give birth: *"There is no room for you!"*

She, too, must have felt fear and anxiety, experiencing labour pains while being turned away, knowing she was about to give birth to the Son of God.

Looking at Mary, I realise that faith is often proven in suffering. It becomes stronger when we go through pain, rejection, exclusion, or when we are not recognised, or when even our basic rights are not respected.

It is precisely in moments of suffering that the strength to believe is born within us - the strength to trust that joy will come, and that we become more mature, more balanced, more sensitive to others, and more capable of loving.

There is no other reality like pain to teach us to love. Suffering is the moment when we evaluate and verify our faith. I assure you that, after the experience of suffering, we are no longer childish or immature, but more truly Christian - more mature, believing, and trusting.

Faith wins. We must be convinced that if we continue to believe, even in situations that hurt, demand much from us, or accuse us, it will bring good to us and to our families - especially if we do not pass our pain on to others or make someone else suffer because of our interior wounds.

Instead, we are called to enter trusting prayer, bringing to God everything that worries and wounds us, trusting Him who is our Father. I am certain that Mary and Joseph, while knocking on the doors of the inns seeking shelter, continued to pray in trust. Faith gave them the certainty that the Lord would not abandon them, that someone would welcome them, and that a place or door would open.

Faith is a presence within us that is stronger than our disappointments, stronger than every closed door. The Blessed Mother carried this presence within her womb. In her, faith was incarnate - the life of the Child she protected and by whom she was herself protected.

Let us not waste the immense richness of a faith that is tested. Let us exercise our faith in the small moments of suffering. Let us experience that God is with us, that He does not abandon us, and that He is faithful to His people who cry out to Him.

If things in your life are not going well, or you do not yet fully understand them, ponder them in your heart. Mary *"treasured all these things in her heart."* She did not always understand everything immediately, but she persevered through moments of uncertainty and suffering with trust that heaven would open and that God would prevail.

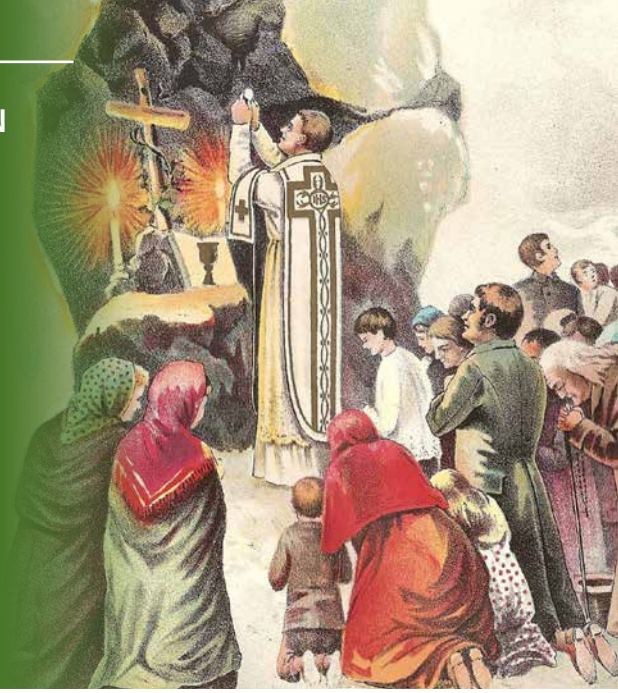
Davide Barbieri is Diocesan Liaison Officer for Aid to the Church in Need Ireland.



SPIRITUAL REFLECTION

Today Irish Catholics don't face Persecution, but Forgetfulness and Indifference

BISHOP NIALL COLL



When we gather for the celebration of Mass here in Rodger's Burn, Letterkenny, we are standing at a holy place whose significance has not been lost over the generations. In Penal times, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the celebration of the Mass was outlawed, when priests were hunted and congregations scattered, the Catholics of Conwal and Leck gathered quietly at this Mass Rock along that burn.

A simple stone became an altar. As in many other spots throughout **Ireland** a clearing became a makeshift church. And a people who refused to abandon the Eucharist became a living witness to the truth that God's grace cannot be suppressed.

Imagine them walking in darkness, listening for danger, whispering warnings, kneeling on wet ground. No church roof sheltered them. No bell called them. Yet they came.

They came because they believed that Christ was worth the risk. They came because the Mass was the heartbeat of their faith. And in that hidden place, the Catholic faith survived.

This hiddenness brings us directly to the Gospel for the Vigil Mass of the Assumption.

Mary *"arose and went with haste"* to the hill country to visit Elizabeth. She carried Christ in her womb, quietly and humbly. No crowds followed her. No one recognised the

world-changing moment unfolding in that small encounter between two women.

Faith often survives in hidden places.

Mary's journey mirrors the journeys to Rodger's Burn. She travelled in trust; they travelled in danger. She carried Christ in her womb; they carried Christ in their hearts.

She brought the presence of the Saviour into a quiet home; they brought the presence of the Saviour to a quiet glen.

And when Mary arrived, she proclaimed the Magnificat - that great hymn of hope and reversal: ***"He has looked on the humble estate of his servant…and exalted those of humble estate."*** Those words were undoubtedly prayed at Rodger's Burn. Indeed, they were lived out there too.

Today, we face no Penal laws. No one is banning the Mass. No one is hunting priests.

But faith faces a different kind of threat - not persecution, but forgetfulness; not violence, but indifference. The danger now is not that we cannot practice our faith, but that we do not bother. The challenge is distraction, busyness and the quiet suggestion that God is optional.

And yet - just as in Penal times - faith is surviving. It survives in young people searching for meaning. It survives in families rediscovering prayer. It survives in those who go to Knock Shrine seeking peace and silence. It survives in the quiet heart that still dares to hope.



Rodger's Burn Mass Rock, Glencar, Co. Donegal.

Rodger's Burn teaches us that faith survives when believers choose it.

Our Lady teaches us that faith grows when believers carry it. Our ancestors teach us that faith strengthens when believers cherish and protect it. And our own time teaches us that faith flourishes when believers live it out in our daily lives.

The Mass Rock at Rodger's Burn is not only a relic of suffering; it is a reminder of resilience. It tells us that the Faith does not die when culture grows cold. It tells us that God works most powerfully in hidden places - in a burn outside Letterkenny, in a hillside in Judea, in the quiet corners of our own lives.

So today, let us ask for the grace to be like Mary - to carry Christ into the world with quiet courage. Let us ask for the strength of our ancestors - to keep the flame of faith alive even when the world grows indifferent.

And let us ask for the spirit of Mary's Magnificat - to trust that God is still lifting up the lowly, still filling the hungry, still remembering His promise of mercy.

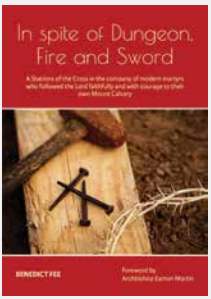
May Rodger's Burn remind us that faith once survived in secrecy. May our witness ensure that faith now survives in freedom. And may Our Lady, who hastened to Elizabeth, hasten to us - to shelter us, to strengthen us, and always to lead us to her.

Niall Coll is Bishop of Raphoe. This is the text of a homily he gave at the Mass Rock at Rodger's Burn in Letterkenny on the eve of the Solemnity of the Assumption.



Celebration of Mass at Rodger's Burn Mass Rock, Glencar, Co. Donegal.

ACN Church Resources DAC



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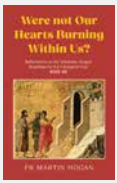

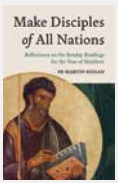

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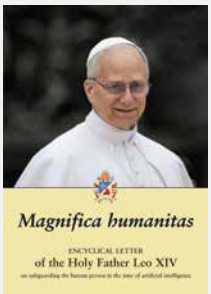

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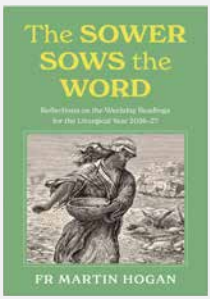
Magnifica humanitas, Is the new Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father Leo XIV.



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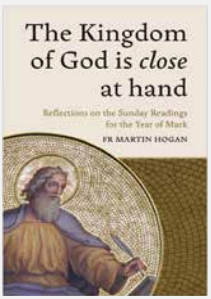
The Sower Sows the Word, Reflections on the Weekday Readings for the Liturgical Year 2026–27.



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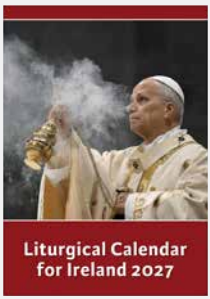

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Liturgical Calendar for Ireland 2027 (Ordo), The Liturgical Calendar for Ireland is the essential guide to the Church's daily round of prayer.

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OCTOBER CROSSWORD

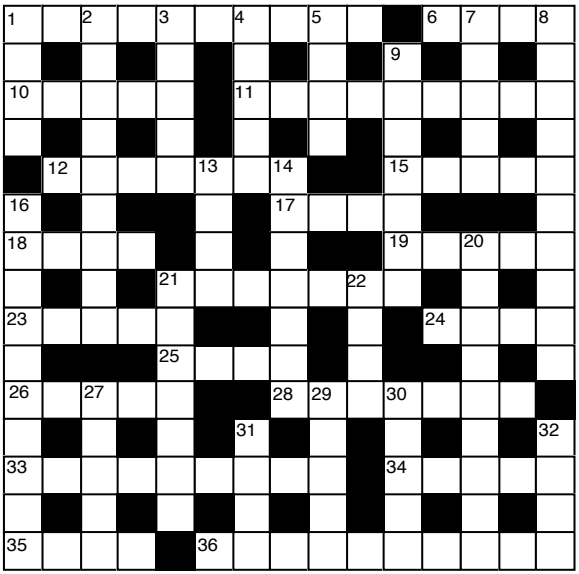
We are pleased to share with you our latest ACN crossword. We will print the answers in next month's edition.

Enjoy!

September Solution

Across 1 Playwright, 6 Bird, 10 Rupee, 11 Mellifont, 12 Declare, 15 Layer, 17 NATO, 18 Prey, 19 Corgi, 21 Peacock, 23 Lithe, 24 Knee, 25 Rome, 26 Group, 28 Drowned, 33 Sorceress, 34 Arson, 35 Sash, 36 Clothes peg.

Down 1 Pork, 2 At present, 3 Wheel, 4 Izmir, 5 Holy well, 7 Ivory, 8 Determined, 9 Hillock, 13 Acne, 14 Enacted, 16 Apologises, 20 Runners-up, 21 Perplex, 22 Coco, 27 Ogres, 29 Resit, 30 Whale, 32 Snag.



ACROSS

1 You are looking up out of the water if you swim in this style. (10)
6 Piece of information. (4)
10 One who shuns company. (5)
11 Renovate, bring up to date. (9)
12 Realm. (7)
15 & 19a Document signed at Runnymede by King John. (5,5)
17 The largest continent. (4)
18 Ogle. (4)
19 See 15 across
21 Definitely not public. (7)
23 See 8 down
24 Precious stone. (4)
25 Not imaginary. (4)
26 Bays, inlets. (5)
28 Bird with a forked tail. (7)
33 See 8 down
34 Fit with glass; apply a glossy finish to food. (5)
35 Steep, immerse in water. (4)
36 Gentleness, kind attentiveness. (10)

DOWN

1 Sphere used in sport. (4)
2 Self-assured. (9)
3 Gesture with the shoulders. (5)
4 Juliet's lover in the Shakespeare play. (5)
5 Young goats. (4)
7 Mimicking. (5)
8, 23a & 33a Moral tale told by Jesus about how the Good Shepherd will seek out a member of the flock gone astray. (3,7,2,3,4,5)
9 Expression of determination. (7)
13 Expensive. (4)
14 Wonders, scarcely believable sights. (7)
16 They may be white, red or platelets. (5,5)
20 How can the bearer opt out to become a ne'er-do-well? (9)
21 Continue despite opposition. (7)
22 Large seafish. (4)
27 Roman goddess of the hearth. (5)
29 Cleaned with a cloth. (5)

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

‘Lord Hear Our Prayers…’



The *MIRROR* magazine, above all, belongs to the friends and benefactors of Aid to the Church in Need, Ireland. At ACN Ireland, we are a faith-filled and praying community. Every month, we invite you to send your prayers of petition, which will be placed on the altar at ACN and these intentions will be prayed for during that month. We also invite readers, to pray for these intentions.

“I would like to pray for my uncle who has cancer, for my brother and his sons, and for greater direction, clarity, insight and hope in my life. Also for thanksgiving for favours received.”

“For all priests and religious and vocations to the priesthood and religious life. For those who have not yet come to know the love of the father. For protection of the unborn.”

“Please draw all hearts to Our Father in heaven. May his kingdom on earth come as it is in heaven. We offer our prayer in reparation and love for those who have turned away from Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.”

“I pray for the conversion of my husband and my children and that I can be a better witness to the faith. I pray for the graces to help me be a better wife and mother.”

“I beg for the grace of conversion for our immediate and extended family. We pray that someone’s eyes will be opened to the sins of gluttony and obesity. We pray for Godly spouses for our daughters. We pray in reparation for a cathedral. We pray for God’s will regarding a ministry. Please bless two people’s vocations.”

“I pray for a strong and robust Church – unafraid to articulate its faith and message.”

“I pray that the legacy of Matt Talbot is not forgotten as his life has touched so many and guided people to sobriety.”

“Please pray for more vocations to the priesthood and religious life. This is such an essential part of Catholic life.”

“Please pray for the health of a young person who will require surgery over the next month. I pray that there won’t be any complications.”

“As the evenings get colder and darker, pray for those who are struggling with suicidal thoughts. May they come to know the light and love of the Lord.”

Please send your intentions, in strictest confidence, to prayers@acnireland.org or write to Castle Building, 426 Clontarf Road, Dollymount, Dublin 3, D03 FP52 marking your envelope *‘petitions’*.

Aid to the Church in Need

ACN IRELAND

Month of the Holy Rosary



Queen of the Holy Rosary, you came to Fatima to reveal to the three shepherd children the treasures of grace hidden in the Rosary.

Inspire my heart with a sincere love of this devotion, that by meditating on the Mysteries of our Redemption which are recalled in it, I may be enriched with its fruits and obtain peace for the world, the conversion of sinners and the graces which I ask of you in the Rosary.

AMEN

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