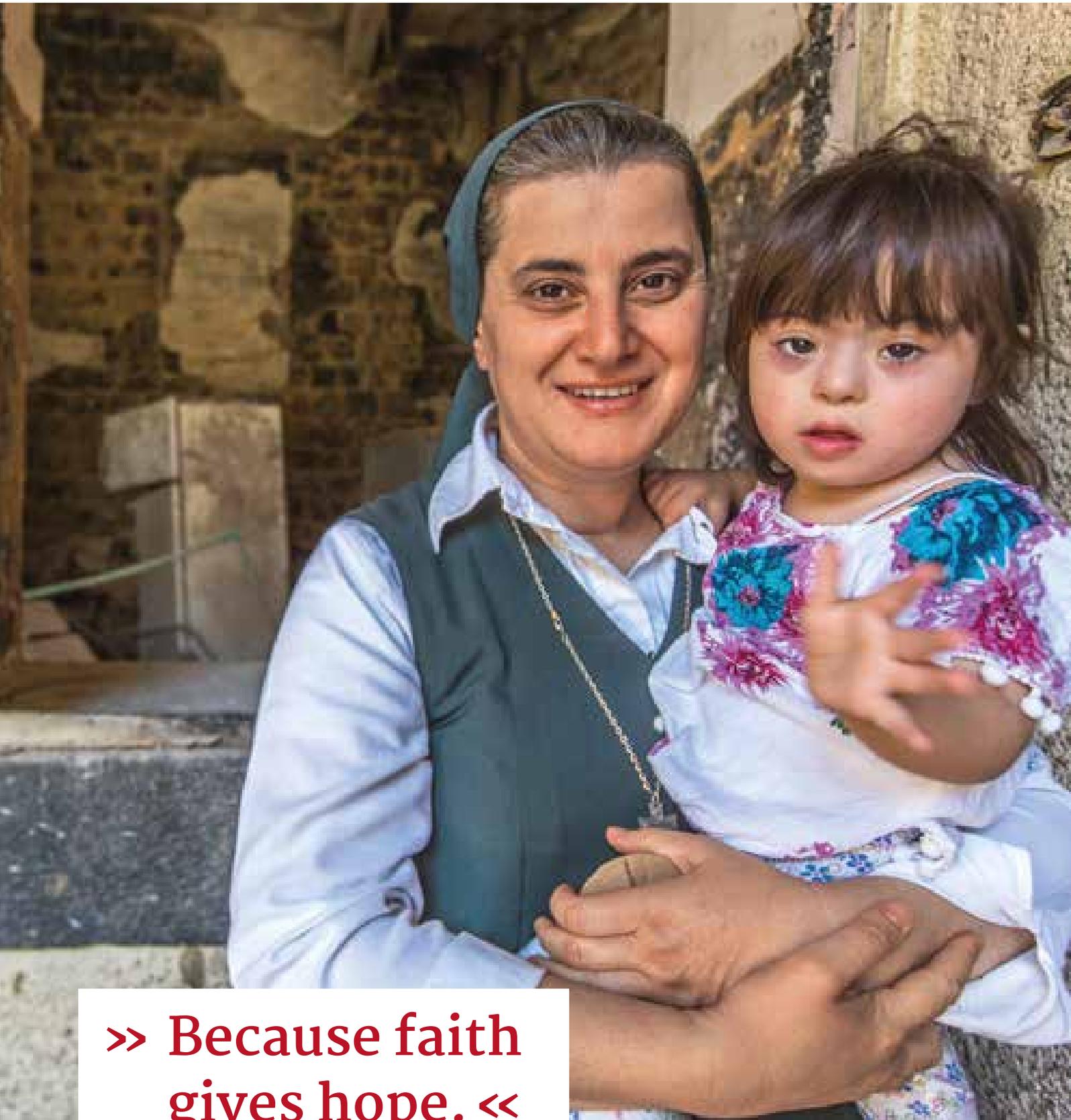




Aid to the
Church in Need

ACN INTERNATIONAL



»» Because faith
gives hope. ««

Activity Report 2018

PONTIFICAL
FOUNDATION



Imprint

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Represented by Philipp Ozores, Secretary General

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ACN Aid to the Church in Need International



Dear friends and supporters,

Every day, numerous requests for help from all over the world arrive at our international headquarters. Together, they form a kind of almanac of need, but above all of hope anchored in faith.

Our aid is as multifaceted as the needs of the Church itself: a seminary in Nigeria – a country where the church is persecuted in many places – cannot pay for the education of its many young seminarians alone. In Iraq, thousands of Christians have had to flee from Daesh terror. Thanks to ACN, they can return home again. In the Amazon rainforest, a priest urgently needs a boat to visit the faithful in the jungle. Nuns across the world need aid in order to help others. In Russia, Catholic and Orthodox Christians work hand in hand to meet the current challenges. ACN is helping them. The needs are enormous, but the power of faith is much greater. It is infinite. Faith in the infinite love of God is the greatest reason why ACN has been committed to alleviating pastoral needs around the world for more than 70 years.

2018 was a bloody year for the Church. The number of priests, religious and the laity killed almost doubled in compari-

son to the previous year. ACN has always been committed to providing information on religious persecution, e.g. in its “Religious Freedom in the World Report”, which is published every two years.

The gratitude expressed by our project partners goes out to you, dear benefactors. Thanks to your generous assistance, we were once again able to support more than 5,000 projects in 2018. We hope that in the future, we will be able to say “yes” when we are asked for help. We pray to ensure this every day.

I extend heartfelt greetings to you with my blessings,



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





» I cordially bless you all. «

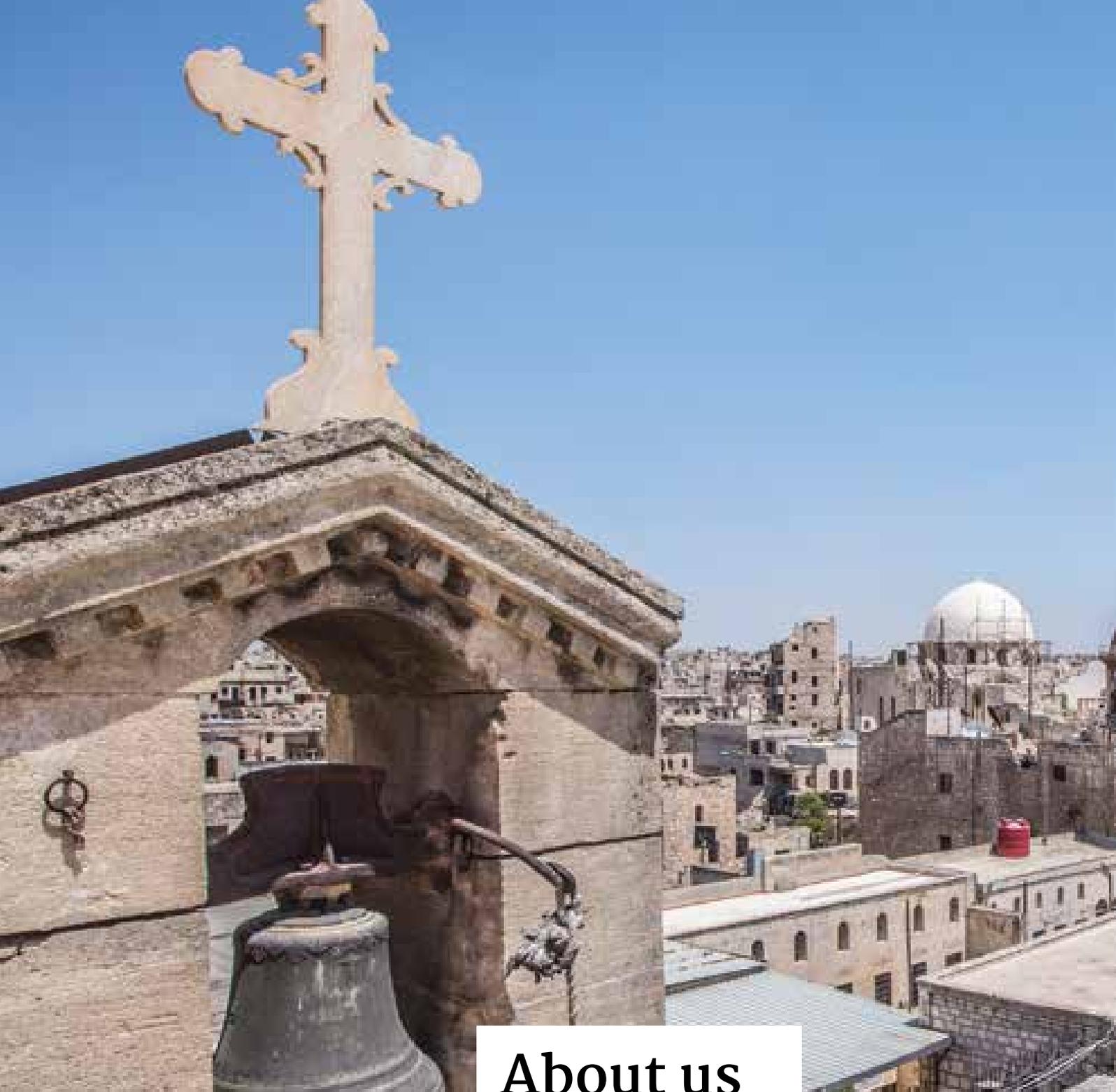
Dear friends, may the Lord make your prayers and your commitment to the mission of the Church always nurture more fruit throughout the world, especially where it is suffering from spiritual and material needs or is discriminated against and persecuted.

I cordially bless you all.

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

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





About us

**Learn more about Aid to the Church in Need on the following pages:
How we were formed and the history of our success; what we are committed to; our funding priorities in 2018.**



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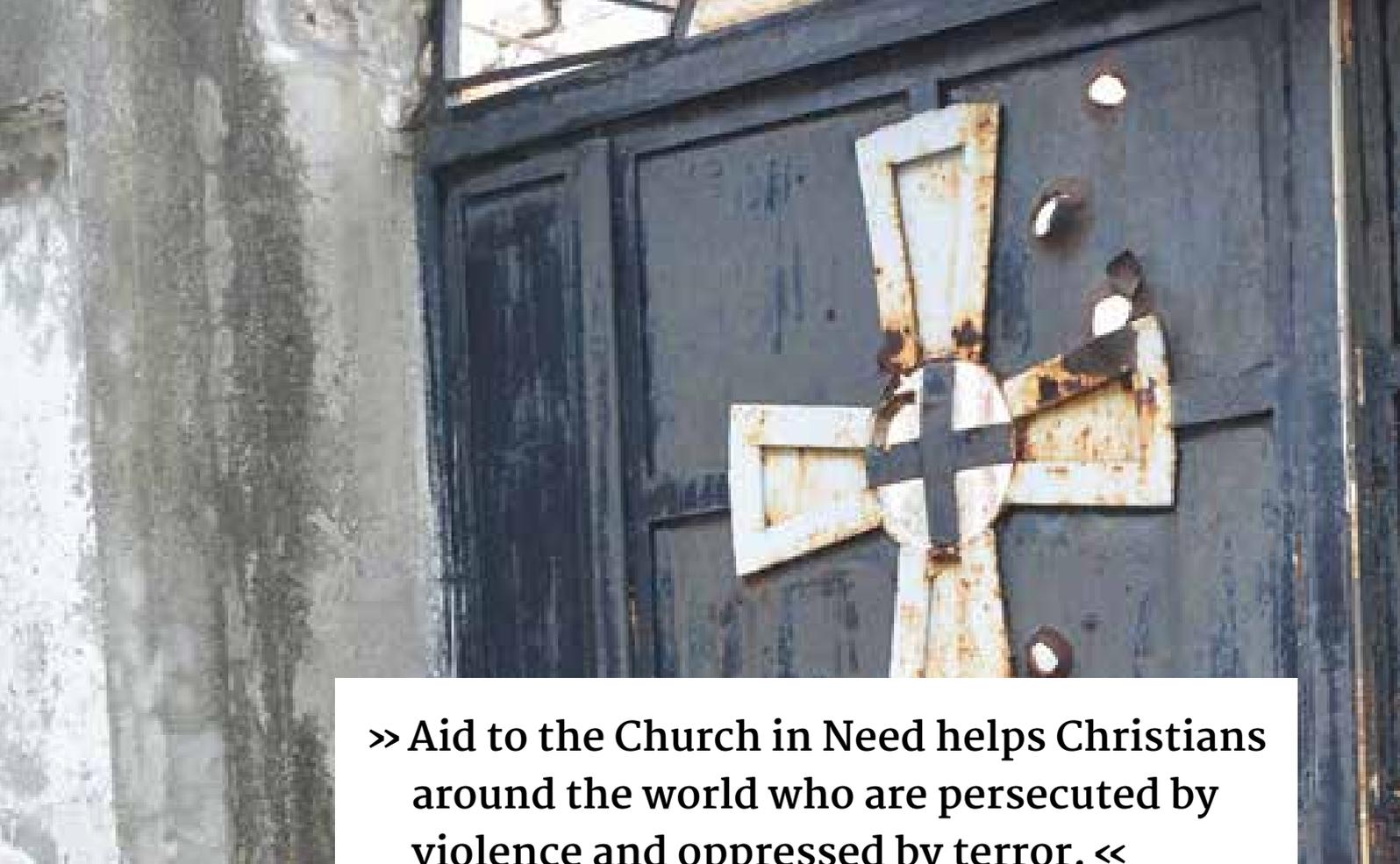
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>> Aid to the Church in Need helps Christians around the world who are persecuted by violence and oppressed by terror. <<

Thomas Heine-Geldern,
Executive President



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

But many do not realise that the Church itself often requires urgent help, mainly in developing countries and among those affected by displacement, persecution or catastrophe. The numbers speak volumes: in our world today, some 200 million people cannot freely exercise their faith. The fundamental right of religious freedom is not guaranteed in more than 80 countries.

Christians are currently persecuted, discriminated against or oppressed in more than 40 countries. Here the Church's infrastructure and the human dignity of the faithful cannot be maintained through their own resources, or if

so, only with great difficulty. In many of these countries, monetary donations are the only source of income for the Church.

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

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

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

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

Sr Annie Demerjian,
project partner, Syria



Church in Need – our name says it all

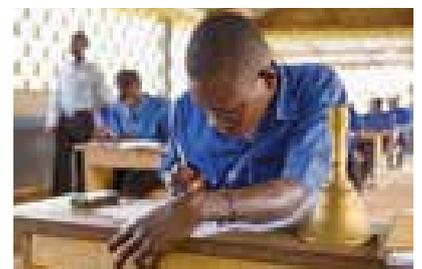
Over the 72 years since its foundation, Aid to the Church in Need has developed into an aid organisation with a broad range of tasks. Today, we can rightly claim that our name says it all. We now support some 5,000 Catholic projects each year in nearly 150 countries – many of these over the long term. In this way, we frequently remain in crisis areas much longer than other aid organisations.

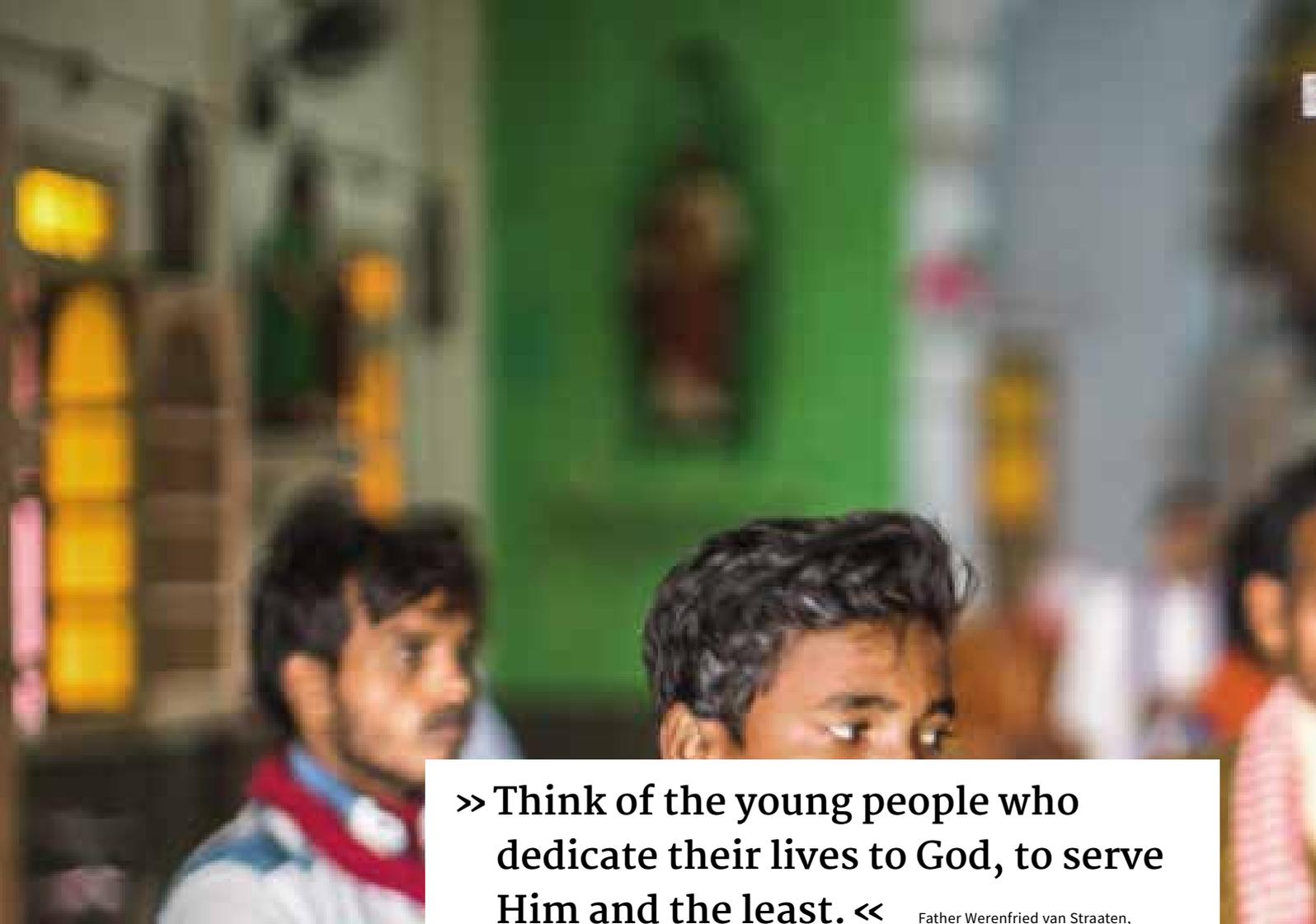
Of course, this requires not only personnel and logistical resources, but also the necessary financial means. Only through the donations of over 330,000 benefactors in 23 countries are we able to fulfil our mission of providing and promoting pastoral assistance.



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

-  Mass stipends (→ p. 19)
-  Training of priests and religious (→ p. 20)
-  Existence help for religious (→ p. 22)
-  Faith formation of laity (→ p. 23)
-  Construction and reconstruction of church facilities (→ p. 24)
-  Means of transport for pastoral care (→ p. 25)
-  Emergency assistance in cases of war, displacement, violence and natural catastrophes (→ p. 27)
-  Distribution of Bibles, religious books and media (→ p. 29)
-  Advocacy (→ p. 31)
-  Media support for the propagation of faith (→ p. 40)





>> Think of the young people who dedicate their lives to God, to serve Him and the least. <<

Father Werenfried van Straaten, founder of Aid to the Church in Need

The roots of Aid to the Church in Need go back to the period following the Second World War. Europe was in ruins; millions of people were displaced or in flight, often without shelter and plagued by hunger – with refugees from eastern Germany particularly affected.



Into this dark hour was born what was to become the life work of Father Werenfried van Straaten. In 1947, he founded the welfare organisation “Ostpriesterhilfe”, from which the charity Iron Curtain Church Relief, today’s Aid to the Church in Need, arose.

His relief association organised food and clothing for millions of eastern German refugees and provided spiritual care during this time of crisis. Initially the task seemed nearly impossible – especially considering that those from whom he sought donations were themselves victims of the German war occupation in Belgium and the Netherlands.

In his passionate appeals, Father Werenfried preached brotherly love and reconciliation, which ultimately triggered a wave of assistance. Since most people had little money, they donated food, including bacon. Before long, Father Werenfried became known as the “Bacon Priest”.





Charity as concretely lived faith

Under the leadership of Father Werenfried, the Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need was repeatedly successful in getting unique aid projects off the ground. For instance, priests with backpacks were sent on motorcycles and in VW Beetles to remote provinces, and chapel trucks were sent as mobile churches to displaced persons.

When the Cold War began in the 1950s, the charity launched an unprecedented campaign to lend support to the persecuted Catholic Church in countries behind the Iron Curtain. In the 1960s, aid programmes were extended to Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Thanks to the hundreds of thousands of benefactors of Aid to the Church in Need, annual donations total over 110 million Euros. The foundation is now active throughout the world. This success story proves once again how practical charity grows out of a lived faith.



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

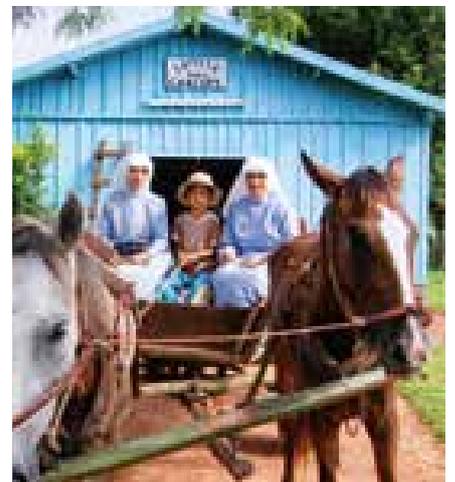


» Charity with efficiency and transparency. «

Regina Lynch, Director of Projects

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

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





Each year, we screen more than 7,500 aid project requests from 149 countries.

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

Our General Secretariat supports the fundraising efforts of the National Sections and annually screens about 7,500 aid applications from around the world, which are examined and either approved or rejected by the decision-making bodies. Our head office maintains contact with project partners in 149 countries, ensuring the appropriate use of donations.

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

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



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

Sr Hanan Youssef,
project partner, Lebanon



>> Under the guiding theme >Information – Prayer – Action<, we were able to support more than 5,000 projects worldwide in 2018. <<

In 2018, we received 7,607 applications for aid from all over the world. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we were able to finance activities amounting to €110.5 million.* The majority of these funds – 80.1% of the donations – went towards mission-related expenses, i.e. concrete project work, information, media support and prayer activities.

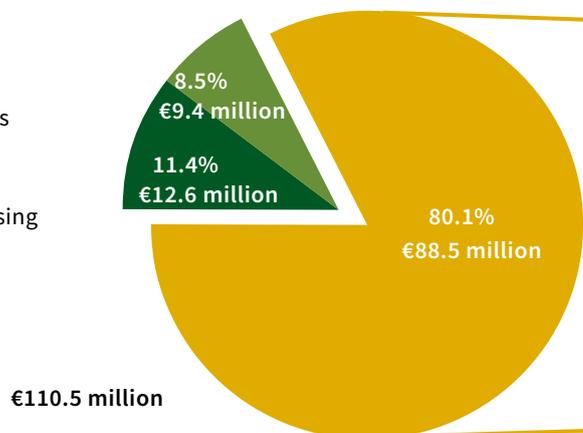
We keep the share of necessary expenditures for administration and fundraising as low as possible at 8.5% and 11.4%, respectively, so that as many resources as possible reach local Christians.

In 2018, we supported a total of 5,019 projects in 139 countries with approximately €75.5 million. With a further €13.0 million, we advocated the needs of disadvantaged and persecuted Christians worldwide.

Fluctuating legacy income fell by €11.7 million compared with the previous year, so that we were able to finance fewer projects in 2018. All the more reason for us to be pleased that the current level of income from donations has remained stable. We are building our project commitments for the future on this basis.

Detailed use of funds (2018)

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



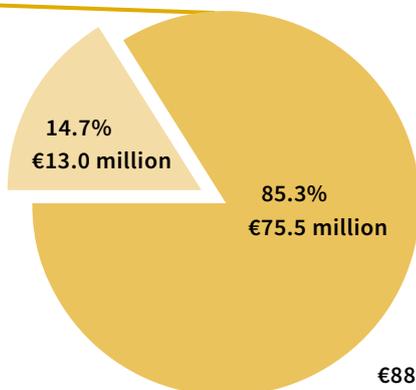
*In addition, ACN spent €3.4 million on self-financing activities, including the sale of religious articles and books (→ p. 30 ff.).



Facts and figures*

- Offices in **23** countries
- More than **330,000** donors worldwide per year
- 111,108,825** euros in donations and other income
- Use of **2.8** million euros in surpluses from previous years
- Project partners in **139** countries
- 5,019** projects supported worldwide
- 80.1%** of the funds used are allocated to mission-related expenses

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

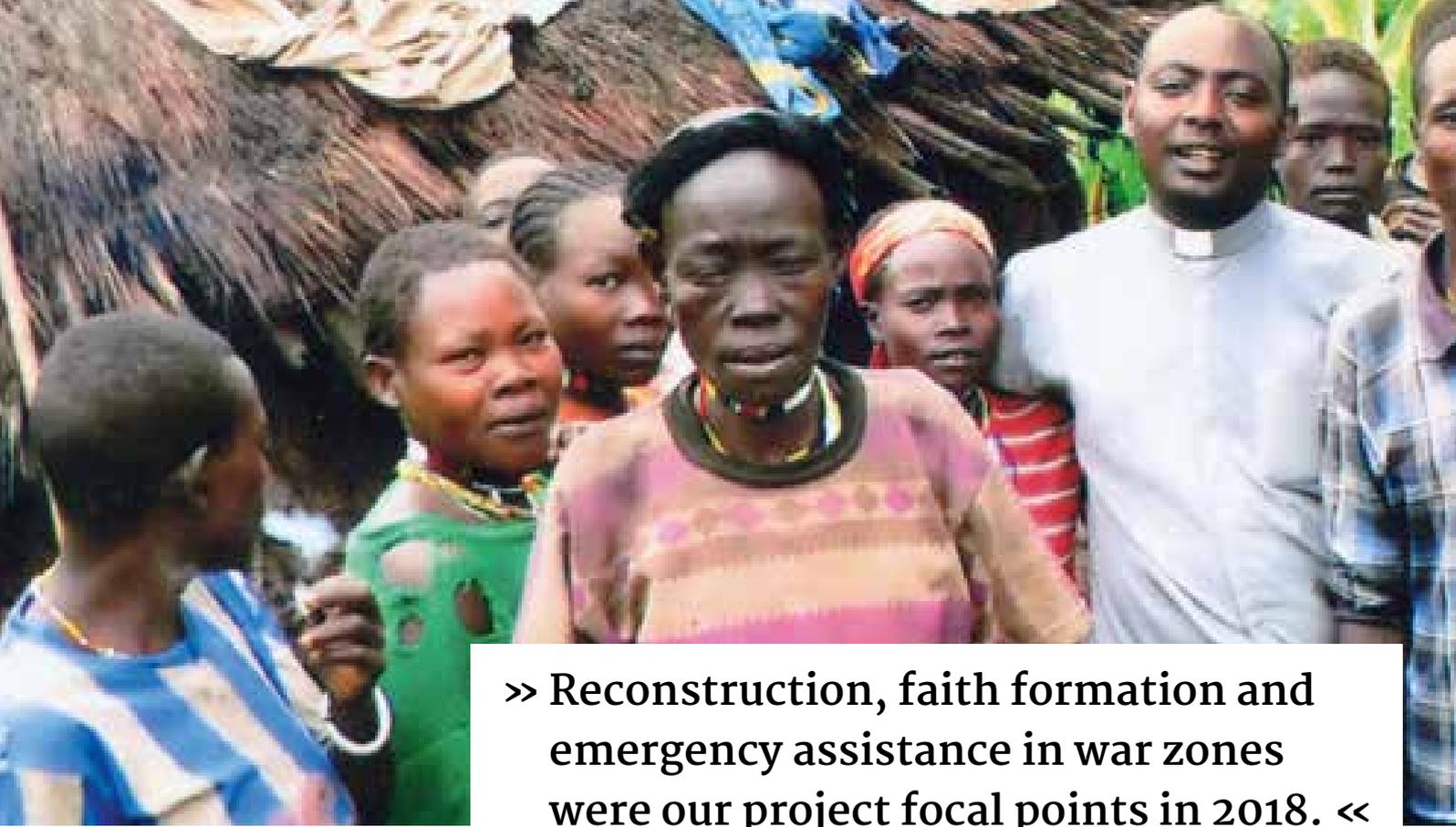


Mission-related expenditures (2018)

- Project work (→ p. 16ff.)
- Information, proclamation of faith and advocacy for discriminated and persecuted Christians (→ p. 30ff.)

€88.5 million

**Valid as of 2018



» Reconstruction, faith formation and emergency assistance in war zones were our project focal points in 2018. «

The projects we support are primarily of a pastoral nature. In 2018, about one-third of the outlays were used for the construction of seminary buildings and the construction and reconstruction of churches and church facilities.

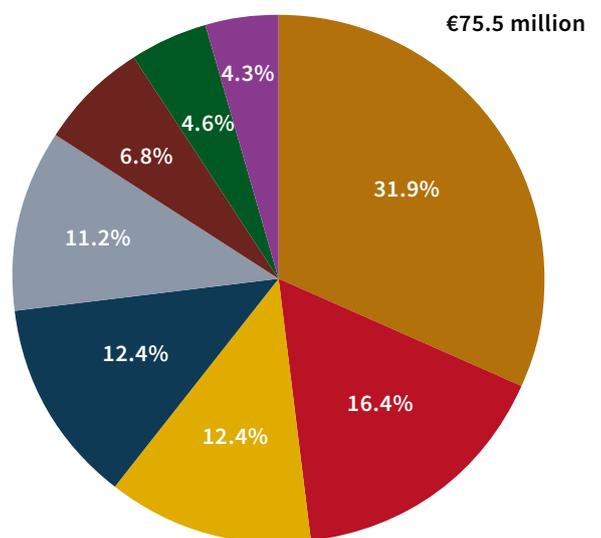
More than one-fifth of our project budget was used for training priests and sisters, as well as for the further education of priests and faith formation of the laity.

At just under one-eighth, a considerable portion of our funding was also used for emergency aid, including for numerous victims in crisis areas in the Middle East.

An important constant is also our funding of Mass stipends: in 2018, we awarded €12.4 million in Mass stipends to priests around the world.

Aid granted by type of help (2018)

- Construction and reconstruction (→ p. 24) 
- Mass stipends (→ p. 19) 
- Emergency assistance (→ p. 27) 
- Training of priests and religious (→ p. 20) 
- Faith formation of laity (→ p. 23) 
- Means of transport for pastoral care (→ p. 25) 
- Distribution of Bibles, religious books and media (→ p. 29) 
- Subsistence help for religious (→ p. 22) 





>> Our relief measures start with close dialogue with the local churches. <<

In 2018, regional focal points for our aid projects were placed in the Middle East and Africa. In all our project work, dialogue with the local Church is particularly important to us because the local bishops and religious know best where the need is greatest and which relief measures must be taken. We consider it our task to support the Church, particularly in those places where Christians suffer from war, oppression, persecution and violence.

Unfortunately, a hotspot in 2018 was once again the Middle East, where the faithful are daily exposed to the arbitrariness and violence of the Daesh and other Islamist groups in many places. Therefore, aid projects for Syria and Iraq will continue to be high on our agenda.

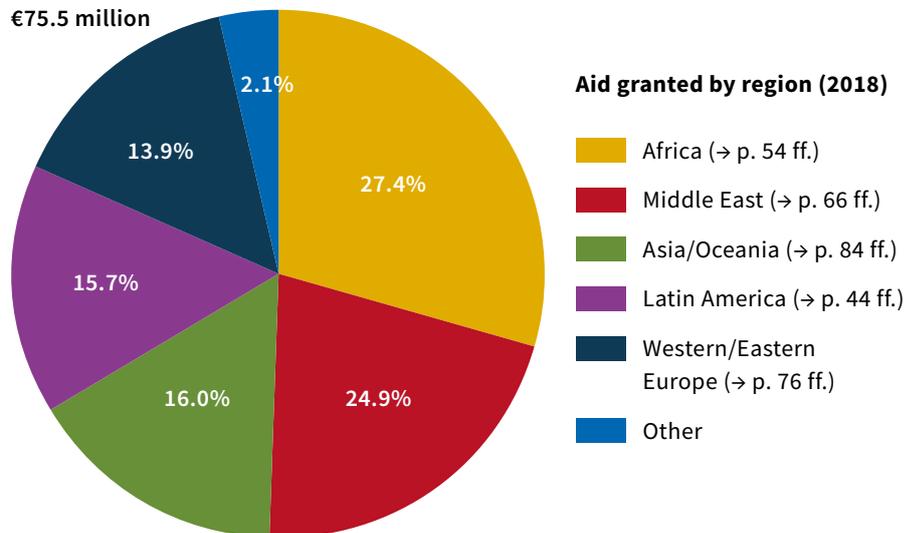
Christians in many countries in Africa also suffer from the persecution and violence of radical Islamism. At the same time, Africa is the continent with the strongest growth in believers. Our funding for Africa takes these developments into account, as more than a quarter of our overall project budget went to the local churches of African countries in 2018.

In Asia, on the other hand, our priority is in regions such as Pakistan and the Philippines, where radical Islamism is also on the rise.

We are also active in India, where an increasingly radical Hinduism persecutes and oppresses the Christian minority with violence in many places.

China, Vietnam and Laos, which have suffered under communist power structures for decades, also remain on our list.

€75.5 million



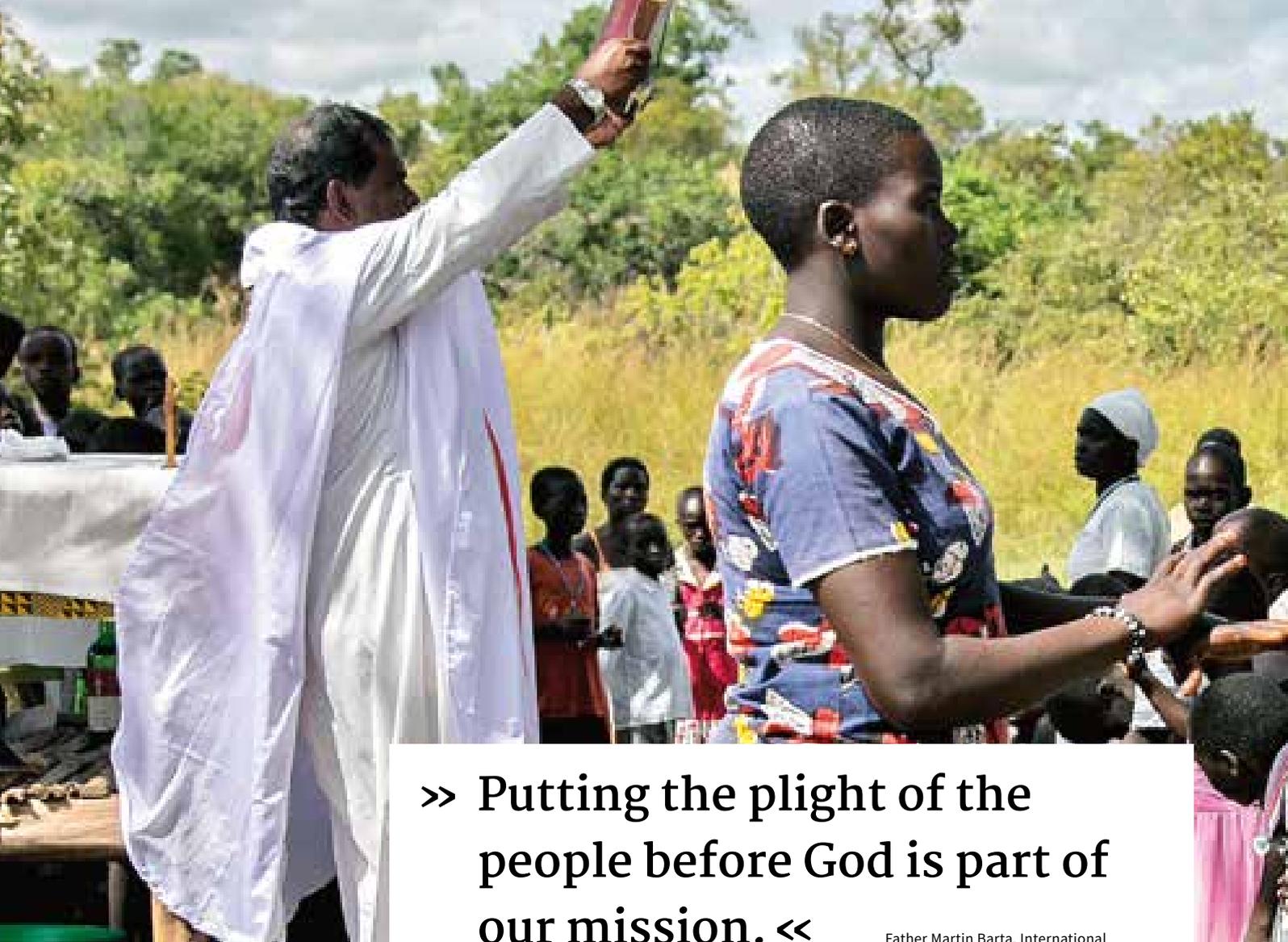


Our task areas

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



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- pp. 40–41 CRTN – Media support for the propagation of faith



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

Father Martin Barta, International Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Foundation

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



Despite his paraplegia, Father Leite from Brazil describes himself as a happy priest. ACN supports him with Mass stipends.



Mass with Bishop Vieira in Samai, Benin.



Mass stipends

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

In 2018, a total of 1,421,001 Holy Masses were celebrated in the intentions of our benefactors. In this way, we were able to support a total of 40,569 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, 38% of the Mass stipends went to Africa, 26% to Asia and the Near and Middle East, 15% to Latin America and 21% to Central and Eastern Europe.

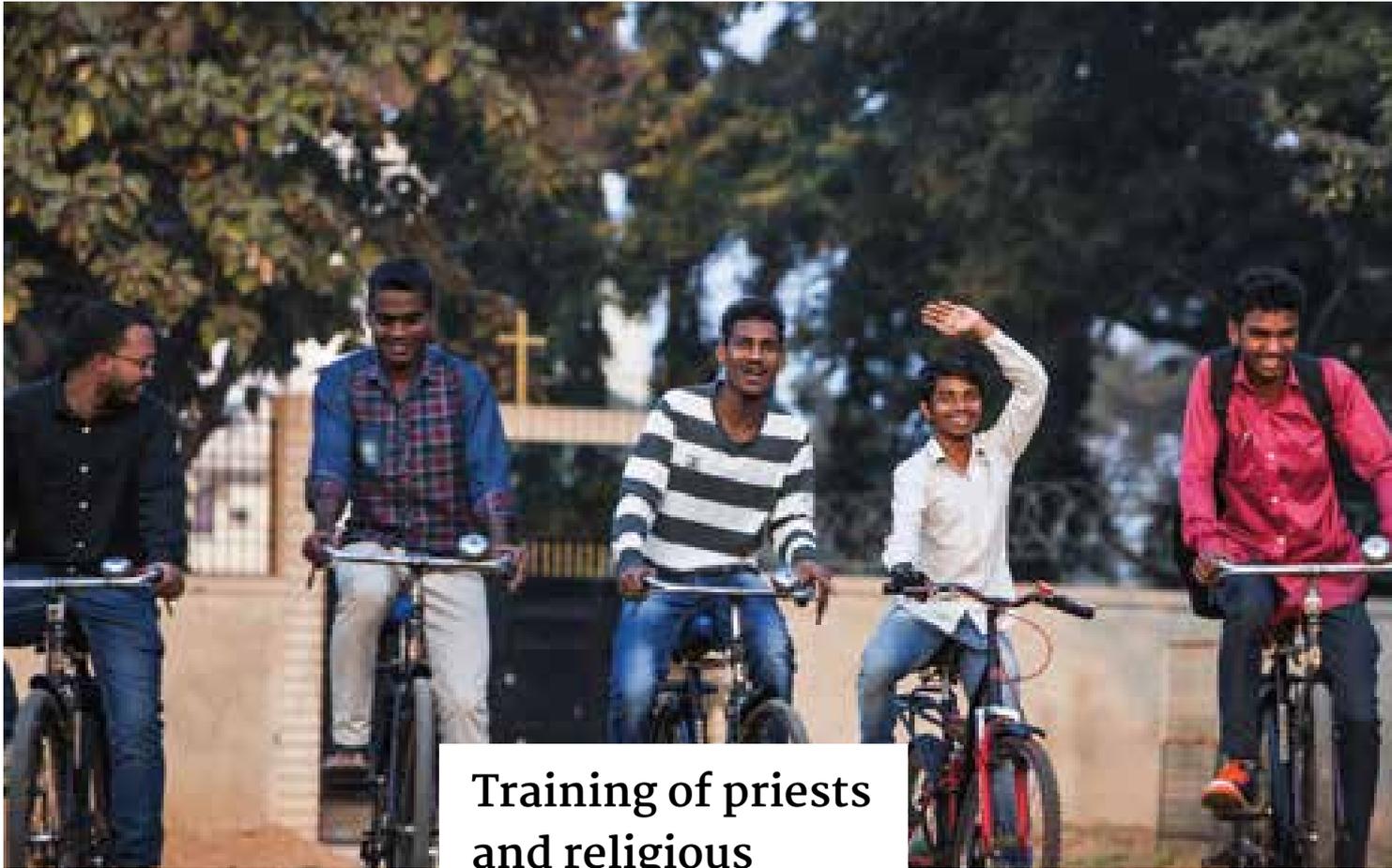
>> For some priests, Mass stipends are the only source of income. <<

By focusing Mass prayers on deceased or sick relatives, on people who are experiencing life crises or on certain issues our donors may be facing, they take part in the Eucharistic celebration in a very special way. With this kind of donation, many of our benefactors recognise the profound spiritual purpose of uniting their charity with Church prayers. On average, a Holy Mass is held every 22 seconds for the intentions of ACN benefactors somewhere in the world.

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



With Mass stipends, we support the livelihoods of priests worldwide, like here in the Moita Bwawani Mission, 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.

In 2018, we supported a total of 11,817 seminarians. Thanks to the generosity of our benefactors, we have been able to fund every tenth seminarian worldwide.

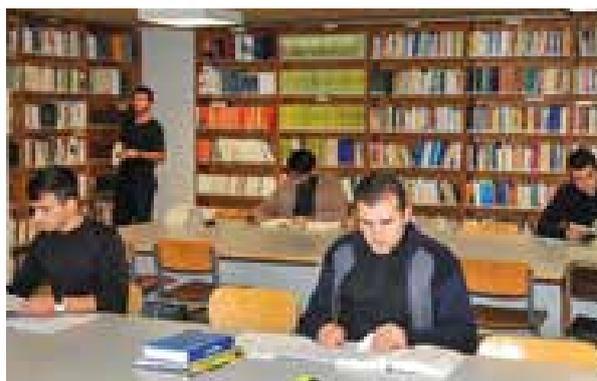
The continuing education of God's servants is also an important concern to us. In the reporting year, we sponsored the continuing education of 4,370 priests who themselves will train seminarians and thus maintain the qualitative level of priestly formation in their home countries over the long term.

In addition, we were able to offer financial support to courses and retreats, through which a total of 4,397 priests could gather strength and grow in wisdom towards a daily renewal of their vocation.

It is always a great pleasure when bishops report to us, full of pride and gratitude, that scholarship holders have successfully completed their studies. In 2018, we continued this commitment.

In this way, we were able to award 406 scholarships to priests who, for example, are earning a doctorate or completing an additional degree course to become lecturers in priestly formation or in other fields that require a higher academic degree or additional study. The scholarship holders received their training at universities or institutions in Italy, Belgium, France, Germany, Austria, Spain, Poland and Canada.

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



Joint training of seminarians from Albania and Kosovo.



Theology students at St. Joseph's Seminary in the Diocese of Multan, Pakistan.

In terms of continental distribution, 30% of our scholarship holders came from Asia, 42% from Africa, 20% from Latin America and 8% from Eastern Europe. We receive many strong applications each year, and we are continually faced with challenges in selecting and deciding who will receive scholarships.

On the one hand, we would like to do justice to the special requirements and needs of the diocese, the order or the congregation that applies for a scholarship from us for their candidate. Often it is important to close gaps in the teaching staff at the seminary or to train a new novice mistress for a growing community of nuns.

On the other hand, there is also the question of the personal, intellectual or spiritual maturity of priests or sisters who are to be released from their function to undergo further theological or philosophical training. In the end, the scholarship holders will be living away from their normal environment for a long time in a country whose language they have often only recently learned. In addition, there are frequent issues such as health problems, homesickness or obstacles to obtaining a visa.

>> Awarding a scholarship is special, because in contrast to all other types of projects, the project partner, the student, is one hundred percent responsible for whether the project bears fruit one hundredfold, fiftyfold or not at all. <<

Peter Rettig, Head of section († 2017)



Fr. Anthony Hasdak received a five-semester scholarship to the University of Santo Tomas in Manila, Philippines.



Existence help for religious



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

In 2018 alone, we supported 11,046 religious sisters from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America in their valuable work.

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

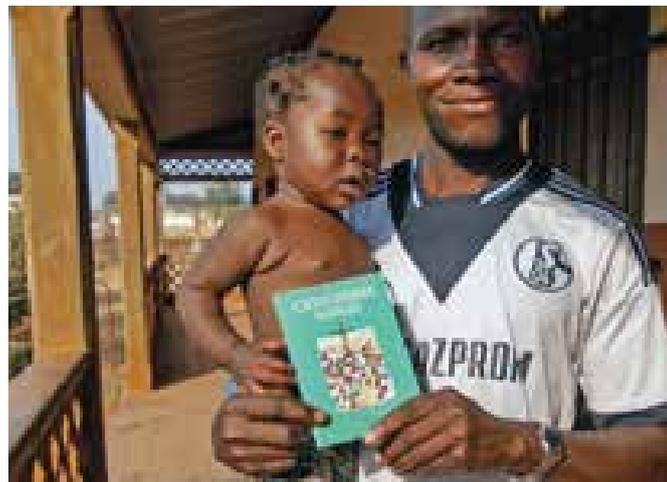
Regina Lynch, Director of Projects



Faith formation of laity

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

With our help, more than 14,169 laypersons were supported in their faith formation in 2018.



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

Dolores Soroa Suárez de Tangil,
 benefactress, Spain



» Faith and a good organisation together can move mountains. «

Eric Dupont, Director of Administration

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



Construction and reconstruction of church facilities

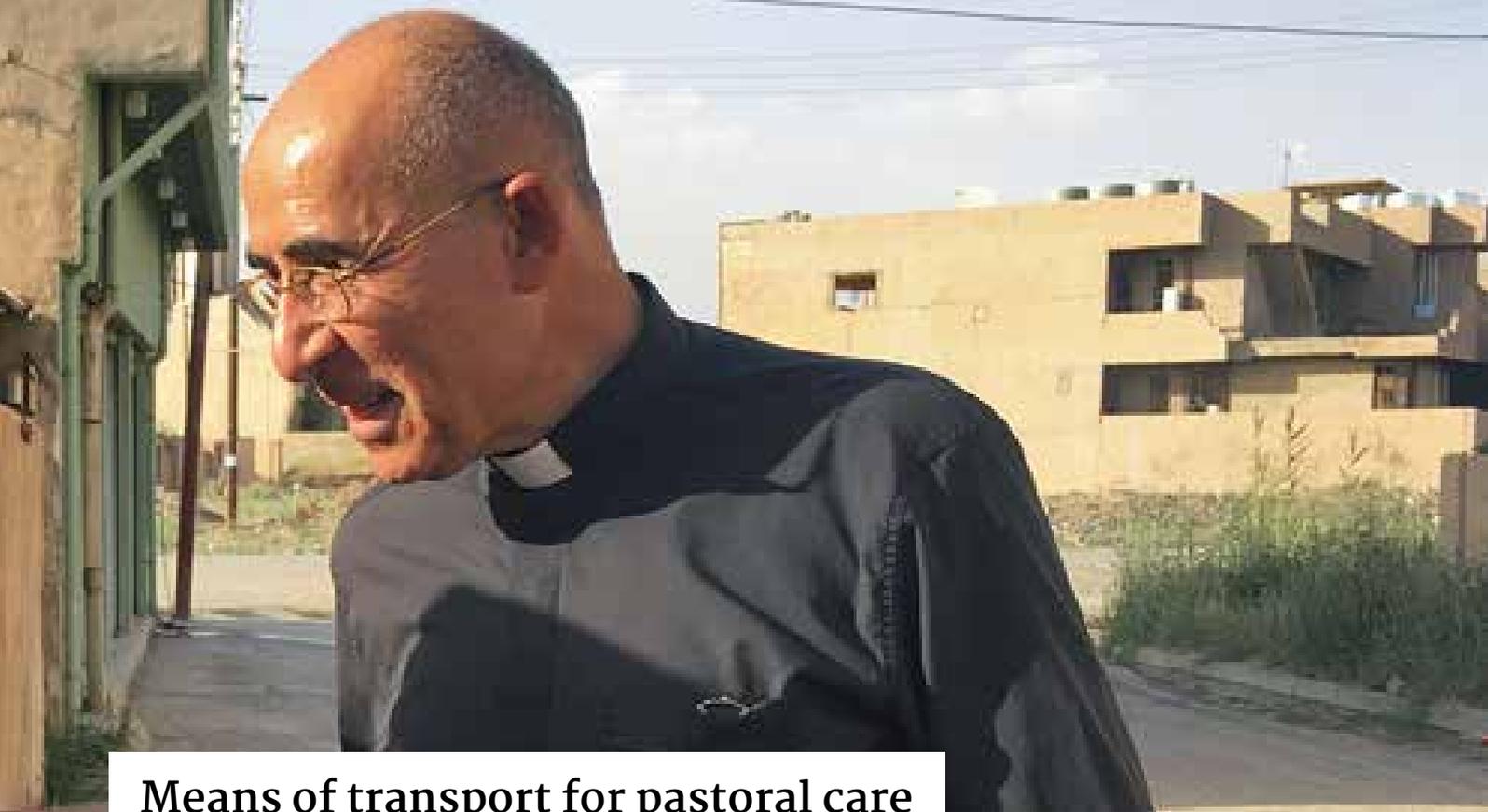


Especially in crisis areas, churches and ecclesiastical institutions are often destroyed by violence. We support reconstruction in these areas, as the Church is the centre of the life of faith and a sign of hope.

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

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

991 such buildings were constructed or repaired with our help in 2018 alone.



Means of transport for pastoral care

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

We receive applications to fund vehicular purchases from every continent. Applications include requests for the purchase of trucks, cars, motorcycles, bicycles, boats, or in particularly difficult mountain regions, mules. In 2018 alone, 373 cars, 189 motorcycles, 342 bicycles and two boats were financed.





>> For us, the greatest conceivable catastrophe would be not to act. << Philipp Ozores, Secretary General





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

 Emergency assistance for refugees is deeply rooted in the history of our relief organisation. Already in the 1950s, the founder of Aid to the Church in Need, Father Werenfried van Straaten, carried out pioneering work in supporting displaced persons.

in many other parts of the world as well: 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.

The bitter truth is that there are more refugees worldwide than ever before. 68.5 million people are currently fleeing war and violence around the world; of these, 16 million alone are in the Middle East.

Our great financial commitment to refugees and displaced persons in the Middle East is not only a response to their pressing need, but also a contribution to stop the wave of Christian emigration and thus ensure the continuity of Christianity in the region (for more information, see the Middle East chapter starting on page 70).

But we support Christians who have been persecuted and expelled for their beliefs

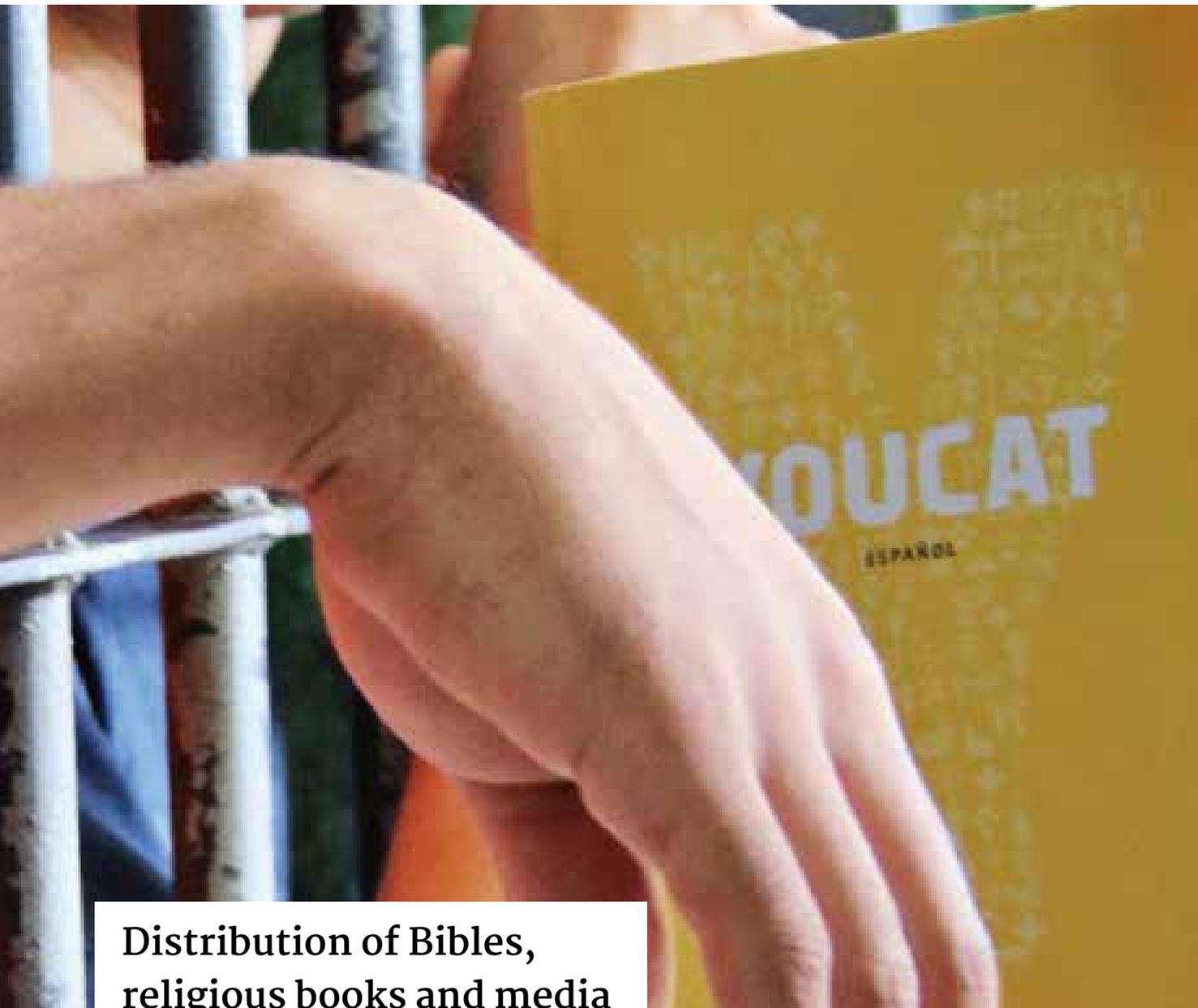




>> For some children the Bible is the only picture book that they can get hold of. <<

Fr. Martin Barta, International Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Foundation





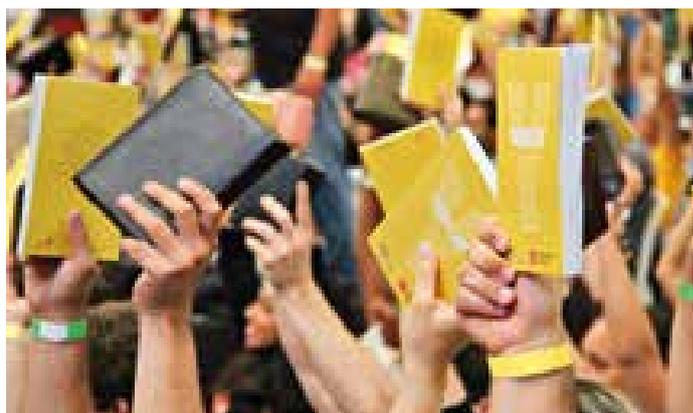
Distribution of Bibles, religious books and media

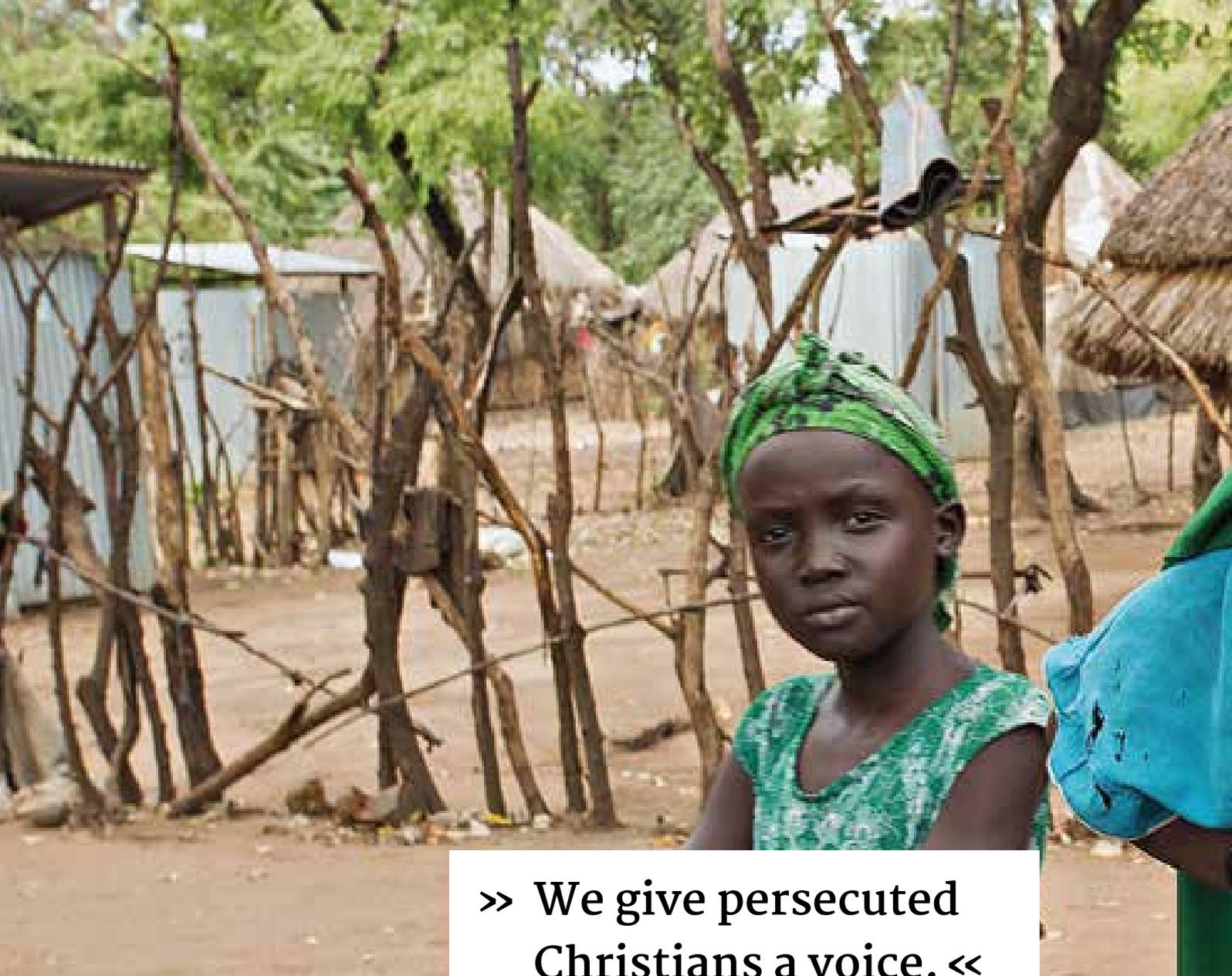
 “Go out into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to all creation,” Jesus said. Aid to the Church in Need takes this assignment literally. For instance, since 1979, our organisation has been a publisher and global supplier of the Child’s Bible, which has been translated into 191 languages and has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

In 2018 alone, 1.1 million religious books were produced and distributed with the help of ACN.

In addition, Aid to the Church in Need promotes YOUUCAT, the illustrated Youth

Catechism of the Catholic Church, which is now available in 47 languages. Since 2016, our foundation has also been the publisher of DOCAT, a modern translation of the social teachings and doctrine of the Catholic Church. You can find more information about YOUUCAT and DOCAT on pages 38 to 39.





» We give persecuted Christians a voice. «

Thomas Heine-Geldern,
Executive President

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

These materials are provided to the National Sections to forward to the local media, including radio and television stations. With information campaigns, publications, events and conferences, the 23 National Sections advocate the welfare of the Church around the world. We also assist with the construction of radio stations and oversee the training of media professionals in the service of evangelisation.

As the “advocate of Christians”, we raise the voice for disadvantaged and persecuted Christians in many urgent cases.

We have already been able to galvanise key people in positions of responsibility with our plea for more humanity and charity. Much of our advocacy work is made possible by maintaining contacts on visits of project partner delegations and also by providing high-quality information. As a result, over the past few years, we have gained a high level of trust and a good reputation among politicians from the EU and other parts of the world. This helps us to launch projects and win over fellow campaigners.



Advocate for Christians in need.



With a donation volume of 110 million euros, a good deal of need can be alleviated, but more is required to create a real difference in the world. One means of leverage is the information and motivation of governmental and transnational agencies which can then support larger projects. ACN acts as an advocate of brotherly love and Christians in need, or as ACN Executive President Thomas Heine puts it: “We offer persecuted Christians a voice.”

ACN does not accept government funding, but is able to bring together governments that show a genuine interest in religious freedom and Christian aid with reliable local partners. With the help of this concept, we were able to raise considerable sums for project partners through our mediation efforts: The USA provided 197 million dollars, Germany 35

million euros, Hungary 15 million euros, Italy and the Netherlands 2 million euros each and Austria 1 million euros. These funds were primarily made available to alleviate the plight of Christians in Iraq and to improve their situation.

Perhaps nothing moves us more than the personal experiences of those affected. That is why the ACN Public Affairs team took part in international congresses, symposia and conferences, where the situation of Christians was mostly presented with concrete witness reports, in line with the motto “Do good and talk about it”: For example, at the annual meeting of the European People’s Party (EPP), which represents the largest political group in the European Parliament; or at the meeting of the Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice Foundation, an international organisation of Catholic economists and bankers. In addition, special

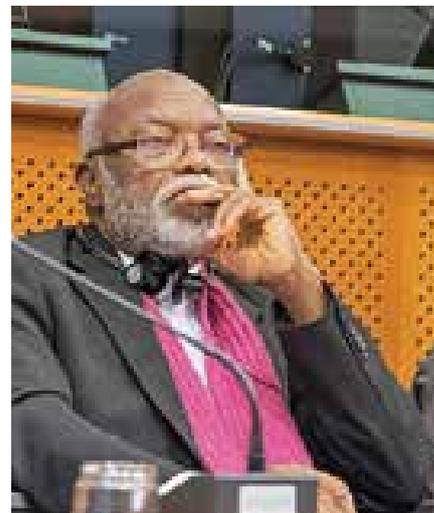
ambassadors for religious freedom were informed, who in turn referred to ACN’s work at international meetings.

The key objective is always to ensure synergistic effects and meet multipliers who can inform the world of opinion leaders in and beyond the media about the plight of Christians and thus mobilise them for dialogue and action.





Mourad Wahba, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations, in conversation with ACN delegates on 26.02.2018 in New York.



October

ACN met with Bishop Aguirre of the Central African Republic for a discussion in Madrid, followed by a meeting in Lisbon for the annual meeting of the Intercultural Dialogue Group of EPP members in the European Parliament. This was followed by our participation in meetings of the U.S. Federal Government on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the International Religious Freedom Act.

November

ACN representatives were present in many locations to launch the “Religious Freedom in the World Report 2018”. These included numerous Red Wednesday events at symbolic cathedrals and monuments, as well as participation in prayer vigils and processions at more than 50 locations. The media response was stronger than ever.

December

In Rome, we visited Pope Francis for the start of the Christmas campaign “Candles for Peace in Syria”. To draw politicians’ attention to the fact that children are also victims of the Syrian war, ACN, together with the Embassy of Poland to the Holy See, held a conference with 30 EU ambassadors.

February

ACN visited the Danish Special Envoy for International Religious Freedom. Travel then continued to Lithuania to organise a hearing at Parliament. This was followed by a Nineveh Reconstruction Project meeting with Mourad Whaba, who represented the Arab states at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in New York.

March

An ACN delegation visited the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, where we provided information on the situation of Christians in the Central African Republic.

May

At the invitation of the Religious Freedom Institute, we travelled to Washington to inform members of Congress on Capitol Hill about our work and to solicit aid for reconstruction efforts in Iraq.

June

We took part in a meeting in Baghdad with the head of the agency US-AID and other aid organisations. We discussed the current progress of reconstruction and repatriation aid for Christians in Iraq and the planning of further concrete measures.

July

ACN travelled to The Hague to establish a special tribunal for Daesh war crimes. We also attended a conference in Washington for a ministerial meeting on religious freedom.

August

In Rome, ACN was one of the participants in the meeting of the International Catholic Legislators Network, which brings together some 100 legislative bodies from 30 countries.



Guests at an ACN event in France for persecuted Christians.



Presentation of the ACN Religious Freedom Report on 24.11.2018 at the Presidential Palace in Malta.



Presentation of the ACN Religious Freedom Report on 04.12.2018 at the European Parliament in Brussels.



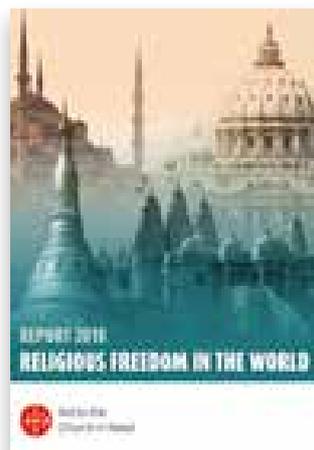
Faith needs freedom: the Religious Freedom Report

In November 2018, ACN's Religious Freedom in the World Report was published for the 14th time. ACN Italy published the first Religious Freedom Report in 1999. As always, the report notes whether religious freedom is upheld in comparison to other world religions and how the situation has developed over the past two years. 196 countries were examined.

The 2018 report is 880 pages long and available online in six languages at www.religious-freedom-report.org. It is one of four reports on the state of global religious freedom. The other three are published by the American Pew Research Center, the U.S. State Department and the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).

The ACN report is the only non-governmental report in Europe that takes Catholic social doctrine into account. The preface was written by Cardinal Nzapalainga of

the Central African Republic. The media response to the ACN report was enormous: More than 1,770 articles mentioned ACN and these reached 1.6 billion readers. This shows once again how strongly this issue currently moves people around the world – especially Christians, who are most affected by persecution and oppression.





Public relations

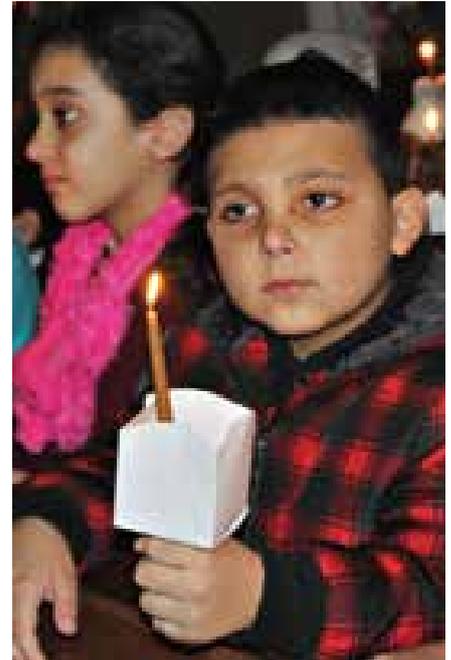
Whether media relations, global meetings, events, conferences or campaigns – ACN’s actions and public relations in 2018 were highly diverse. Here are some of the activities organised by the ACN headquarters or some of its 23 national offices.



Candles for Peace

At the end of November, more than 50,000 children from the war-torn cities of Aleppo, Damascus, Homs, Tartus, Hassaké and Marmarita in Syria took part in processions, plays and songs for peace. Previously, at the invitation of ACN International, they had painted scenes and prayers on lanterns and lampshades in schools and parishes to express their longing for peace and reconciliation. The paintings were then distributed to donors through ACN’s national offices, asking them to join in the children’s prayers for peace on the first Advent Sunday.

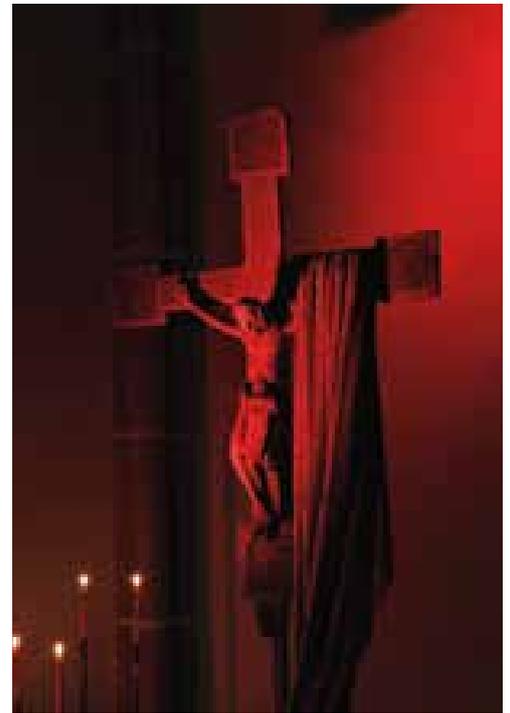
Impressions from the ACN Advent campaign “Candles for Peace”.



Pope launches ACN campaign

On the second Advent Sunday, during the Angelus on St. Peter’s Square, Pope Francis lit a candle depicting photos of needy children in Syria. With this action, he opened the ACN Advent campaign “Candles for Peace” to support Christians in the troubled country. Afterwards, 400 masses for

peace and the concerns of the Pope were celebrated in Syria, another 300 in Egypt, 250 on the Arabian Peninsula and 100 in Lebanon. At an international conference in Rome, ambassadors and participants were asked to light a virtual candle on ACN’s website www.candlesforpeace.org.

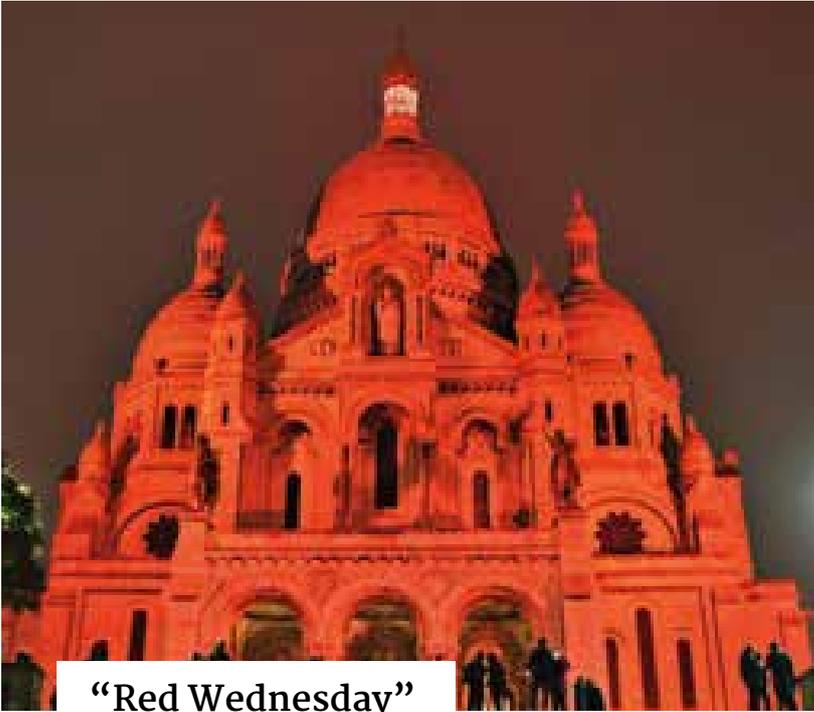


“Night of the Witnesses”

Ten years ago, ACN’s French national office began to commemorate the situation of oppressed and persecuted Christians with prayers and eyewitness accounts in a “Night of the Witnesses” (“La Nuit des Témoins”). In 2018, these were once again deeply moving hours. For instance, the Bishop of Cuernavaca in Mexico reported on

the critical situation of the Church, which in many places in Mexico has been put under pressure by the drug mafia and mourns a total of 55 murdered priests since 1990. The Coptic Catholic Bishop of Assiut in Egypt and a missionary from Algeria also enlightened others about the difficult situation and the suffering of Christians in their respective

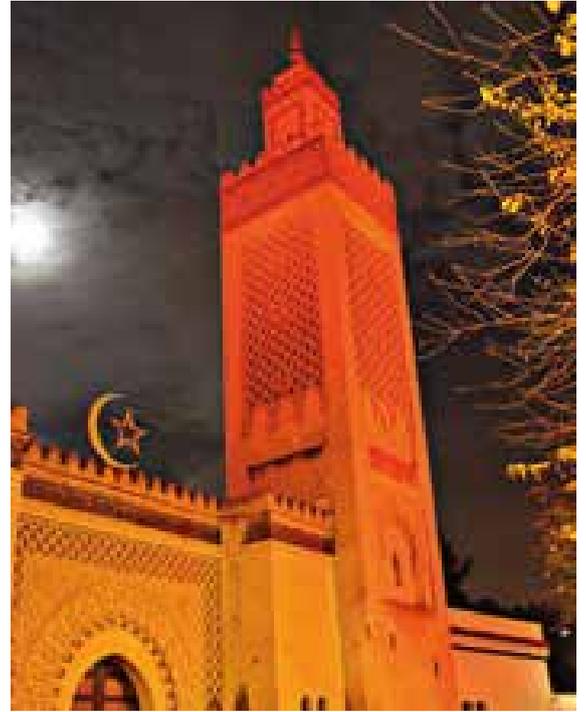
countries. Once again this year, the “Night of the Witnesses” was held in Notre Dame de Paris Cathedral and was repeated over the course of the year in other French cities. Luxembourg and Italy also celebrated a “Night of the Witnesses”. In 2019, ACN offices in Spain, the Netherlands, the Philippines and South Korea will organise similar commemorations.



“Red Wednesday”

As in previous years, symbolic sites were again illuminated in red in 2018 to commemorate the victims of religious persecution worldwide. This time, the campaign also coincided with the presentation of the new Religious Freedom Report. The ecclesiastical and secular sites in 2018 included the Grand Canal

in Venice, Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, Sacré Coeur and the Russian Orthodox Holy Trinity Cathedral in Paris, Westminster Cathedral in London, the cathedrals of Armagh, Galway, Waterford and Cobh in Ireland, the Cristo Rei statue in Almada near Lisbon, the Basilica of Our Lady in Maastricht, the Basilica of the



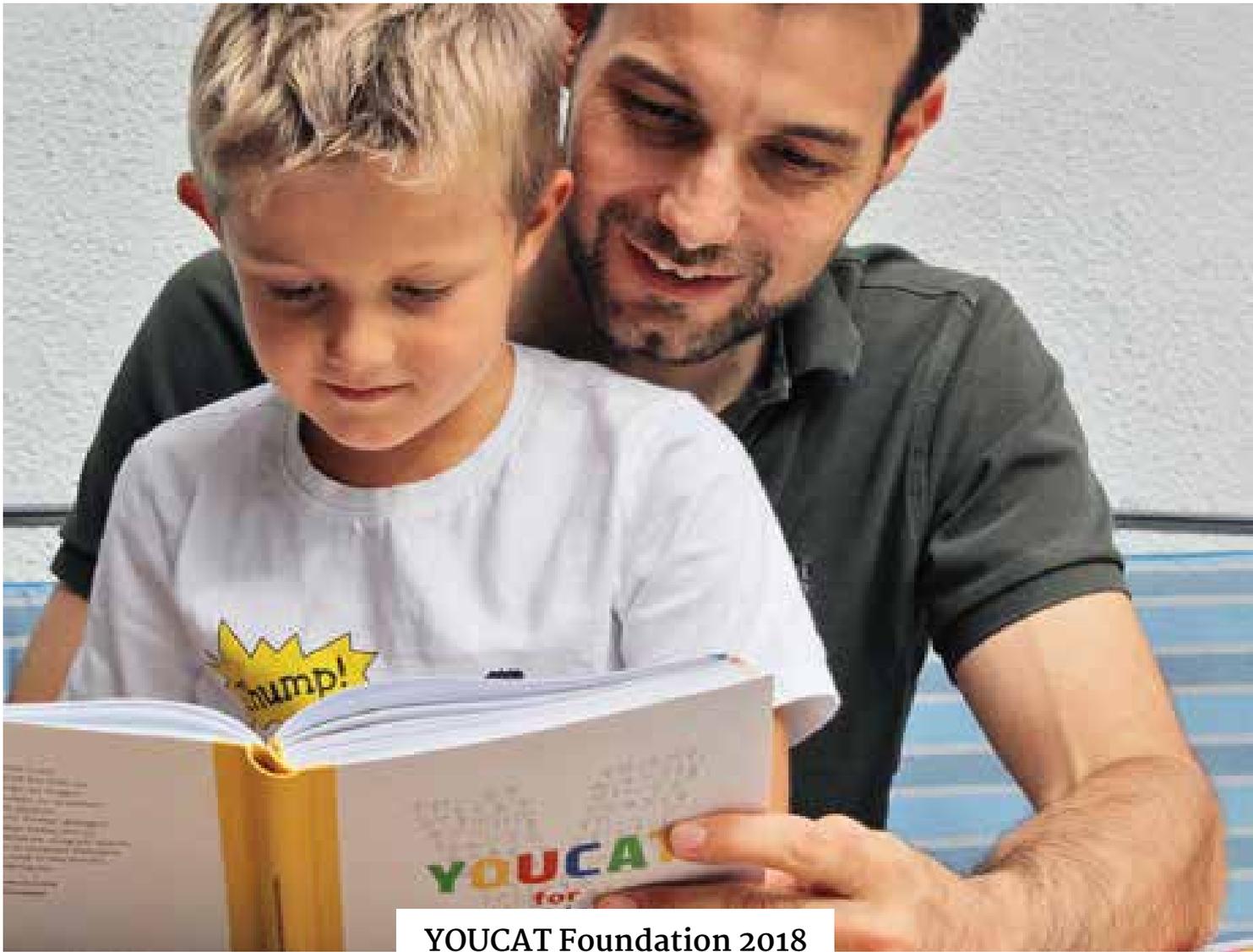
National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., St. Michael’s Cathedral Basilica in Toronto, Manila Cathedral and St. Mary’s Cathedral in Sydney, along with many others. The monuments and cathedrals were bathed in deep red light, becoming a sign of solidarity for persecuted Christians all over the world.



World Family Meeting in Dublin

“The family is the way of the Church,” wrote John Paul II, and it was under his papacy that the tradition of World Family Meetings began, which the Vatican now hosts every three years. Pope Francis, who likes to call the family a “masterpiece of God”, continued the tradition in Dublin in 2018. ACN was again involved, helping

poor families from Syria, Africa, Latin America and Asia to take part in the meeting. Upon their return, they will act as ambassadors and multipliers for family pastoral care in their countries. Thanks to ACN’s support, YOUCAT for Kids, the “little brother of the Youth Catechism YOUCAT”, was distributed to all participating families at the meeting in Dublin.



YOUCAT Foundation 2018

Since 2014, ACN has been the sole shareholder of the YOUCAT Foundation, which publishes YOUCAT, the Youth Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church, and DOCAT, a translation of the social teachings of the Catholic Church by and for young people. The publications are translated into a total of 40 languages.

In 2018, the new “YOUCAT for Kids – Catechism for Children and their Parents” was the focus of the project. Pope Francis personally presented the work to the international public at the World Family Meeting in Dublin. Along with books, a range of digital tools have recently been developed that enable young

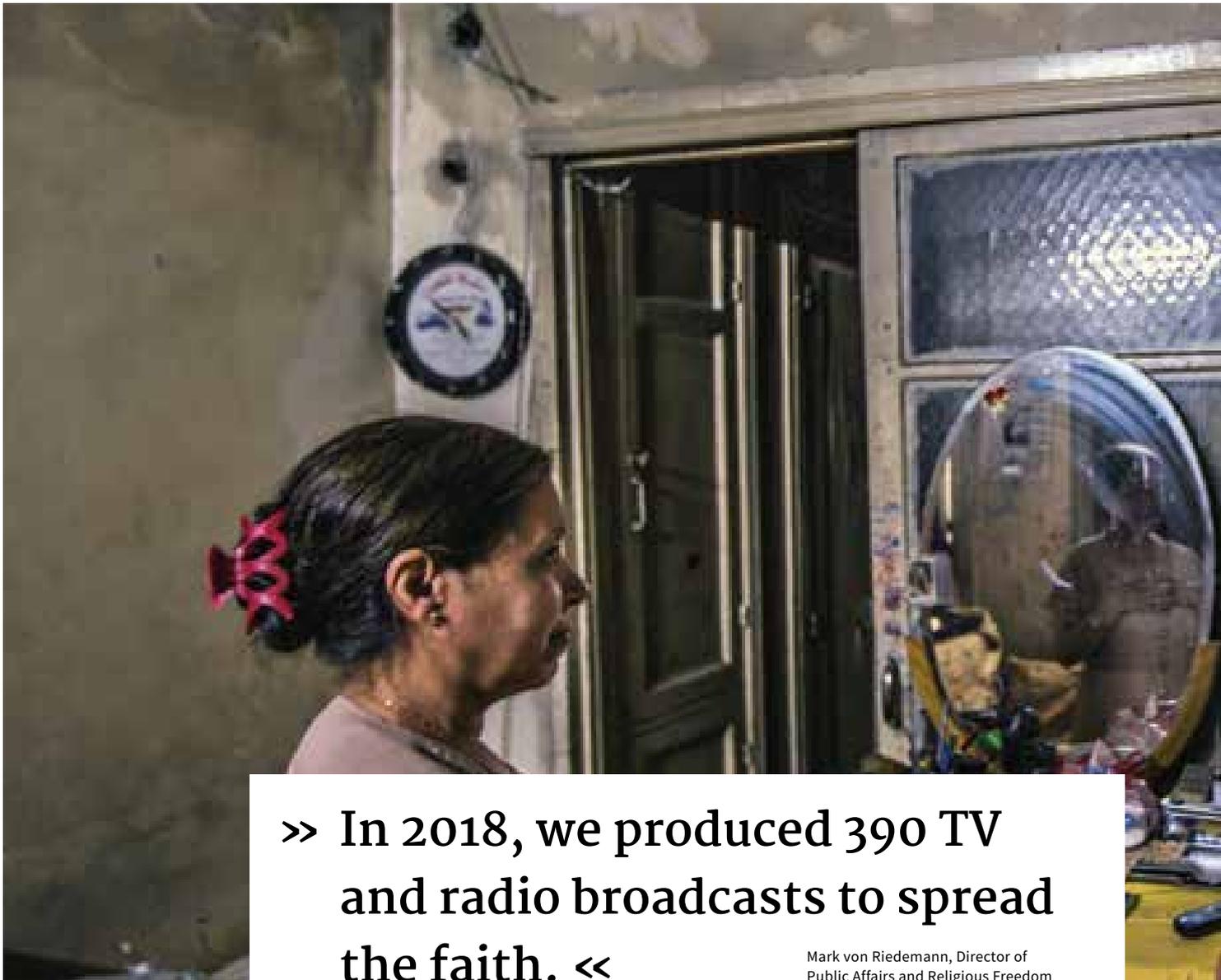




people to learn more about the faith. These include YOUCAT and DOCAT study guides and the free YOUCAT Daily app launched in December 2018, which sends a topic from the Catechism or Catholic social teaching to smartphones in five languages every day.

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





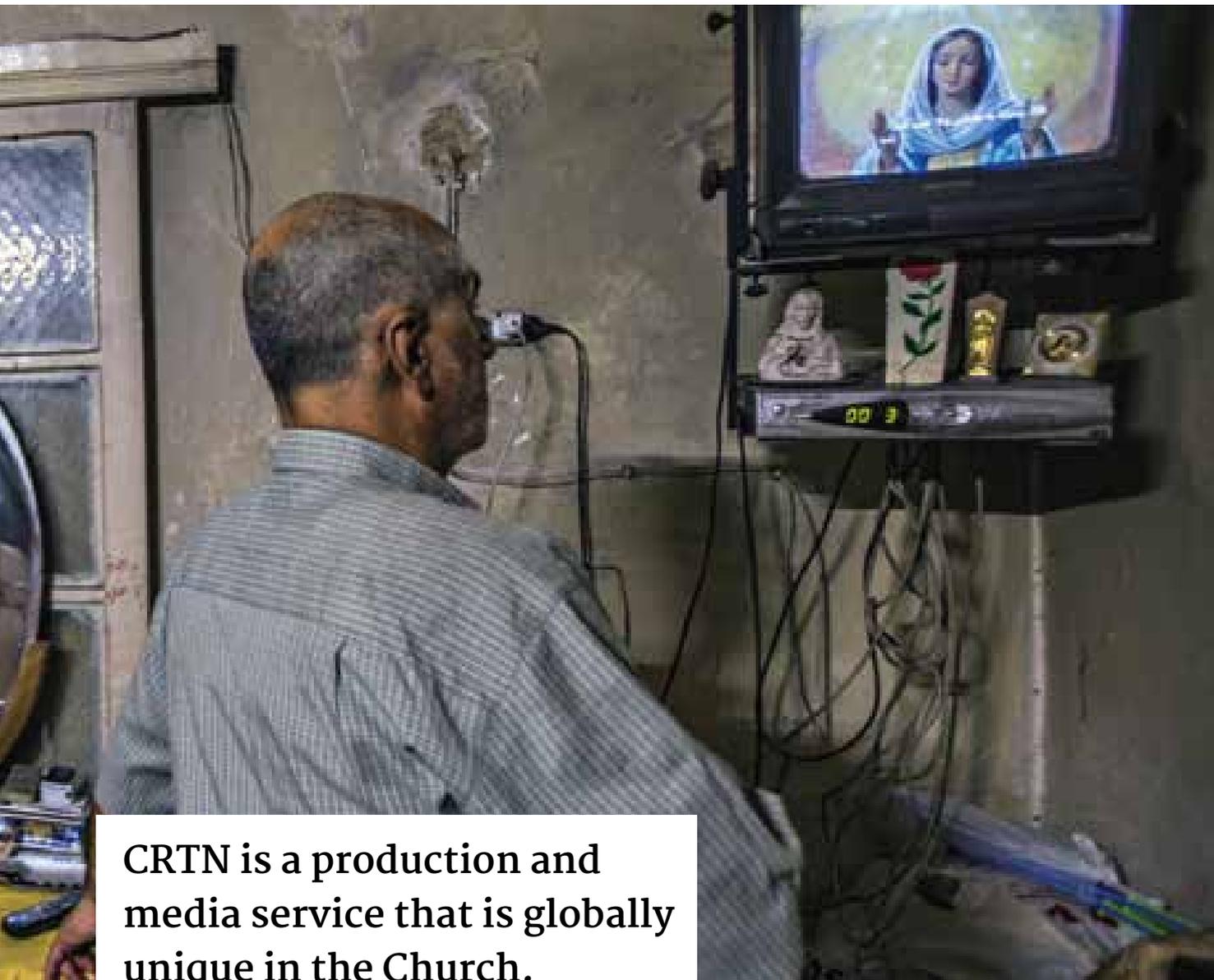
» In 2018, we produced 390 TV and radio broadcasts to spread the faith. «

Mark von Riedemann, Director of Public Affairs and Religious Freedom

Behind the Catholic Radio & Television Network (CRTN) is a modern production studio specialising in reports and documentaries on the Catholic Church in remote areas. The broadcasts primarily serve to support evangelisation efforts and promote solidarity with the suffering Church. Additionally, they further publicise the work of Aid to the Church in Need. Through our network, we are able to provide productions to TV and radio stations around the world. In 2018, the studio produced 390 TV and radio programmes in all language versions, which were then broadcast on 102 TV and 475 radio stations. In addition to documentary films and interview broadcasts such as “Where God Weeps” and “Donde Dios

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

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



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

 CRTN achieved record distribution in 2018 with documentary films alone: the broadcasts reached 102 television stations worldwide. These included seven TV stations in North America, ten in Europe, 55 in Latin America via SIPCATV and 23 TV channels in Russia via Blagovest-Media.

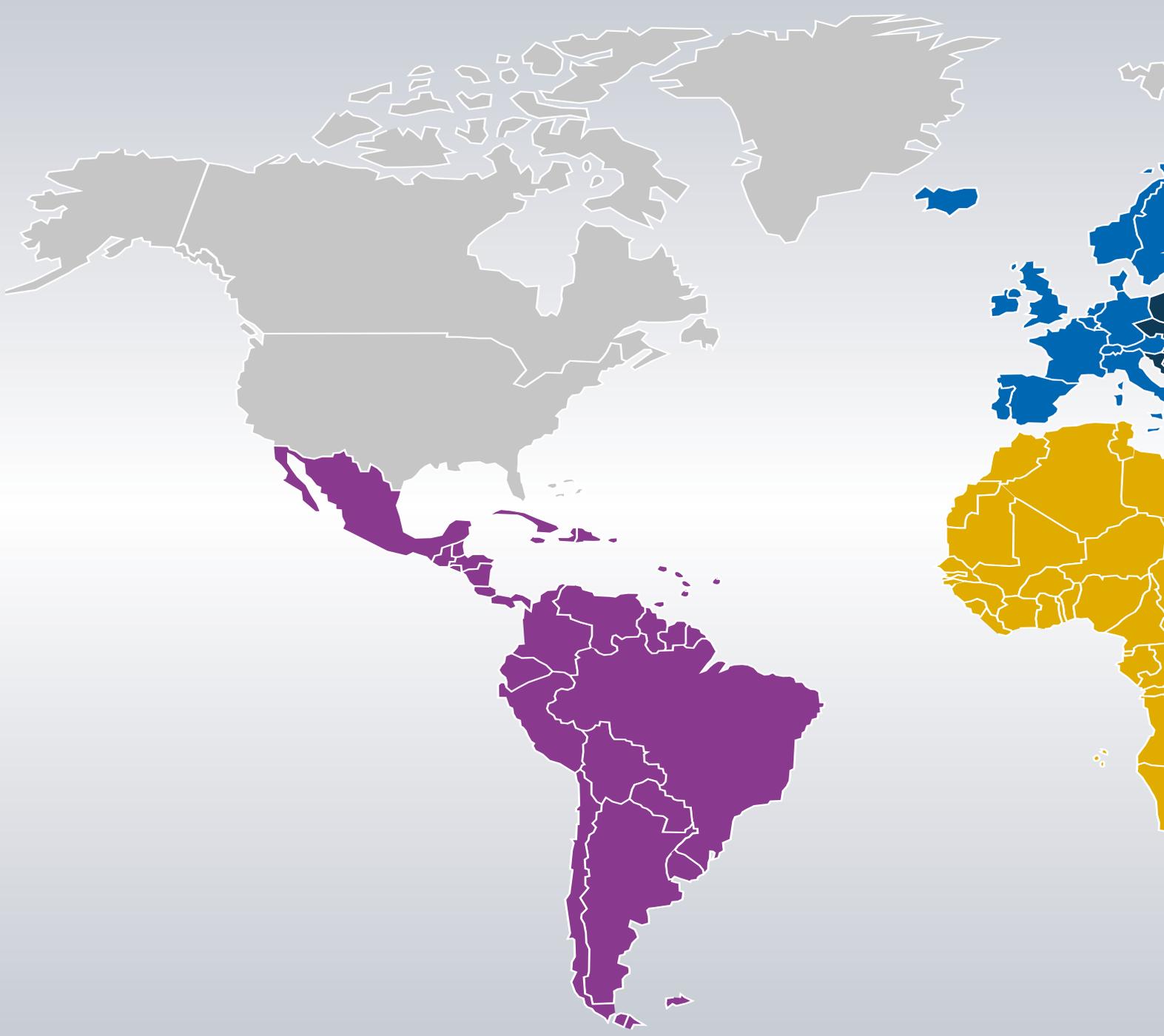
Every day, broadcasts reach tens of millions worldwide. In addition to production and distribution, CRTN also supports a number of worldwide TV distribution initiatives through consulting and programming services. What's more, CRTN established the global Catholic television resource network crtn.org 19 years ago, which gives Catholic produc-

ers 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 1,363 productions. In 2018, 274 producers and 140 television stations used this service, which is unique in the Church. A CRTN newsletter, a CRTN Facebook page with 2,000 followers and the CRTN YouTube channel round off our media service.

The CRTN YouTube Channel has had just 1,65 million views.





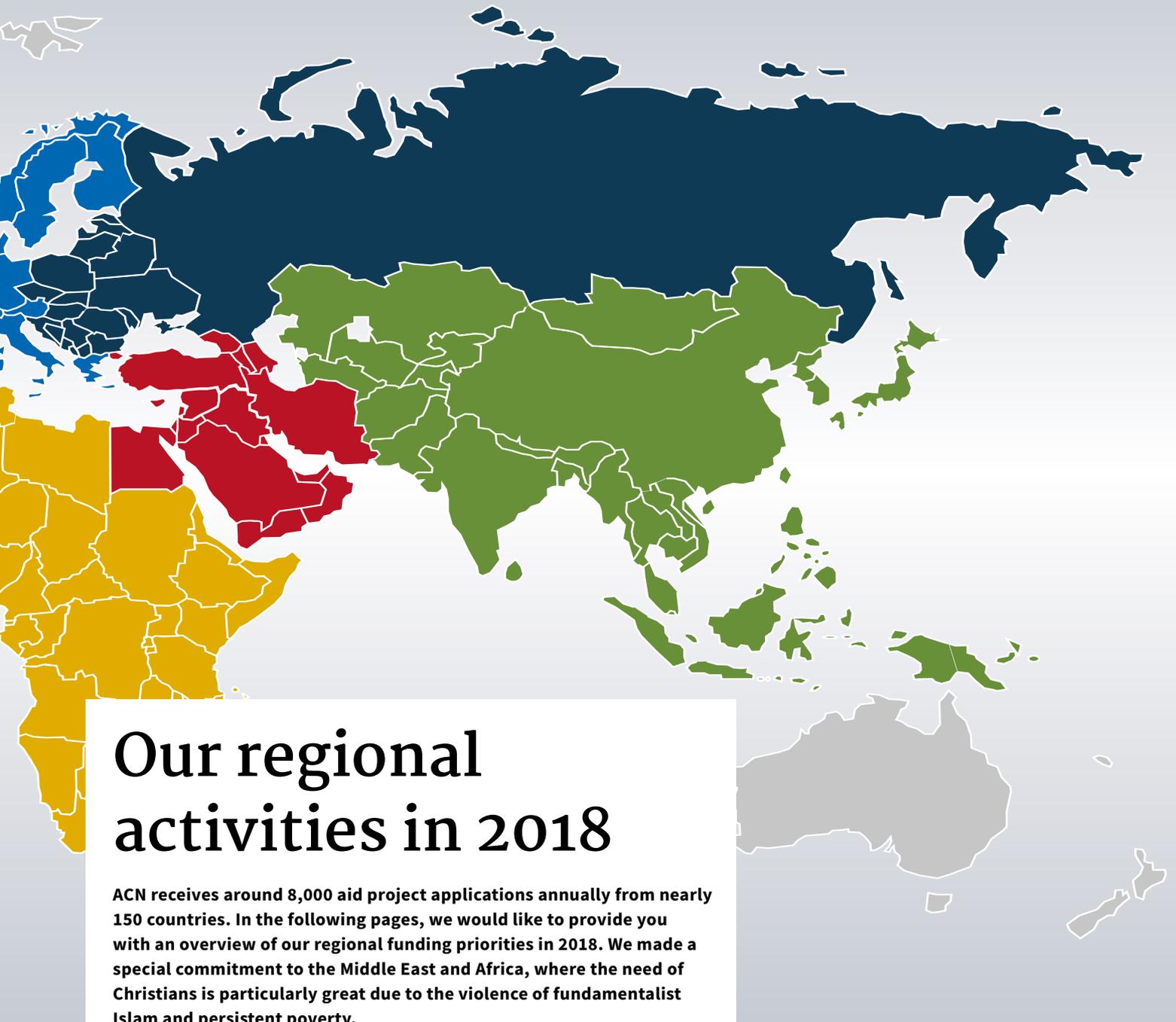
p. 44 Latin America

- pp. 46–47 Venezuela
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Our regional activities in 2018

ACN receives around 8,000 aid project applications annually from nearly 150 countries. In the following pages, we would like to provide you with an overview of our regional funding priorities in 2018. We made a special commitment to the Middle East and Africa, where the need of Christians is particularly great due to the violence of fundamentalist Islam and persistent poverty.



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pp. 68–71 Syria
pp. 72–75 Iraq



p. 76 Western/ Eastern Europe

p. 78 Refugees in Western Europe
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Latin America

For decades, poverty, violence, corruption and drug-related crime have been some of the constants that have repeatedly plunged Latin American countries into serious crises. For many of the more than 500 million Catholic Christians on the continent, the Church is often the only mainstay that still offers them hope. Nevertheless, the local Church has lamented the increasing decline in the number of believers for 40 years. Through our help, we hope to both alleviate the needs of the local churches and support them in initiating a change enabling more people to once again find a home in faith. In 2018, a total of 13.9% of our worldwide aid volume went to Latin America.

“There are problems that have no solution, only history.” This quotation of the Colombian philosopher Nicolas Gomez Davila goes directly to the heart of the problems of Latin America. The recent political unrest in Venezuela is just one example among many.

Political despotism, corruption, sects, drug mafias, violence and unemployment in most Latin American

the lack of young priests is dramatic and the rapidly growing flood of new sects also represents a difficult task



A sister visiting the faithful in Umass, Peru.

>> 1,336 application for aid reached us in 2018 from Latin America. <<

countries have now reached proportions that sometimes present the Church with seemingly insurmountable challenges. For it is often priests, missionaries and sisters who point out the bad state of affairs. However,

for the Church. It comes as no surprise that a total of 1,336 applications reached us from Latin America in 2018 – about 10% more than last year. Venezuela and Brazil are at the top of this list as a result of political and economic crises. As a mission country with variable climate and geographical conditions, Peru has remained a focal point of our help.



Venezuela

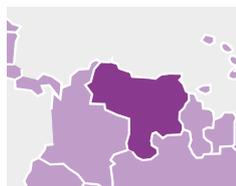
Number of projects

□ 206 Project applications
☑ 110 Funded projects

Type of projects

🔔 9 Construction/ reconstruction	📍 8 Means of transport	👤 38 Mass stipends
📄 1 Emergency aid	🎧 1 Media help	📖 20 Bibles & books
👤 12 Training of priests	👤 10 Existential help	👤 11 Formation of faith

Head of Section
 Marco Mencaglia



Venezuela is a land of records, but also of contradictions. On the one hand, the state has the largest oil reserves

in the world at 50 billion tonnes; on the other hand, Venezuela has the highest crime and inflation rates in the world. The mismanagement of the socialist regime under President Maduro has led the country to the brink of famine. Elderly people, children and the sick are dying due to a lack of simple medica-

tions or power outages. Venezuela survives from day to day, and this also applies to the Church. Our aid for Venezuela therefore consists first and foremost of survival assistance.

The political crisis in Venezuela has also led the country into an economic crisis of historic proportions. With the exception of a small elite, all social classes are affected. Until 2015, we received few applications for aid from Venezuela; the Church was largely able to help itself. But for three years now, the once self-suffi-



In 2018, we supported the livelihood and work of 13 sisters of the "Jesús Resucitado" Order.

On Via Crucis, the Way of the Cross in Tucupita, Venezuela.

» It is precisely when faced with bitter need that faith gives people hope and optimism. «

Mass in the diocese of La Guaira.



cient local Church has increasingly found itself in economic distress. Meanwhile, applications come from all dioceses, and the amount of promised aid totalled over 1 million euros in 2018.

Half of the funds are simply spent on helping priests and religious to survive, and are needed more urgently than ever in the crisis. In the political turmoil which affects the country, the Church is often the only institution that still calls for peaceful debate, despite all the confrontations.

In the face of crises of faith and the hopelessness that many people continue to feel as a result of the crisis, the Church needs to proclaim a message of love and hope all the more. Therefore, in addition to material support, about one-third of our budget for Venezuela flows into catechesis and pastoral initiatives. Further financial support is funnelled into aid for the purchase of vehicles and the renovation of church facilities.

Young prison inmate receives the YOUCAT.



ACN was able to bring more than 10,000 copies of the YOUCAT, the YOUCAT Prayer Book and the YOUCAT Confirmation Book to the country through various channels. Sisters and catechists personally distribute the literature in the parishes to those who participate in prayer and

faith circles. Only a few years ago, the Church would have published scriptures and books for a religious initiative such as this itself. But even paper has become scarce in Venezuela, and books are no longer affordable because of rampant hyperinflation.



Peru

Number of projects

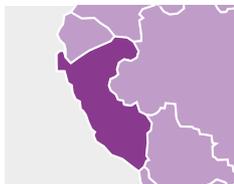
□ 140 ✓ 114

Type of projects

🔔 18 🎯 8 🏠 20
 📄 0 🎤 1 📖 18
 👥 30 👤 9 👤 10

Head of Section

Marco Mencaglia



At around 76% of the population, Catholics make up the vast majority of religious communities in Peru.

Nevertheless, Peru is one of the Latin American countries most strongly supported by ACN. And for good reason: Although there is now modest urban prosperity in the Andean country, the predominantly indigenous population in rural and mountain areas typically live in bitter poverty. The material deprivation has also affected the local Church. ACN is therefore primarily involved in the formation of priests and supporting sisters in Peru.

New vocations are the true treasure of the Church, including in Peru, for a new generation of priests promises pastoral continuity and spiritual future. In Peru, ACN supports the formation of young priests in more than 20 seminaries. This not only includes the study of theology and philosophy; the seminarians also go to the villages, offer catechesis, visit the sick and take care of the young and lonely.



A new baking machine for consecrated wafers for the Convent of the Discalced Carmelites in Albancay.

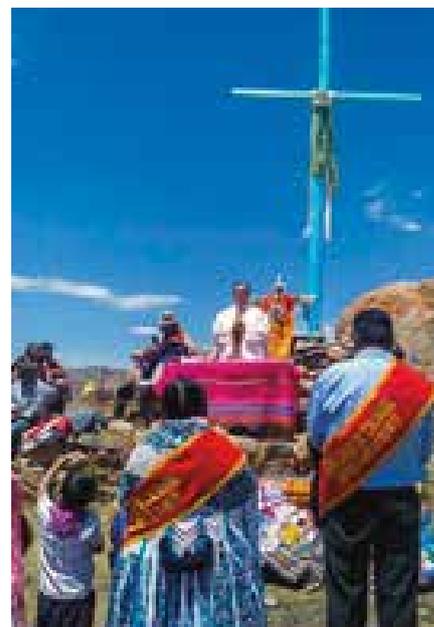
» New vocations are a true treasure for the Church in Peru. «

Sisters visiting the elderly and the sick in Umass.

ACN supports the missionary work in Canaria by funding new vehicles.



Sometimes Holy Mass is celebrated under the open sky.



“We learn to serve and try to satisfy people’s hunger for God,” emphasises Wilber Sucapuca Jaila from the Our Lady of Guadalupe seminary on the Chucuito Plateau. The total cost for a seminarian amounts to about 2,100 euros for a full year, including accommodation, meals, medicine and books. But even with stipends of 180 euros per seminarian, seminaries are able to plug the holes in their annual budgets.

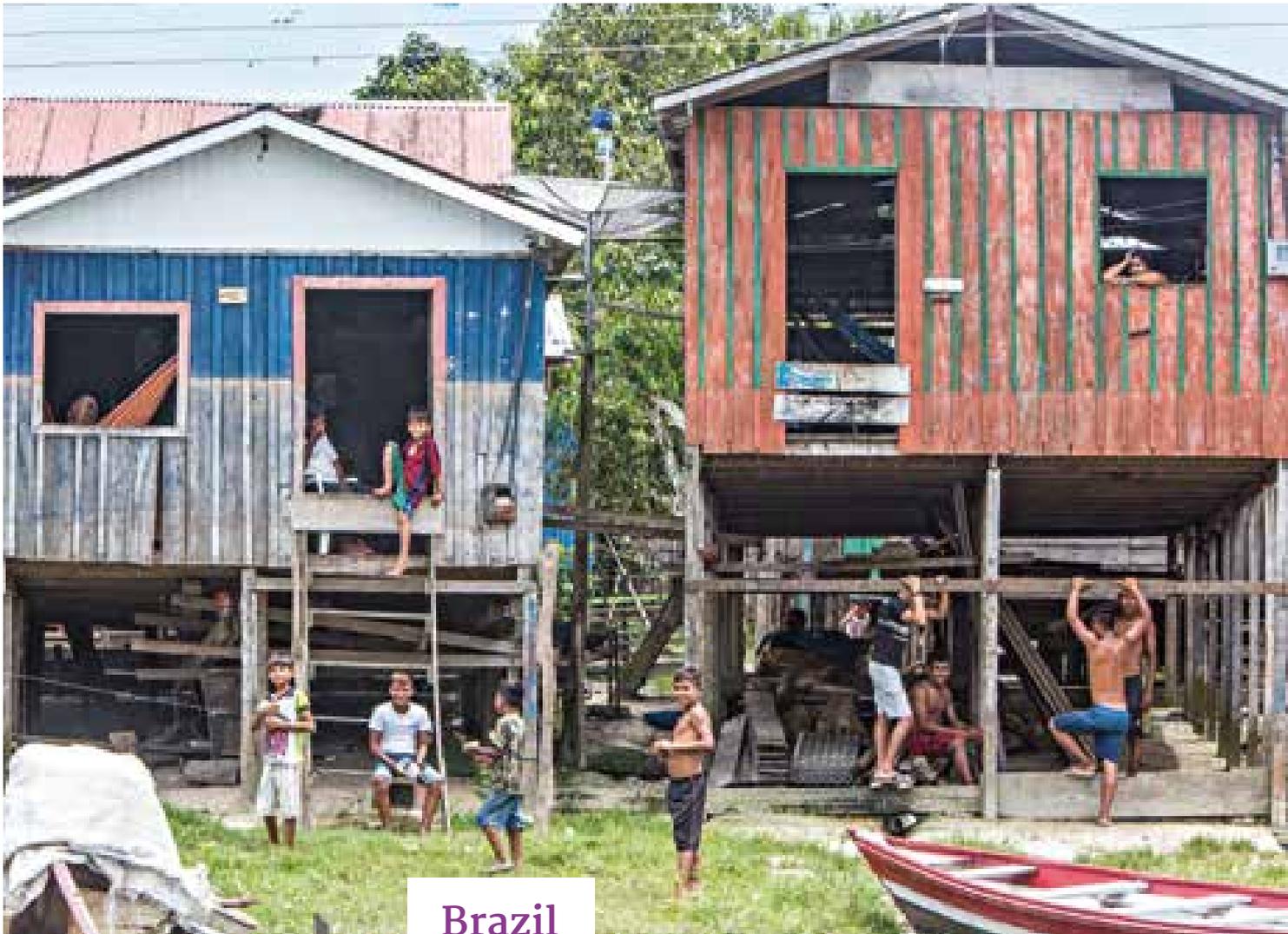
The training of catechists has also been improved with the help of ACN. For example, in the Apostolic Vicariate of Iquitos, a monthly meeting of all catechists enables them to share their experiences in workshops, lectures and discussions. Many of them live in remote parishes in the jungle, which are often difficult to reach.



Material support for sisters

Our aid for active and contemplative sisters has been an important concern for us for many years. One example of this is the congregation “Hermanitas de los Ancianos Desamparados” (Little Sisters of the Helpless Elderly), which maintains eleven houses and a retreat centre in Peru. Here, the sisters care mainly for the poor, the lonely and the el-

derly. Under the motto “Care for the body in order to save souls” of their founder, Saint Teresa Jornet, sisters not only help with the washing and meals, but also provide care and assistance to support people in their spiritual needs. This is charity in the truest sense of the word, which we would very much like to continue to aid in the future.



Brazil

Number of projects

□ 305 ✓ 236

Type of projects

🔔 33 📍 20 🏠 31
 📍 0 🗣️ 2 📖 23
 👥 72 👤 36 👤 19

Head of Section

Ulrich Kny



Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world. Of its 210 million inhabitants, 64% are Catholics. But the

number of believers is dwindling. 20 years ago, Catholics still accounted for 75% of the population here. This development is not least due to the misery caused by corruption, unemployment, economic crisis and environmental destruction, which fuels mistrust and makes many open to the salvation promises of new sects. ACN responds to diocesan applications with support for the formation of priests, existential

aid for sisters and financial assistance for the purchase of vehicles. Much of the funds primarily went to the Amazon region, which is very difficult to access.

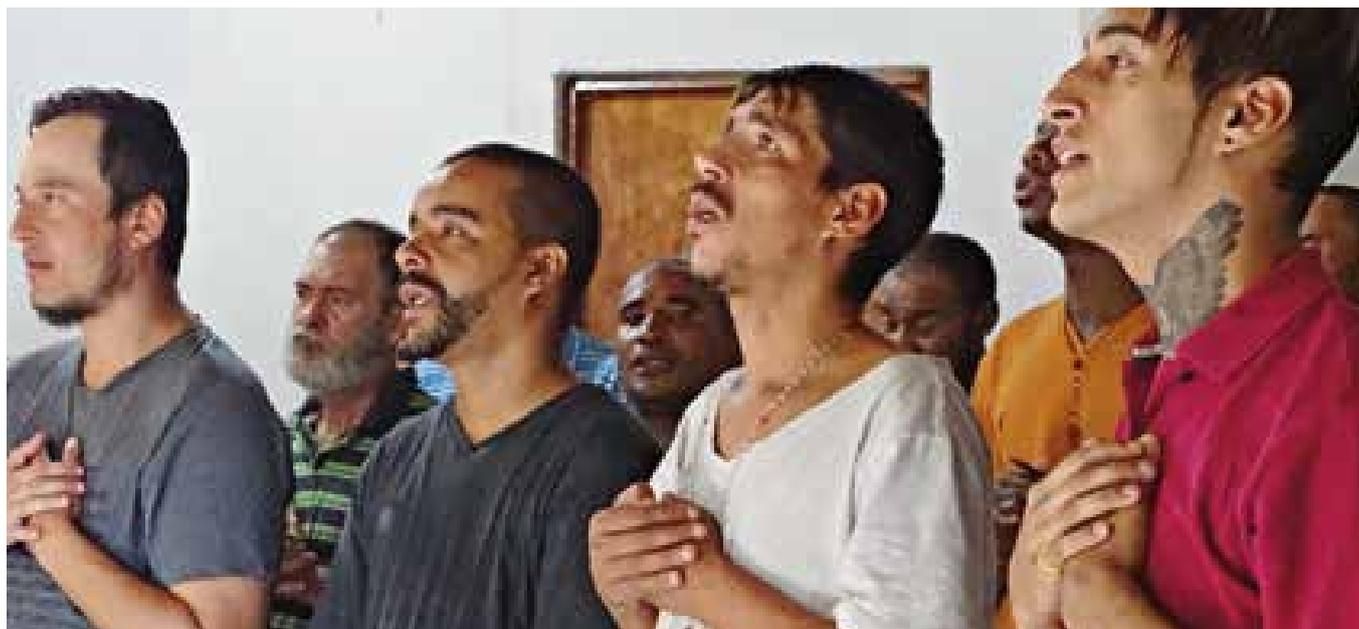
In addition to social and political problems, the extreme geographical and climatic conditions also present the country with great challenges time and again. Almost half of Brazil's land area is made up of the 7 million km² Amazon Basin, which extends far beyond the country's borders. This area is often marked by bitter poverty, a great shortage of priests, poor pastoral care and a correspondingly strong presence of various new sects.

Sisters of the Order of Saint Joseph visiting a family in São Luís.



Pile houses on the banks of the Tefé River in the Brazilian Amazon Basin.

» Brazil remains full of problems – but also full of opportunities. «



Former homeless people from Balca praying in Sao Paulo.

In this region, which is often referred to as the “Green Hell”, the number of applications further increased compared to last year. The hot and humid climate, along with malaria and other tropical diseases and completely inadequate medical care, make it difficult for Amazon inhabitants to cope. In addition, there are frequent floods. Pastoral care is difficult. Many parishes on riverbanks and in the rainforest frequently have to forgo the Eucharist for months. ACN supported the Amazon region of Brazil with almost 700,000 euros in 2018 alone. Whether training aid for seminarians, mass intentions for priests, subsistence allowances for sisters or the purchase of vehicles and boats for mission programmes – our help primarily ensures that the Church’s presence is maintained, even in remote and inaccessible parishes.



Brazil’s Church raises its voice against grievances.

The current political situation has repeatedly led the local Church into conflicts, for example, due to the deforestation of the rainforest or the construction of huge hydroelectric power plants, which lead to land displacement and migration problems. In those places where the Church denounces problems such as the penetration of agribusiness and other

megaprojects for economic development in Amazonia, it is not uncommon that people try to silence it. The same applies when the Church opposes the sexual exploitation of women and children and works to combat corruption and nepotism. Sometimes bishops and religious members even receive death threats and require armed protection.



Nicaragua

Number of projects

□ 47 ✓ 13

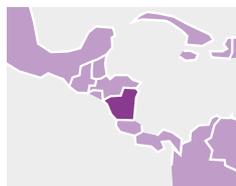
Type of projects

🔔 5 🎯 0 🏠 4
 📍 0 🎤 0 📖 0
 👤 1 👤 0 👤 3

Head of Section

Marco Mencaglia

» Being young and Catholic is dangerous in Nicaragua's current crisis. «



After Haiti, Nicaragua is the poorest country in Latin America. Since 2018, the Nicaraguan people

have been thrown back into turmoil after the regime mandated President Ortega's pension cuts. In the protests that followed, more than 400 Nicaraguans died as a result of military violence. For months, the Church tried to mediate in the violent conflict and offered refuge to the persecuted and injured in community centres. ACN does not intervene in political affairs, but supports pastoral activities such as those in Nicaragua, which often provide people with concrete help.

"Being young and Catholic is dangerous in Nicaragua," was uttered last year during the persecution of opposition members and regime critics in many of the country's parishes. But the Church is concerned with showing its presence and supporting the people, even in times of crisis. Or as Pope John Paul II once said: "The charity of works ensures an unmistakable efficacy to the charity of words."

We continue to support the commitment of the Church in Nicaragua. For example, in infrastructure development to ensure the formation of young candidates for the priesthood, after the Managua seminary was closed for security reasons during the crisis. With our financial aid, it was also possible to build community centres for new parishes in the countryside. These are not only spiritual and social meeting places for the parishes, but also accommodate catechist training for young laypersons. To help the Church with its mission and pastoral care, ACN is also helping to fund vehicles and boats, which are essential in many parishes due to the extreme geographical and climatic conditions in the "land of a thousand volcanoes".



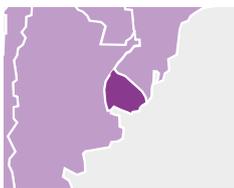
Bishop Matagalpa blesses a child.

The Bishop of Granada distributing food for the poor.

School near the Schoenstatt Shrine in Nueva Helvecia.



Uruguay



The secular country is a kind of foreign entity in what is known as the “Catholic continent”. Since 1916, the strict separation

of church and state has been anchored in the constitution. Of 3.5 million inhabitants, significantly less than half are Catholic, and there are no official religious holidays. State regulations for the maintenance of church buildings have brought the dioceses to the brink of ruin. Without outside help, the Church cannot survive here. Therefore, it has been supported by ACN for many years.

Due to the desolate financial situation of the local Church, many priests live at the subsistence level. Our Mass stipends are a great help to them. In addition to the active priests in most of the ten Uruguayan dioceses, ACN also supported 18 very elderly priests in the ecclesiastical retirement home in Montevideo in 2018 with a subsistence grant of 14,800 euros. The sum helps both the home and the priests, who can use it to pay for part of their medication, among other things.

Number of projects

□ 39 □ 27

Type of projects

🔔 9 🎯 0 👤 7
 📍 0 🎤 3 📖 2
 👥 1 👤 0 👤 5

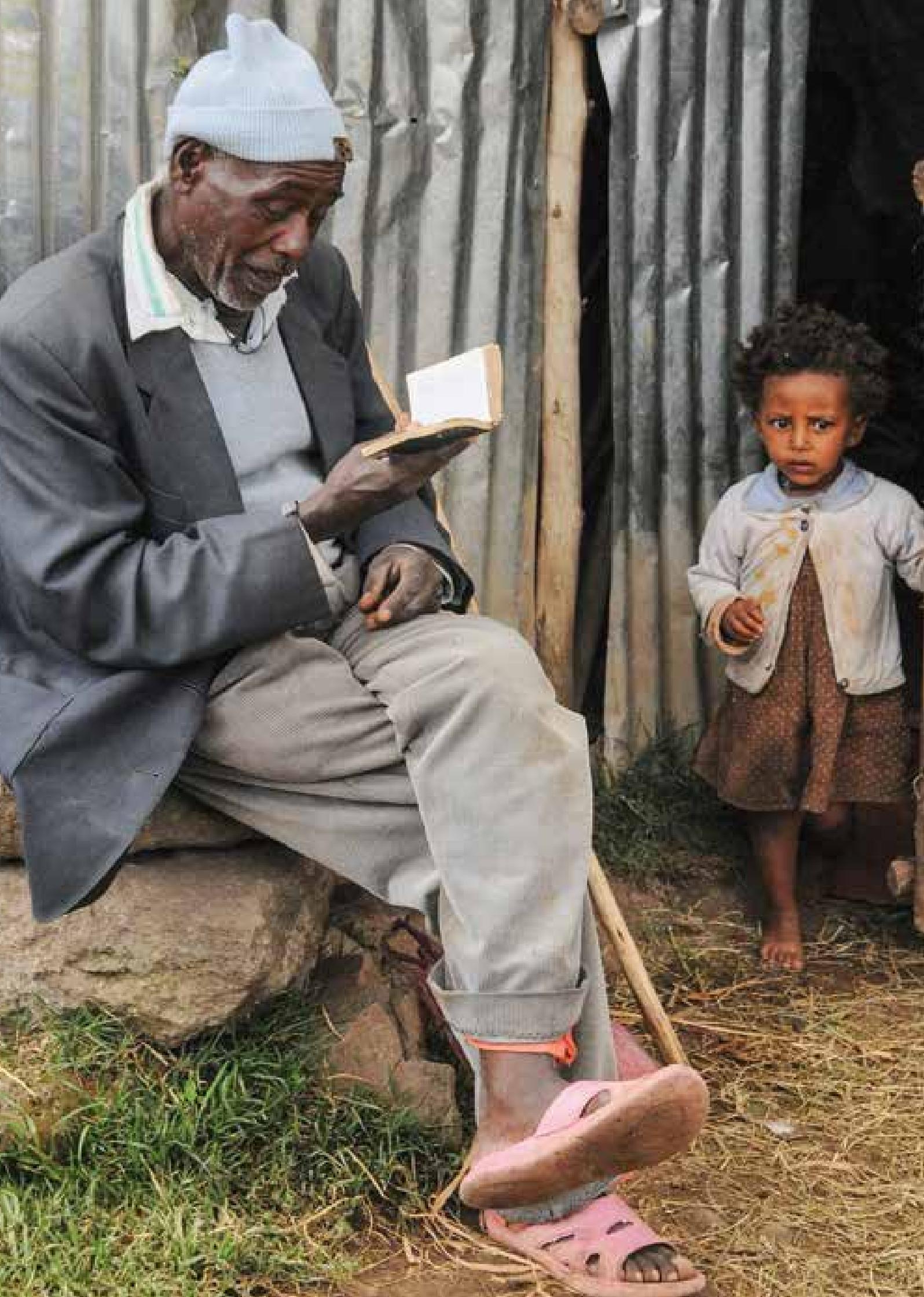
Head of Section

Ulrich Kny

» Despite the anticlerical environment, many young people have a flourishing faith. «



But despite a secular environment that is often hostile to the Church, faith is also flourishing among young people. These include more and more women who have decided to enter convents. One example is the city of Florida in southern Uruguay. Twelve sisters currently live and pray in the Convent of the Discalced Carmelites, and other young women have asked to be admitted to the convent. But there are not enough rooms to accommodate further entrants. An annexe, co-financed by ACN with 70,000 euros, will now accommodate five new rooms.





Africa

Political unrest, Islamic radicalisation and increasing terrorist and rebel movements represent growing dangers in many African countries – including for the Church. In 2018, Africa had the world’s highest number of murdered priests for the first time ever. The population also suffers from famine, the inactivity of corrupt governments, catastrophic droughts and the lack of medical care in many countries. In 2018, ACN supported 1,659 projects in Africa.

One in six Catholics, one in nine priests and one in four seminarians in the world currently live in Africa. To ensure that the Church not only grows quantitatively on the continent, but is also strengthened qualitatively, the deepening of faith is an important concern. The training and further education of priests and instructors at seminaries plays a central role here, for which ACN will continue to campaign in Africa.

>> For the Church, Africa remains a continent of hope in spite of all its needs. <<

One of the most significant events for the Church in Africa was the ACN-backed 4th Congress of the “African Federation for the Advancement of the Family” in November 2018 on Mauritius. The event was attended by



4th FAAF Congress on Mauritius in November 2018. Founded by Pope John Paul II, the organisation is committed to family education on the continent and is supported by ACN.

nearly 30 bishops, numerous theologians, priests, sisters and doctors, as well as lay pastoral workers from various parts of Africa. The aim of the Congress is to promote respectful and loving dialogue between spouses and to help them raise children and resolve conflicts. ACN supports the Church in these programmes, especially as traditional family values in Africa are often at odds with Western development aid models – one need think only of the promotion of abortion.



Benin

Number of projects

80 Project applications

40 Funded projects

Type of projects

10 Construction/reconstruction

3 Means of transport

9 Mass stipends

0 Emergency aid

1 Media help

1 Bibles & books

10 Training of priests

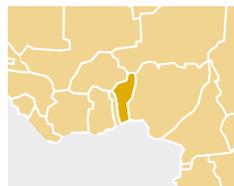
2 Existential help

4 Formation of faith

Head of Section

Rafael D'Aqui

Sisters looking after children in the "Orphélinat des Saints" orphanage in Natitingou.



West African Benin has about 11 million inhabitants. While the north of the country is predominantly

Muslim, the south is mainly inhabited by followers of traditional African religions and Christians, who often suffer from bitter poverty. ACN is active throughout Benin with aid projects to strengthen the presence of the Church and support the formation of faith.

Where the Church has too little presence, Christians can easily come under the influence of other faiths. This is true in Benin. In the south of the country, superstition is widespread – many practice Voodoo. The deepening of the Christian faith has a special role to play here. The training of priests is therefore the top priority for the local Church. In order to better reach the faithful, songs and illustrated books are needed which translate the Gospel into the local language and

culture. ACN primarily supports local churches in the formation of priests and in pastoral care for couples and families. In addition, the Church infrastructure is also being financed, as "worthy" chapels are of enormous importance and often just as important for people as a hospital.

Support for sisters.

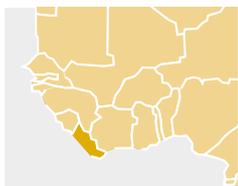
The work of sisters is also indispensable for the people of Benin, especially for children. The sisters take loving care of unwanted, sick and orphaned children, but also of handicapped or "bewitched" children who are often abandoned or killed by relatives. The presence of sisters in the villages alone usually prevents children from being killed, because mothers turn directly to them with their problems. At the request of the bishops, ACN supports the sisters so that they can carry out activities in as many places as possible.

» For the faithful, a chapel is just as important as a hospital. «



Because of the difficult road conditions in the Liberian diocese of Monrovia, ACN supported the purchase of off-road vehicles for spiritual welfare and pastoral work in the St. Paul Parish of Banjor.

Liberia



Between 1989 and 2003, the West African republic experienced one of the bloodiest civil wars on the conti-

nent. The country has still not recovered from it right up to the present day. The consequences of the war are also a great challenge for the Church. Our aid to Liberia is mainly concentrated on supporting priests, who are often the only source of hope for many believers.

More than two-thirds of Liberians still do not believe in lasting peace. The civil war

has continued to cause deep mistrust at all levels of society. We therefore support the Church in its pastoral mission wherever we can. Our focus is on supporting priests, who have to shoulder most of the spiritual reconstruction in this war-torn country. In addition to the consequences of the war, the Ebola crisis once again put Liberians to the test between 2014 and 2016. In order to better heal the traumas caused by war and epidemics, the bishops are therefore planning to offer additional spiritual retreats for priests in 2019 so that they are better able to support the faithful in their spiritual needs.

Number of projects

□ 11 ☑ 12

Type of projects

🔔 1 🎯 1 🏠 3
 📍 0 🎤 1 📖 0
 👤 2 👤 1 👤 3

Head of Section

Kinga von Poschinger

>> More than the infrastructure, believers' souls are destroyed. <<

Mali



Mali is a West African landlocked country with 18 million inhabitants, of whom only about 2% profess

the Christian faith. Since 2012, there has been chaos in the country, because radical Islamists and Tuareg fighters want to establish their own "theocracy" in the north. Since then, hundreds of thousands have been fleeing the violence caused by jihadists. ACN supports the Church in Mali with numerous projects, such as the training of priests and religious priests and religious.

In essence, Mali has been divided by Islamist terror since 2013. This also applies to the Church itself. While the Church infrastructure in the north of the country has largely been destroyed, the situation is better in the south, despite violent incidents – the Catholic community is even growing here. In order to maintain ecclesiastical structures, ACN supported the local Church in 2018 not only with pastoral training, but also with vehicle assistance, Mass stipends, pastoral care and construction aid. In the diocese of San, for instance, a retirement home for priests was equipped with a solar-powered water pump.

Number of projects

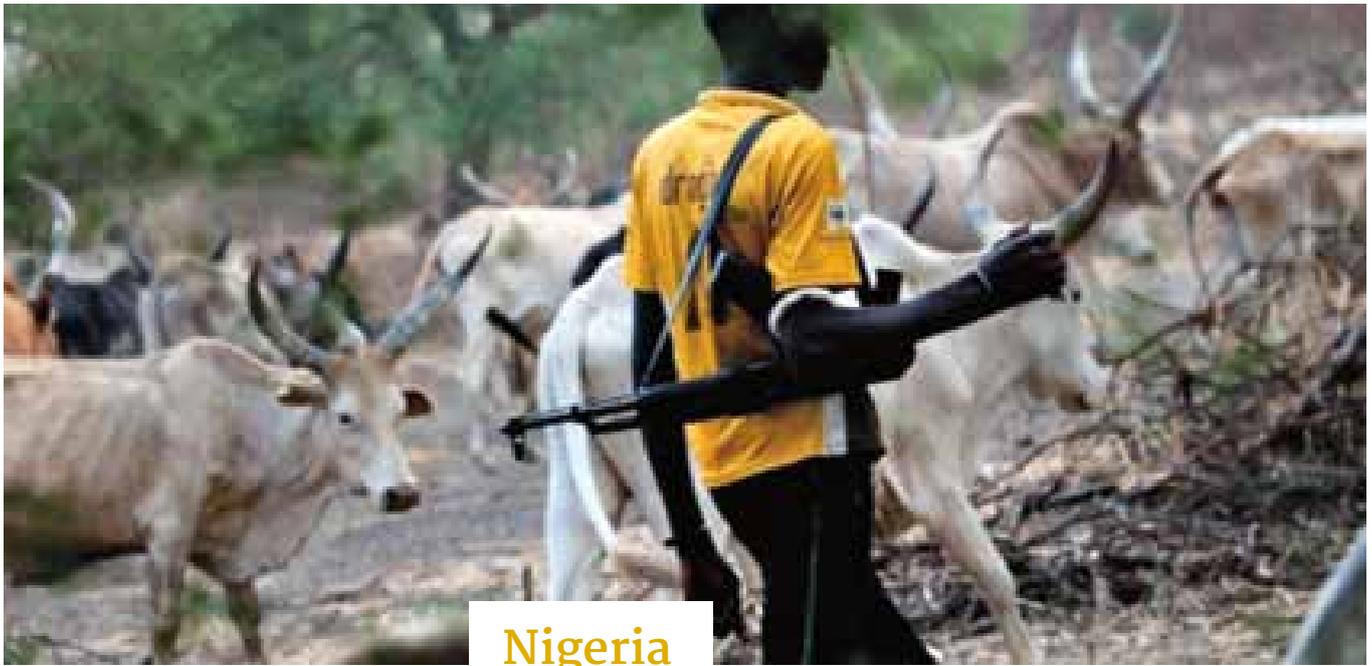
□ 32 ☑ 24

Type of projects

🔔 7 🎯 2 🏠 6
 📍 0 🎤 0 📖 0
 👤 6 👤 1 👤 2

Head of Section

Rafael D'Aqui



Nigeria

Number of projects

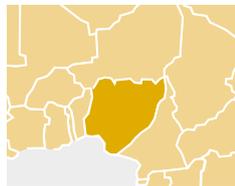
132 94

Type of projects

16 2 17
0 0 1
50 1 7

Head of Section

Kinga von Poschinger



With 190 million inhabitants, Nigeria is by far the most populous country in Africa. While

the West African country is predominantly populated by Christians in the south, the north is chiefly Muslim. The infamous Islamist terrorist group Boko Haram, whose attacks are mainly directed against Christians, is active here. ACN supports the Nigerian Church in these difficult times with numerous aid projects.

As we learned from the local bishops, Christians are not only threatened in the north by the Boko Haram terror, but now even more brutally by heavily armed Muslim Fulani shepherds in central Nigeria who are increasingly taking action against Christians. Despite all the violence and threats, Christians continue to stand firm in their faith, and there are still numerous priestly and religious vocations. But the Church in Nigeria is urgently in need of help, not only to fulfil its pastoral mission, but also to comfort the traumatised and those in mourning and to rebuild destroyed Church infrastructures.

>> We haven't lost hope, but we need help. <<

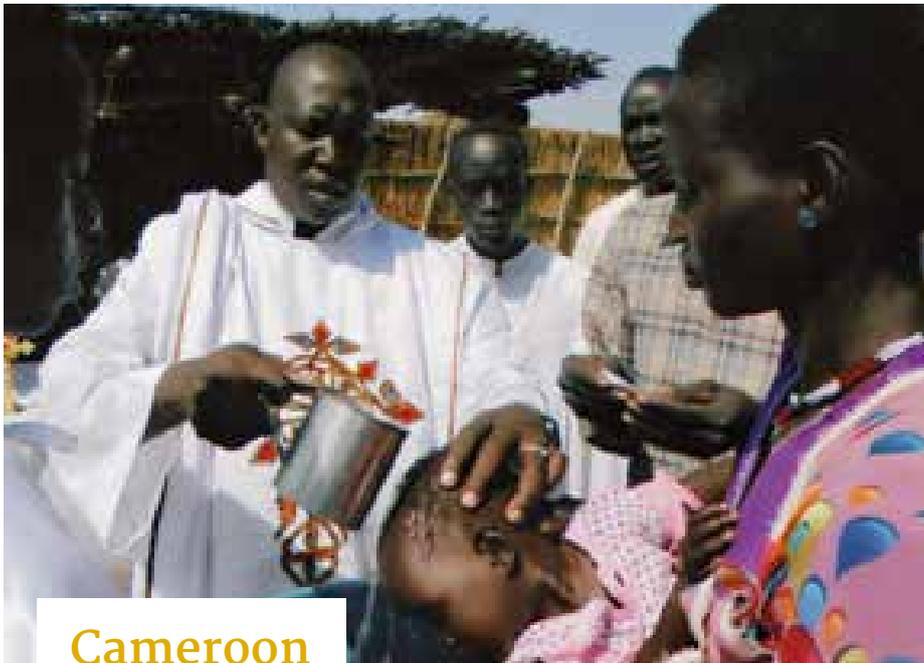
ACN is particularly committed to supporting the local Church in training seminarians and helping needy priests with Mass stipends. We also help finance vehicles and are active in building and rebuilding church facilities.



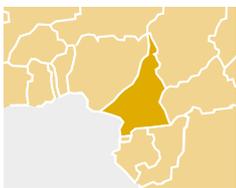
Leah didn't want to deny her faith.

In early 2018, 100 schoolgirls were kidnapped by the Boko Haram terrorist militia in Dapchi in northeastern Nigeria. Among them was 15-year-old Leah. The Muslim girls were released by the terror-

ists. But Leah was forced to remain in captivity. For her to be released, the kidnappers demanded that the young Christian convert to Islam. But Leah refused. Her fate remains uncertain to this day.



Cameroon



For a long time, Cameroon was regarded as relatively stable in the midst of crisis states. However,

the Central African country with its 24 million inhabitants is increasingly being caught up in a maelstrom of political and social conflicts. The Catholic Church is strongly represented here, with a share of 38% of the population. But it is dependent on assistance to meet the growing challenges. Cameroon is one of the countries most strongly supported by ACN in Africa.

A former German colony, Cameroon is currently marked by the conflict between Anglophone and Francophone population groups. What began in 2016 with protest marches against the marginalisation of the English language and culture by the French-speaking central govern-

ment has now escalated into an armed conflict with fugitives and numerous people killed. The Church has also become the victim of suffering: In 2018, two Catholic priests and a seminarian were killed in the affected areas. Priests are increasingly attacked or kidnapped.

Nevertheless, the local Church is passionately committed to reconciliation between the conflicting parties and is tirelessly trying to renew dialogue between them. But there is a lack of human resources in many places. Through vocational promotion and a good formation of candidates for the priesthood, the Church is endeavouring to meet increasing demands. However, the local Church can hardly cope with the costs of training on its own. ACN is therefore in close contact with bishops and priests in order to improve the training situation through further support measures and thus cushion the financial burden on the local Church.

The diocese of Maroua-Mokolo in the north of Cameroon. Despite the danger, many young men still want to become priests. ACN is helping them.

Number of projects

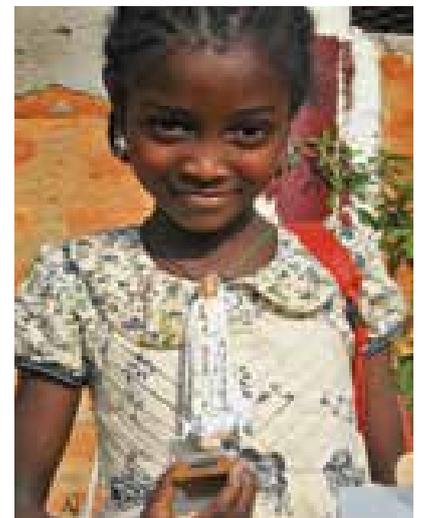
188 96

Type of projects

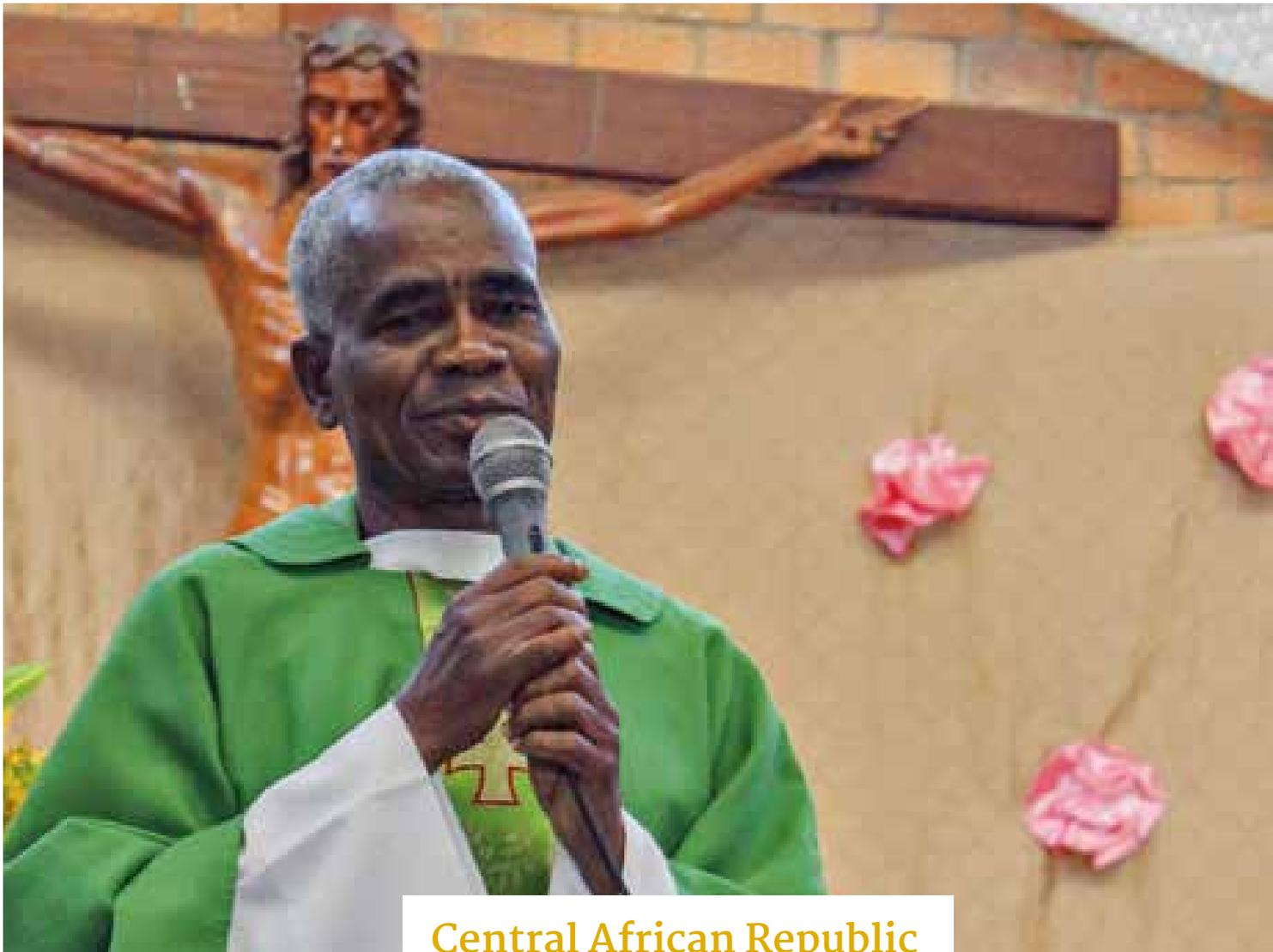
7 6 19
3 0 11
32 7 11

Head of Section

Rafael D'Aqui



>> The Church is trying to maintain dialogue between the conflicting parties. <<



Central African Republic

Number of projects

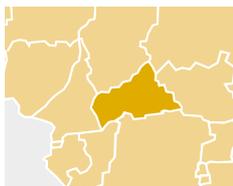
48 37

Type of projects

5 2 9
3 0 0
10 3 5

Head of Section

Christine du Coudray



Since the end of 2012, the Central African Republic has been sinking into a maelstrom of violence as

a result of the civil war. Thousands have already fallen victim to the war and almost one million are internally displaced or seek protection in neighbouring countries. But priests and sisters are resolutely holding the line, providing pastoral care to the people

and working tirelessly for the reconstruction of the country. ACN mainly supports the Church with emergency aid and the formation of priests.

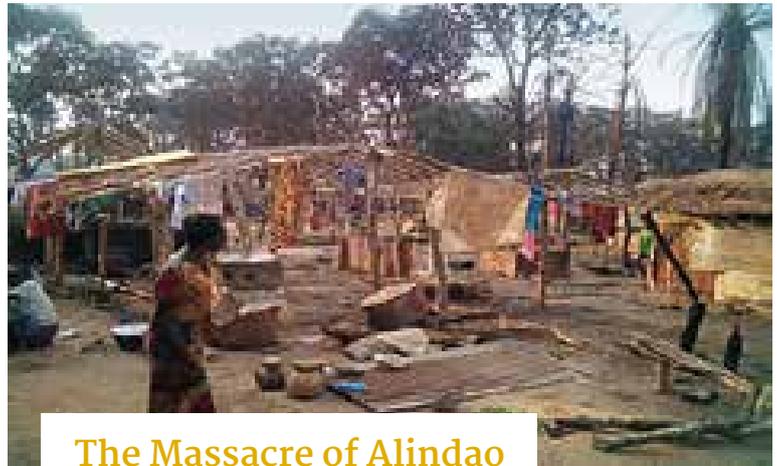
The fighting between SELEKA rebel militias and the anti-Balaka group mainly affects the civilian population. Thousands have seen their belongings go up in flames and many have witnessed their relatives being murdered. Neither the government nor the UN peacekeepers have been able to achieve lasting peace.



38 future Carmelite priests would like to give their country new hope. ACN has donated 22,800 euros for their training.

Deadly attack during Holy Mass.

During an armed attack in the parish church of Our Lady of Fatima in Bangui on 1 May 2018, 20 worshippers were killed and 100 others injured during Holy Mass. Father Albert Toungoumale-Baba (left) was among the victims. The 71-year-old priest was a friend of ACN and had asked us to pray tirelessly for peace in his country in a video message. We mourn his loss and are deeply concerned with the increasing violence in the Republic.



The Massacre of Alindao

On 15 November 2018, thousands of refugees were attacked by armed Seleka rebels in the refugee camp on the grounds of Alindao Cathedral in the south of the Central African Republic. The rebels killed more than 80

people, including two priests. In addition, the cathedral was looted and burned down by the rebels. ACN immediately provided 30,000 euros in emergency aid for the most urgent primary care.

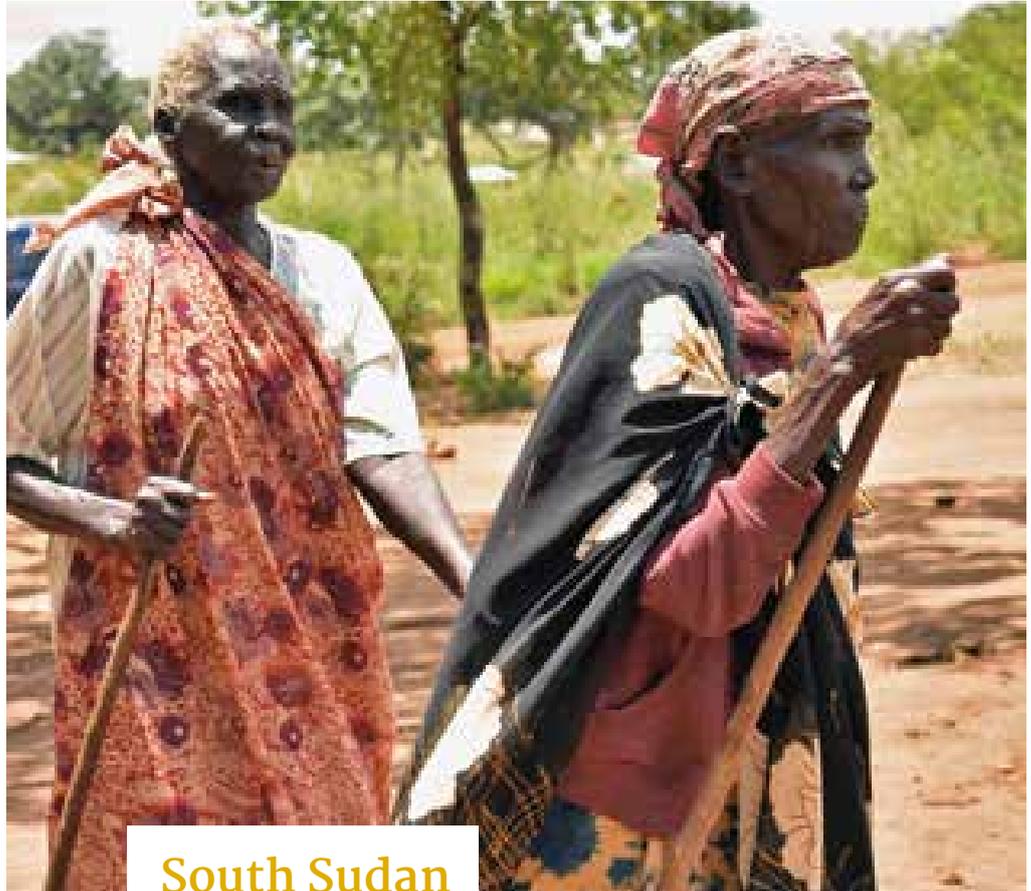
>> Despite great danger, none of the priests has left his mission. <<

Nor has the Church been spared extreme acts of violence. Church institutions are repeatedly attacked and plundered. But the Catholic Church is on the front line to protect the population from the violent attacks. Thousands of displaced persons of various faiths have found refuge in monasteries and mission stations. Priests and religious often risk their own lives: In 2018 alone, five priests were murdered.

ACN supports the Central African Republic with emergency relief and funds for the formation of priests, as future priests are indispensable to the peace and well-being of their country. In 2018, for example, we supported 48 seminarians and their teachers in Bangui with a budget of 60,000 euros.



Two old women at the Bidibidi refugee camp.



South Sudan

Number of projects

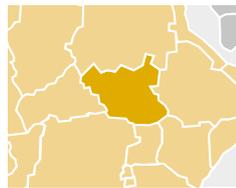
46 27

Type of projects

3 2 7
 1 0 0
 8 3 3

Head of Section

Christine du Coudray



South Sudan is currently the third poorest country in the world, partly because a bloody civil war has been

raging here since 2011. Behind the war is the brutal power struggle between the Dinka and Nuer ethnic groups, which has made about one-third of the 13 million South Sudanese homeless.

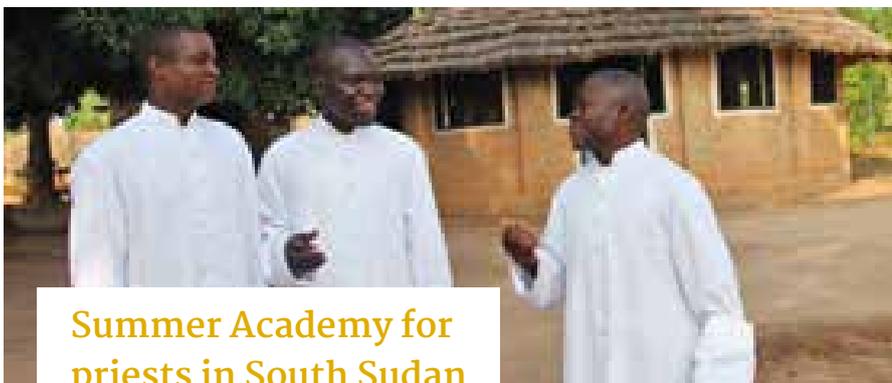
It was not until 2018 that a ceasefire was reached, along with an agreement on the division of power in the country. ACN is providing particular support to South Sudanese priests, who are important pillars of hope and reconciliation for the suffering population.

Although new hope for peace has been emerging in South Sudan since 2018, the situation remains precarious. This also applies to the Church, which often lacks the financial and human resources to assist the suffering population. As in many African countries, the training of priests is a great challenge in South Sudan.

This is precisely where ACN's assistance comes in. We support the dioceses in the formation of candidates for the priesthood and sponsor priests with Mass stipends. We also support retreats and meeting days for priests so that they can nourish their minds and spirits and summon up new strength, protecting them from overwork.

>> A month in Rome has renewed our spirits. <<

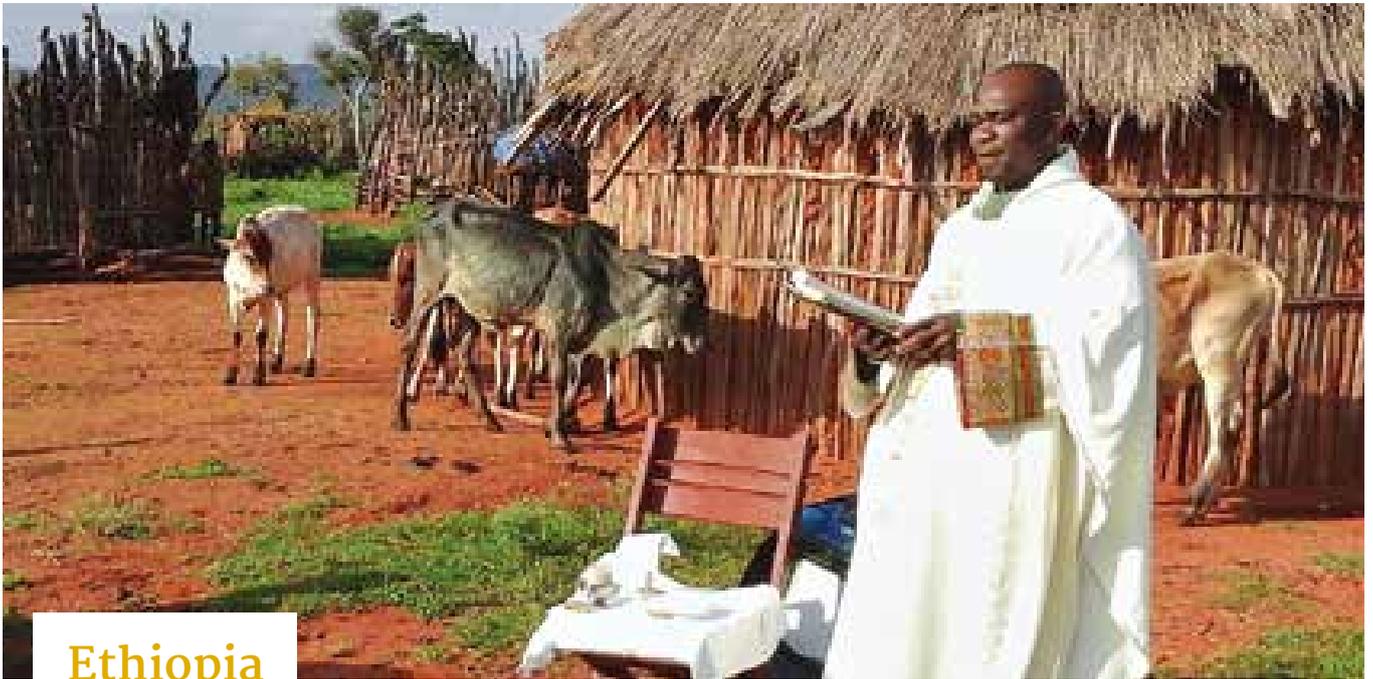
Candidates for priesthood at the seminary of St. John Paul II in Tombura Yambio.



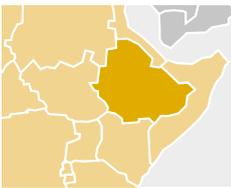
Summer Academy for priests in South Sudan

In 2018, ACN enabled twelve priests teaching at southern Sudanese seminaries to participate in a one-month summer course for instructors in Rome. Father George, one of the participants, reported: "The month we spent in Rome

was a wonderful experience for us. Many were exhausted by the hard work and difficult circumstances at home. The impact the course had on the instructors and students could be felt immediately."



Ethiopia



Despite strong economic growth, Ethiopia – located on the Horn of Africa – is still marked by great poverty. Of the 102

million inhabitants, 58% are Orthodox Christians. However, the proportion of Muslims is rising and currently stands at 34%. Catholics make up only about 1% of the population. Nevertheless, the Catholic Church is very active. In order to ensure this momentum in the future, ACN supports the local Church, primarily in the formation of priests, youth ministry and construction projects.

The Catholic Church operates numerous schools and kindergartens in Ethiopia, as well as social facilities that benefit members of all religions. Thus they contribute substantially to understanding among local peoples. But the Church is also active in remote and underdeveloped areas. Here, for example, it looks after tribes such as the Oromo and the Gumuz, whom no one would otherwise care for. First evangelisation, instruction in the faith and pastoral care are usually the top priorities here. Churches and chapels are very important, especially for people who have just found

their way to the Catholic faith, because they create identity and give the faithful the feeling of belonging to the Church. For this reason, ACN supports many construction projects. But priests who pass on the faith and provide answers are also indispensable. This is why in 2018 we once again approved a number of funding applications in Ethiopia for the education and training of priests, religious and the laity, as well as the organisation of pastoral programmes.

>> Thanks to your help, the young people are now singing songs about the goodness of God. <<

Pastoral work for young people should be emphasised here above all. Among other things, it contributes to ensuring that young people do not emigrate, but instead work for the welfare of their homeland. In addition, ACN helps to finance and procure suitable vehicles, which are indispensable for the maintenance of pastoral care in predominantly vast areas.

Number of projects

91 70

Type of projects

22 3 7
0 1 0
18 3 16

Head of Section

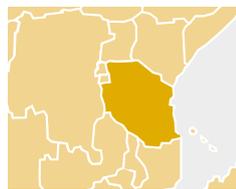
Dr Andrzej Halemba



Girl from the Dessanech tribe in the village of Oromate, where people have only recently become acquainted with the Gospel.



The faithful in Kinyasi building a church that was co-financed by ACN.



More than half of the 57 million inhabitants of the East African country are Christians,

most of them Catholic. But Tanzania is characterised by an aggressive expansionist policy on the part of fundamentalist Islamists, promoted by the oil states. The coastal areas and the north of the mainland are already predominantly Muslim, and on the almost entirely Muslim island Zanzibar, there are often attacks against Christians. ACN supports the local Church in urgent building projects, in the formation of priests and with material aid to strengthen its presence in the country.

feel inferior. This is why ACN is committed to supporting the construction of churches and chapels in Tanzania, for communities with their own church offer the faithful a sense of identity and self-confidence.

An additional problem for the Church is widespread superstition. There is still a good deal of educational work to be done here. Many of the locals believe in witchcraft. Disability is considered a curse or a punishment for an evil deed and albinos are persecuted, ostracised or killed outright in order to make “magic cures” from their body parts. In some areas the illiteracy rate is 75%, and in many places there is a lack of basic medical knowledge to prevent or treat diseases. These are problems that could hardly be solved by the Church without the commitment and care of sisters. They tirelessly support the local population with unceasing advice and support. This is one reason why ACN not only supports priests, but also many sisters with material assistance.

The spread of Islamism is the biggest challenge facing the Catholic Church in Tanzania. Numerous newly built mosques impress believers of all denominations. If Christians have no church to show, they are despised and

Number of projects

321 107

Type of projects

21 19 25
 1 2 0
 32 3 4

Head of Section

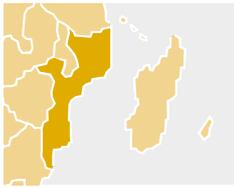
Toni W. Zender

>> We want to escape the maelstrom of Islam! <<



The missionary parish of Netia-Natete in the diocese of Nacala was hit by a severe tropical storm in 2017. Two of the destroyed village chapels were rebuilt in 2018 with the help of ACN.

Mozambique



Located in south-east Africa, Mozambique ranks tenth among the world's poorest countries. The

country still suffers from the consequences of the civil war that raged between 1977 and 1992. But severe natural catastrophes are also something that people here have had to cope with time and time again. About one-third of the nearly 29 million inhabitants profess the Catholic faith, and nearly 18% are Muslims. Above all, Christians are affected by the increasing Islamist violence in the country. ACN helps the Church in Mozambique by providing training and material aid and by supporting construction projects.

>> Jihadists misuse young people for their attacks. <<

As in many African countries, the influence of Islamism is growing ever larger in Mozambique. In the northeastern province of Cabo Delgado, for example,

around 100 people were killed in just one year. Mobility is severely restricted by police posts, to the great detriment of the Church. For example, catechists travelling for advanced training are not always permitted to proceed, although they often have an accompanying letter from the bishop.

These problems are caused by the fact that a group called "Al Shabaab" has been active in the north of the country since 2017, claiming jihadist objectives. The extremists recruit young people with the prospect of jobs or scholarships and misuse them for attacks. In addition, school dropouts, early marriages, the disintegration of traditional values and the uprooting of families as a result of the civil war mean that young people frequently no longer see a future for themselves.

ACN helps the Church restore stability and confidence to the people, especially the young. For example, in the northern diocese of Pemba, the Church of Our Lady of Namuno, built 100 years ago by the first missionaries, is being renovated with our support. We provide further project support through training and material aid for priests and sisters.

Number of projects

63 35

Type of projects

5 5 11
0 0 2
6 3 3

Head of Section

Rafael D'Aqui





الكتاب المقدس



Middle East

Even though the war in Syria and Iraq has finally ended, the plight of the people there is far from over. The ruins, the cave-like dwellings in piles of rubble and the vacant expression in the eyes of countless traumatised people all bear witness to this. Humanitarian aid and reconstruction efforts remain the order of the day. This also applies to the Church in need in the Middle East and its persecuted and displaced believers. ACN has provided more than 13 million euros in support for the Church in Syria and Iraq in 2018 alone.

For Christians in the Middle East, our aid is more than a sign of human solidarity. It is a sign of a new future and also of the global unity of Christianity. In the early years of the war, when refugees were struggling to survive, ACN provided emergency food, tents, blankets and medications that saved tens of thousands of Christians. The solidarity, support and compassion of the actions all gave them the courage to live on.



A boy at the Palm Sunday procession on 25.03.2018 in Qaraqosh, Iraq.

» Despite the trauma of war, many Christians in the Middle East are looking optimistically to the future again. «

But millions of people, including many Christians, are still waiting in camps as displaced persons or refugees. Most of them would like to return to their birthplace, because they long for a home that promises

protection and security. But like their own four walls, the faithful also need their churches after this brutal war as a place of common prayer and the sign of a message of reconciliation. As many churches have been damaged or destroyed in the war, reconstruction is one of our most urgent relief projects in the Middle East. After all, with each stone replaced, the social fabric in communities is also being rebuilt.



Syria

Number of projects

 233 Project applications
 185 Funded projects

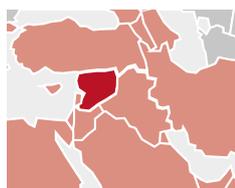
Type of projects

 49 Construction/ reconstruction	 1 Means of transport	 7 Mass stipends
 58 Emergency aid	 1 Media help	 2 Bibles & books
 7 Training of priests	 19 Existential help	 41 Formation of faith

Head of Section

Dr Andrzej Halemba

A displaced family from Aleppo, which has been living for nearly three years under difficult conditions in Tartus, a city on the Syrian coast.



After eight years of war, Syria literally lies in ruins. There is hardly one stone still attached to

another in the entire country. Nor are the souls of the people faring any better. Hundreds of thousands of deaths, millions of refugees and countless people who are often severely traumatised are the toll of the incomprehensible violence inflicted by the war. The population now faces “zero hour”. People’s survival here

largely depends on the support of foreign aid organisations. ACN continued to provide millions of euros to Syria in 2018, especially in regions where many Christians live.

While more than 1.5 million Christians lived in Syria before the war, their number has dwindled to around 500,000 in the aftermath. The modest prosperity that many of them had attained before the war is gone. For most, life has now become about survival. Our aid is provided in close consultation with local Church decision-makers. The bishops



Girl in the destroyed Al-Jdaideh quarter in Aleppo.

A mother and her son light a candle in a Syrian Orthodox church on Assumption Day.



and priests, as well as the deacons and sisters in the parishes, know best which families need what form of aid most urgently. Sometimes this is milk, sometimes a rent subsidy, sometimes medicine or clothing.

Perhaps the Maronite Archbishop of Damascus, Samir Nassar, describes the situation best: “The people of Syria no longer seek freedom. They now seek daily bread, water, gas to cook, a few litres of fuel. Then there is the search for a lost brother, sister, parents and friends – a quiet undertaking, full of

fear and hope. Finding a shelter for the family in a country in ruins seems hopeless, more like a dream.”

» The biggest ruins lie in the souls of the people. «

Humanitarian aid, funds for education and reconstruction aid were once again high on our agenda for Syria in 2018. Most of the aid went to Aleppo, Homs, Damascus, villages in the “Valley of Christians” and to Tartus, for it is here



The father of the martyr Makar Makar visits the grave of the martyr Krikor Ashnagelian at the Syrian-Armenian cemetery in Aleppo.



» We focus our aid on areas where most Christians live. «

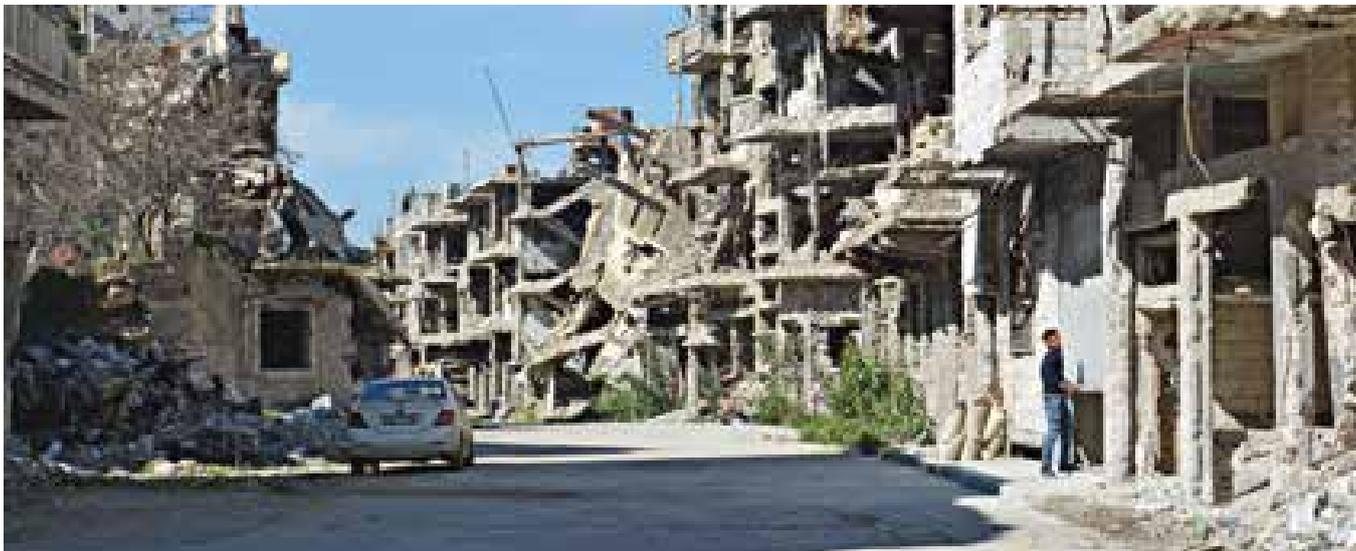
that most of the Christians live. Some examples illustrate how great the need in the country still is. For example, food packages were distributed to 3,000 families with our support. We also provided humanitarian aid for a large-scale “milk programme” that was launched for 800 families with children. Under the motto “Good Samaritan”, we also helped to create an initiative to treat traumatic war

experiences. In order to improve the career prospects of young Christians, we supported scholarships for 12,000 pupils and students. But reconstruction also remains a priority – in 2018, 200 houses and flats were renovated with the help of ACN, offering Christians shelter and security in their homeland once again. The restoration of another 500 residential units will follow this year.

Sister Samia of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary in Homs playing football with one of the children of “Le Sénevé”, a centre that cares for 80 children with disabilities or autism.



Therese Dayekh is a Christian and a young war widow. Her three children were born with scoliosis and require constant medical treatment, which is co-supported by the Church.



Emergency aid for Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

Many Syrian Christians have fled to relatives in Lebanon out of the fear of persecution and violence. But for most, this is only a temporary means of existence. The vast majority of them would like to return home as soon as possible, live from the work of their own hands and help rebuild their country. These believers are especially dear to our hearts. For this reason, around 967,000 euros, or 59% of our

budget in 2018, went to Syria alone as emergency aid for the refugees in Lebanon. We also consider our emergency aid to be an investment in the reconstruction of the Christian community in Syria. Because every Christian who returns home strengthens the unity and diversity of the Syrian Church. And this unity ultimately helps the entire population regain its self-confidence and sense of optimism.



Iraq

Number of projects

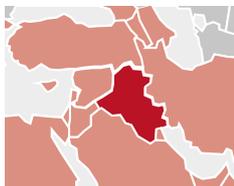
51 40

Type of projects

12 0 0
7 0 5
3 5 8

Head of Section

Dr Andrzej Halemba



After years of siege, Iraq has now been liberated from Daesh terror. But the country is still in a

state of shock. The areas freed from the Daesh are almost completely destroyed; unemployment and economic decline still prevail. As in Syria, millions of people here are dependent on humanitarian aid. The situation for the Christians in the country is disastrous as well. It is estimated that there are only 250,000 Christians living in Iraq at the moment.

Thousands were killed, and hundreds of thousands fled during the war years. We support the local Church wherever we can. ACN's involvement in the reconstruction of Christian settlements on the Nineveh Plains is our largest aid project in recent decades.

The effects of the humanitarian crisis in Iraq continue to ripple throughout the country, even after liberation from the Daesh. Currently, some 6.7 million people are dependent on some form of foreign aid, including 3.3 million children. The Chaldean Patriarch Louis Raphael I Sako

>> We are pleased about every Christian who returns to Iraq. <<



600 Christian refugees have been receiving support and shelter from the Church for six years.

A man and a child in Batnaya, a town that has also suffered extensive war damage.



Holy Mass at St. George's Church in Tesqopa.

>> Reconstruction in the Nineveh Plains is giving thousands of Christians a home again. <<

of Baghdad explained to us in which areas Iraq still needs urgent help: "Education, political support, security in the liberated areas, humanitarian aid and the fight against fundamentalism and terrorism. The stability of this state depends on all these factors. And whether people stay or flee depends on stability."

ACN's primary focus in Iraq is on tasks which are not covered by other aid agencies. For example, the reconstruction of churches and ecclesiastical institutions, monasteries, schools, kindergartens, rectories and parish centres.



Qaraqosh awakens to new life

Qaraqosh was the largest Christian city in Iraq before the Daesh invasion. In 2014, the town in the Nineveh Plains was occupied by Daesh rebels and largely destroyed. It was a place of death. Thanks to ACN-backed reconstruction efforts on the Nineveh

Plains, Christian life in Qaraqosh is vibrant again after four years. By 2018, 377 boys and girls had already celebrated their first communion. They are part of families who fled the Islamists in 2014 and have been able to return in the past two years.



Displaced Christians in Kirkuk receiving food supplies.



ACN also actively supports the pastoral ministry of clergy and religious, e.g. through Mass stipends and material support.

of the Christian faith. Most Christians fled to neighbouring regions, where they were forced to persevere as internally displaced persons. ACN has provided nearly 100,000 of them with regular food and shelter in recent years.

» Of 19,452 families, 9,119 had returned to the Nineveh Plains by March 2019. «

The fate of Christians on the Nineveh Plains has been of particular concern to us in recent years. Daesh rebels not only set fire to houses in the Christian settlements, but also destroyed people's livelihoods by cutting down their fruit trees and ravaging their fields. But the hatred of the 'holy warriors' was also directed against churches as visible signs

In addition, together with the Syrian Catholic, Syrian Orthodox and Chaldean Catholic Churches, we have established the Nineveh Reconstruction Committee. The ambitious reconstruction programme has set itself the goal of persuading the refugees to return to the Nineveh Plains.

The project has developed into a successful model. To date, more than half

Thanks in part to ACN, this family in Qaraqosh was able to return to its home town.



Illuminated candles
in the Cave of Raban
Boya, near the town of
Shaqlaw. The cave is a
place of pilgrimage for
native Christians and
Muslims.



of the Christians have returned to their native homeland. With the help of ACN and other aid organisations, along with government agencies from Germany, Hungary, Austria, Poland and the USA, 5,761 houses and flats have already been renovated on the Nineveh Plains. In 2018 alone, more than 9,100 families were able to find a new home here.

Through the Nineveh Reconstruction Committee, ACN has provided three grants totalling 6.16 million euros for reconstruction efforts on the Nineveh Plains. And the project continues: 14,035 homes, hundreds of churches and community centres, schools and outpatient clinics are part of the largest reconstruction programme the region has ever seen.



Optimal needs assessment thanks to a digital management platform

In order to manage an aid project like the Nineveh Reconstruction Programme, perfect organisation and quality control between the funding partners is required. Thanks to a digital platform that manages the housing projects, a comprehensive data pool of all

participating aid agencies was created, which compiles needs more precisely for concrete assistance on site. Audit results have confirmed the high quality level of the Reconstruction Committee's administrative tasks in terms of accountability, transparency and reporting.





Western/Eastern Europe

Even thirty years after the political changes in Eastern Europe, the effects of atheistic communism are still evident. The population and the Church are affected by economic hardships in many places. In addition, many local churches still have to bear the burdens of their expropriation. ACN has been supporting the Church of Eastern Europe in its spiritual and material reconstruction work for many years with numerous aid projects. In Western Europe, on the other hand, the problem of refugees continues to pose a great challenge to the Church – ACN's main focus here is on pastoral care for Christian refugees.

To this day, local churches in Eastern Europe are still fighting for the restitution of property taken from them as a result of expropriation during the communist era. But in many Eastern European countries, the Church is also under financial pressure due to the economic crisis, and monasteries and seminaries are also affected. Many local churches are still dependent on aid from abroad to maintain pastoral care.

>> There is still much work to be done – spiritually as well as materially. <<

The areas overseen by priests in Eastern European countries are frequently very large. And the need for pastoral

workers who understand people's needs and are able to spiritually support them is immense. This is why the formation of priests, religious and the laity is so important and is at the top of ACN's list of priorities.

But there are also encouraging developments, especially in Russia. Although the Catholic Church is in the minority here, its voice receives more and more attention in society. For more than 25 years, ACN has been promoting dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. This dialogue was also revived by the historic meeting between Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow in February 2016. New constructive forms of cooperation have emerged, in which ACN is also actively involved.



Refugees in Western Europe

The Iraqi refugee Marwan Jalal Khalil attempts to come to terms with his new situation in life.

Head of Section
Peter Humeniuk



Most of the refugees who have found asylum in Western European countries have

experienced persecution, violence and discrimination. A roof over the head and material support often are not enough to restore their courage and confidence – many long for a new spiritual home as well. ACN has therefore intensified its support for the pastoral care of Christian refugees. We support the Church in its pastoral work so that refugees feel

at home in their new homelands, and also when it comes to faith, which is so important for their identity.

ACN not only helps the Western Church in pastoral care, but also supports contemplative monasteries and the formation of priests, as well as Catholic media outlets, congresses and other events that strengthen faith and promote Christian values in society. Project aid also flows into new spiritual communities that are particularly attractive to young believers, frequently helping to bring new momentum to their parishes.

Many requests for support from Western Europe also relate to new evangelisation initiatives. The drop in the number of believers, the decline in priestly and religious vocations, the ageing of society, the dwindling knowledge of faith and the current questioning of the Christian roots of Europe are gradually draining the Church, both in terms of personnel and structure. As in the pastoral care of refugees, the procurement of Bibles and religious literature also plays a decisive role in the new evangelisation. Here ACN helps the Church to procure the necessary literature in the respective native languages.

» There is also a lack of a spiritual home for many refugees. «

Iraqi refugee children reading the children's Bible in the Chaldean Catholic community in Essen/Germany. The community was provided with 300 Arabic Bibles.





Czech Republic



The Czech Republic is considered the most atheistic country in Europe. In the last census in 2011, nearly 80%

of the 10.5 million inhabitants either described themselves as non-denominational or provided no response. Only 10% are Catholic. The consequences of 40 years of communist persecution of the Church have left deep wounds among the local churches that only heal slowly. ACN supports the Church in the training of priests and with Mass stipends, with great success. Many parishes are now experiencing a slight increase in the number of believers.

The Church in the Czech Republic sees hope, mainly in the younger generation. Many young adults are being baptised and there are more families with small children in the Masses. A new generation is growing up here that has made a conscious decision to believe in God. They may still be few in number, but they live their faith with conviction.

Another positive sign for Church and society in the Czech Republic occurred in April 2018 with the transfer of the mortal remains of Joseph Cardinal Beran. The

Cardinal, who had spent three years in German concentration camps and another 16 years in communist prisons as a result of his courageous resistance to the communist government, was expelled from the country in 1965 and died in Rome in 1969. The fact that he found his final resting place in Prague 50 years after his death was highly symbolic for many Czechs and for the country's Church. And this is also true for ACN. After all, the Cardinal was a close friend and partner to our foundation during his exile.



ACN provided formative aid to 23 seminarians of the Archbishop's Seminary in Prague.

Number of projects

10 Project applications
 5 Funded projects

Type of projects

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

Head of Section

Peter Humeniuk

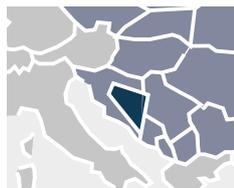
>> A new generation of Christians is growing up here. <<

Seminarians carry Joseph Cardinal Beran's coffin to the Prague Cathedral.



Bosnia and Herzegovina

Renovation of the war-damaged parish church of Sv. Filip i Jakov in Mrkonjic Grad parish.



In Bosnia and Herzegovina, affiliation with a religious community is closely linked to ethnic

origin. The Bosnians are Muslims, the Serbs are Orthodox and the Croats are Catholic. Catholics here form a minority of just under 14% – with a downward trend. Many of the Catholics were already displaced by the Bosnian war and those who return home are often discriminated against and socially disadvantaged. One focus of our project support is therefore supporting initiatives that promote reconciliation between religious communities.

and no longer see any prospects for themselves. For years, bishops have complained that Christians and Croats who had fled the Bosnian war and wanted to return are not receiving the support they deserve.

>> Catholics are not on an equal footing in our country.<<

Due to the widespread social discrimination against Catholics, the Catholic Church is increasingly involved in initiatives that involve interreligious reconciliation work. This ultimately benefits all ethnic groups in the country. At the same time, the initiatives bring permanent jobs to schools and charitable institutions, giving numerous families hope for the future. A good example of this is the John Paul II Youth Centre in Sarajevo, which provides a range of interdenominational dialogue initiatives. It is supported every year by ACN and even opened a branch in northern Bosnia in autumn 2018 – due in part to ACN's help. In addition, we support the reconstruction of churches destroyed in the Bosnian war, help fund the formation of priests and help sisters with subsistence grants.

Overall, an increasing Islamisation can be seen in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is reflected in numerous new mosques in the country. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, has been witnessing a sharp decline. Already during the Bosnian war from 1992 to 1995, every second of what were then approximately 500,000 Catholic Croats was expelled or forced into emigration. The exodus continues to this day. Every year, about 10,000 Catholics leave the country because they suffer disadvantages on the job market, in schools and in social life,

Number of projects

69 50

Type of projects

21 11 0
0 1 1
8 4 4

Head of Section

Magda Kaczmarek

ACN provided financial support for the newly opened pastoral care office of the diocesan youth in Banja Luka.





Thanks to a newly-purchased van for Vsikh Svyatykh parish in Feodosia, this elderly couple can also be supplied with basic necessities by the parish once a month.

Number of projects

☐ 373 ☑ 275

Type of projects

🔔 74	🎯 48	🕯️ 59
📍 3	🎤 2	📖 8
👥 25	👤 15	👤 41

Head of Section

Magda Kaczmarek



Corruption, crime, economic crisis and, last but not least, war in the eastern part of the country

have made life in Ukraine very difficult for years. The Catholic Church is in the minority here and takes the form of Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic denominations. Nevertheless, it has an important voice in the fight against corruption and injustice. Currently, the Church is seeking new ways of evangelisation, as it sees its commitment to youth and the family as an important investment in the future. ACN has therefore increasingly strengthened its commitment to family and youth ministry.

In 2018, family policy was once again a central issue for society and the Church in Ukraine. At the “March for Life” organised by the Interreligious Council of Ukraine in Kiev in June, 8,000 people of all ages and religions demonstrated for the protection of unborn human life and the family. The Church also attaches great importance to youth work. With ACN’s support, a Spiritual Youth Forum was held in October 2018 in preparation for the Youth Synod, where common goals were formulated and ideas and projects developed.

Fortunately, there are still many new priestly vocations in Ukraine. On the other hand, living expenses are continually rising at seminaries and in the monasteries. By promoting the education and training of priests and religious, we try to cushion the material needs of the local Church.

In 2018, the Catholic media outlets Radio Voskressinnya, Zhyve.TV, EWTN and Radio Maria, which spread the Word of God, were also supported. Particularly in a time of military conflict in Eastern Ukraine, they represent a means of reconciliation and understanding amongst the population.

>> For a better future, we are going down new paths in evangelisation. <<



Candles in the Greek-Catholic Church in Kiev.



Russia

Number of projects

□ 91 ✓ 80

Type of projects

🔔 22 🎯 8 🏠 5
 📄 0 🗣️ 6 📖 1
 👤 5 👥 6 👨‍👩‍👧 27

Head of Section

Peter Humeniuk



Although the Catholic Church in Russia is in the minority, its prestige in society is noticeably increasing. However, it still needs help from abroad to care for its believers, who are often scattered across the country. The East Siberian diocese of St. Joseph alone, with its base in Irkutsk, is larger than the USA with an area spread over nearly 10 million square kilometres. ACN's commitment

to the Church in Russia is highly diverse – for more than 25 years, one focus has been promoting dialogue and cooperation between the Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches.

>> We are proud of our cooperation with the Russian Orthodox Church. <<

Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and Metropolitan Hilarion, chairman of the Department of External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, at a meeting in Vienna.



Cooperation between the Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches was further intensified in 2018. For example, an ecumenical working group established in 2016 as a result of the historic meeting between Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill oversaw the practical implementation of points defined by the two church leaders in their declaration.

Wooden church in the Khokhlovka open-air museum.

Priests from Talmenka parish during a procession to the newly renovated St Peter's Church.



These include assisting needy Christians in the Middle East. Against this background, Cardinal Kurt Koch and Metropolitan Hilarion met in Vienna on 12 February 2018 for a joint symposium on the topic of persecuted Christians in the Middle East. In cooperation with the Moscow Patriarchate, ACN presented a brochure on the destruction of churches in Syria.

A visible sign of the growing acceptance of the Catholic Church in Russia in 2018 was the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the reopening of the only Catholic seminary in Russia. Since its foundation, the seminary based in Saint Petersburg has developed into a lively centre of Catholic life, where not only ecumenical but also numerous cultural events take place.



International Ecumenical Conference on Addiction

With ACN's help, the International Ecumenical Conference on Addiction was held in St Petersburg for the second time in October 2018. One of the objectives formulated by participants is

sensitising Catholic and Orthodox priests to the special needs of addicts in pastoral work and establishing support systems for addicts as an integral part of training at seminaries.





In most countries in Asia and Oceania, people have to bear bitter poverty. This is exacerbated by the fact that in most Asian countries, Christians are in the minority and suffer from persecution and discrimination. In Asia, with Oceania, there are also many natural disasters, frequently caused by the effects of climate change. Migration to cities coupled with social and cultural uprooting are often the consequences. Here the Church, in addition to its pastoral mission, is also a source of charitable assistance. But it can hardly cope with its tasks without outside support. In 2018, ACN supported the Church in Asia and Oceania with a total of 12.1 million euros.

The challenges facing the Church in the vast area of Asia and Oceania vary greatly from region to region. For example, Christians in South and South-east Asia have been suffering for years from the rise of Islamism or – as in India – from extreme Hindu nationalism, which has already claimed many Christian victims.

can reach the people to whom they offer pastoral care. In Central Asia, as in nearly all countries of Asia and Oceania, pastoral care for families and young people has become a focal point of the Church's work. ACN supports these initiatives as well as the construction and repair of church buildings and the formation of candidates to the priesthood, religious and catechists.

>> Thanks to your help, we can continue our pastoral work. <<

In East Asia, on the other hand, government repression often makes life difficult for the Church. And in Central Asia, the Church is still occupied with rebuilding its structures after the collapse of communism in the former Soviet republics. In areas that are often vast, vehicles are needed so that priests and sisters

The centre of Marawi on the Mindanao archipelago in the Philippines, which was destroyed by Islamist extremists.



Nun of the Order “Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary”, busy overseeing homework.



Kazakhstan

Number of projects

72 Project applications
58 Funded projects

Type of projects

18 Construction/reconstruction
6 Means of transport
3 Mass stipends
0 Emergency aid
0 Media help
4 Bibles & books
3 Training of priests
6 Existential help
18 Formation of faith

Head of Section

Peter Humeniuk



The former Soviet republic Kazakhstan has been independent since 1991. The

vast country in Central Asia covers 2.7 million square kilometres and is rich in natural resources. About 70% of the 18 million inhabitants are Muslim, while there are only 300,000 Catholic Christians in the country. ACN is aware of the concerns of the local Church and therefore provides support for construction projects, mobility, education and material aid to strengthen the Church’s presence in the country.

Although Muslims are in the vast majority in Kazakhstan, Christians here are largely spared discrimination and persecution, unlike in many other Asian countries. The relationship between Russian Orthodox and Catholic Christians is also rather relaxed. This makes Kazakhstan a good example of the friendly cooperation and coexistence of both Christian denominations. There are joint initiatives and open discussions on many important issues which both churches are confronted with today.

Of the 300,000 Catholics in the country, most are descendants of former deportees and have Polish, German, Baltic or Ukrainian roots. In order to survive economically, the Catholic community here urgently needs help from abroad. ACN helps finance vehicles for pastoral care, supports church building projects and provides assistance to foreign priests and members of the order in obtaining residence visas. In addition, it provides material aid to sisters and funds training for future priests.

» This country is a good example of the friendly coexistence of Catholic and Orthodox Christians. «

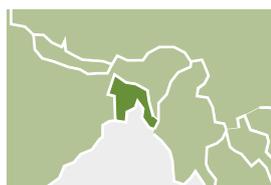


Sisters’ quarters in Kapchagay in south-east Kazakhstan.

In Glasnagar, pupils help build a chapel for the Marist Brothers of Bangladesh.



Bangladesh



Despite gratifying economic growth, the majority of about 163 million inhabitants

still suffers from poverty, which is exacerbated by natural disasters.

As a result, the rural population is increasingly losing sources of livelihood and is migrating to metropolitan areas in large numbers. The local Church faces great challenges in providing pastoral care to new arrivals in the cities, but also as a result of the discrimination they suffer. ACN is involved in numerous projects here, especially in the pastoral care of families and young people.

Muslims make up nearly 90% of Bangladesh's population. The second largest group are Hindus. Only 600,000 people are Christians, 380,000 of them Catholics. Nevertheless, the Catholic Church plays an important role in education and health care. Every year, for example, 100,000 pupils attend Catholic schools, the majority of them Muslims. On the other hand, Christians in Bangladesh are often discriminated against by Muslims, not only because of their faith, but also

because of their ethnic origin, as many of them have indigenous roots.

Often the Church is the only institution here that stands up for the rights of minorities and defends the right to religious expression. ACN supports the local Church in these endeavours and is increasing its funding for family and youth pastoral care, which enables faith to flourish in this difficult environment. Other funding projects include Mass stipends, the purchase of vehicles and the construction of church buildings, which represent the "heart" of the Christian communities.

Restricted rights for Christians.

According to the constitution, ethnic and religious minorities are only entitled to limited rights. For example, many Christians experience disadvantages in their search for work or are victims of land theft. Unfortunately, discrimination against Christian pupils is also common in state schools.

Number of projects

47 32

Type of projects

9 1 6
 1 0 1
 2 2 10

Head of Section

Véronique Vogel

» The Church is often the only institution that fights for the rights of minorities. «





India

Number of projects

701 487

Type of projects

71 44 125
 1 4 17
 124 7 94

Heads of Section

Véronique Vogel
 Reinhard Backes



India has the world's second largest population and is one of the fastest growing economies.

But there are also downsides. Christians and other religious minorities face increasing hostility. Although the Indian constitution guarantees religious freedom, discrimination against religious minorities by Hindu extremists has increased. ACN particularly supports those dioceses where Christians experience political and social pressure and where the Church is in dire material need.

While Christianity has been present in South India for nearly 2,000 years and goes back to the Apostle Thomas, the Church is still young in the poor north and north-east of the country. Here the local Church requires a good deal of support, because church life is still in the process of establishing itself. Parts of the infrastructure are underdeveloped, and remote areas in the jungle or in mountainous regions are difficult to reach.

But despite all the hardships, most of the approximately 21 million Catholics in India live their faith with

» **Christians and other minorities have a difficult time in India.** «



The faithful on their way home after a Christian procession in the state of Bihar.



Sisters in conversation with believers in Gumuda, diocese of Kashinagar.

Catholics in a mission chapel in the state of Jharkhand.



A mother and her son at the chapel of a remote Catholic mission parish in the state of Jharkhand.

conviction. The number of priestly vocations is also high: Altogether, there are more than 30,000 Catholic priests and almost 100,000 sisters – and the number is rising. To further strengthen the presence of the local Church, ACN supports the formation of priests, religious and the laity, the construction and renovation of rectories, chapels and monasteries, and programmes to deepen the faith. Further funds are invested in the purchase of vehicles to ensure pastoral care in areas that are difficult to reach.

Desperate woman in the state of Bihar.



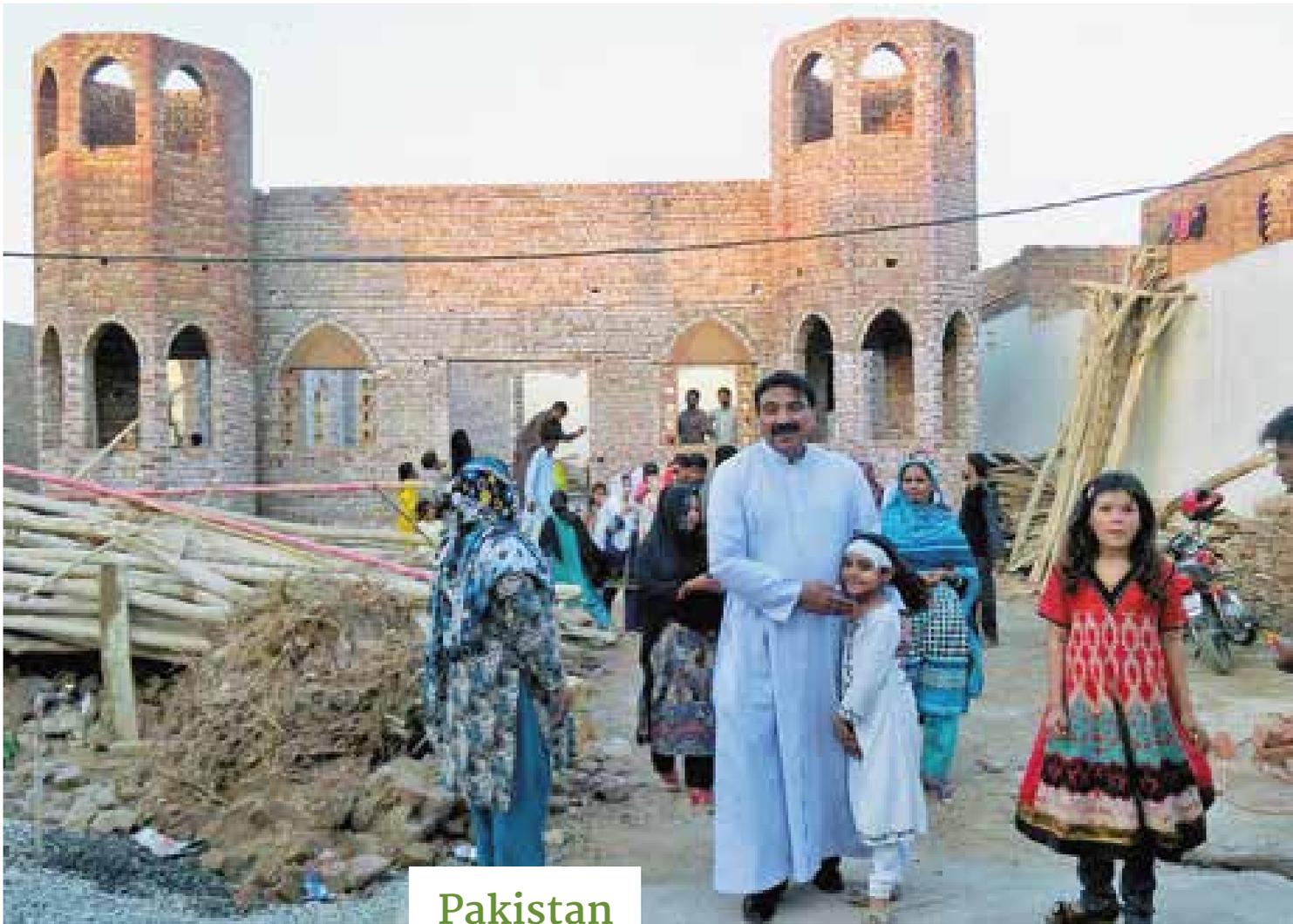
Anti-conversion law weakens religious minorities.

Seven of India's 29 states currently have anti-conversion laws in force. The decree prohibits Hindus from converting to other denominations of faith. Against this background, Christians are often accused of wanting to missionise Hindus. "Dalits", also known as "Untouchables", who

belong to the lowest social class in Indian society, along with people of indigenous roots, are also affected by repressive measures. If they accept the Christian faith, they also lose the little state support that is granted to ethnic minorities and Dalits.



Catechesis in Gumuda, diocese of Kashinagar.



Pakistan

Number of projects

73 61

Type of projects

15 8 4
 1 1 5
 2 1 24

Head of Section
 Reinhard Backes



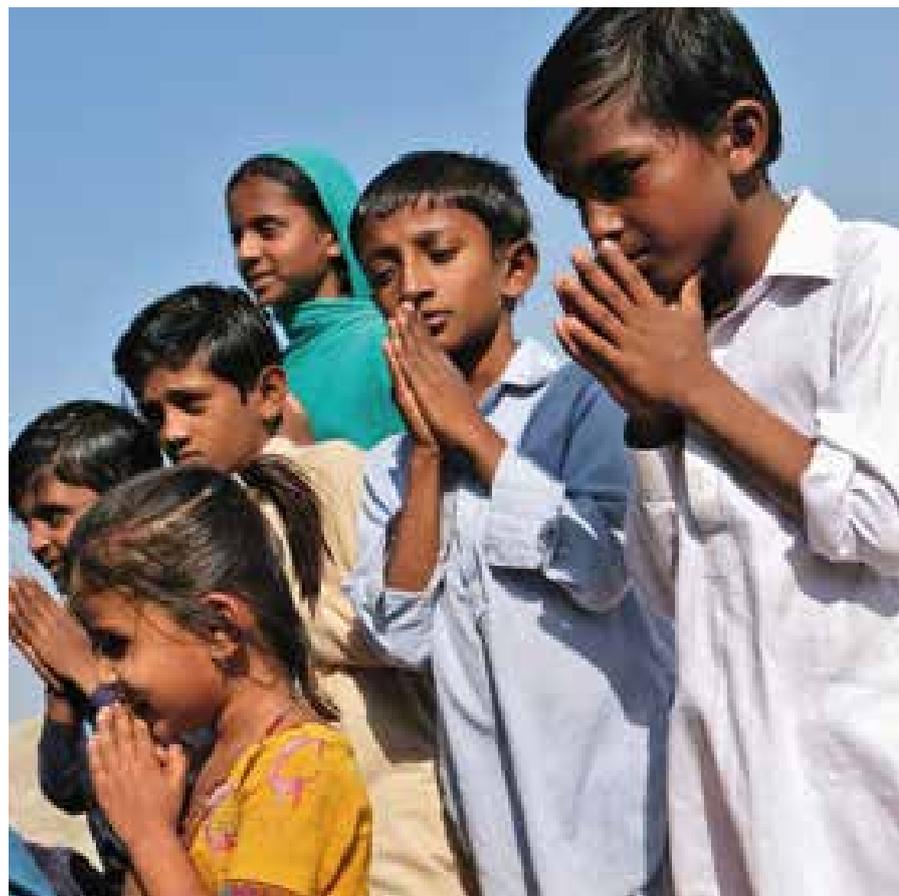
Christians, with about 3 million believers, form a small minority among the 205 million Muslims of Pakistan. Like other religious minorities in Pakistan, they are often treated as second-class citizens. But the Archbishop of Kara-

chi, appointed Cardinal in 2018, sees “signs of hope”. Noticeable momentum has been generated by the local Church, which was able to successfully implement many projects in 2018 with the help of ACN – including spiritual guidance and family pastoral care, which is of central importance for the future of the Church in Pakistan.

Bishop Samson Shukardin visiting the village of Bethlehem in the diocese of Hyderabad.



Nearly completed Catholic church in the centre of Issa Nagri in the diocese of Faisalabad.



Children praying in the village of Bethlehem, diocese of Hyderabad.

» The well-being of families is crucial for the future of the world and the Church. «

Christians in Pakistan still face discrimination in their daily lives. Many are put under pressure to convert to Islam. Not infrequently, they are also falsely accused of having insulted Islam, which comes with serious consequences. It was a joyful moment for Christians in Pakistan when Joseph Coutts, Archbishop of Karachi, was appointed Cardinal by the Pope in June 2018. Overall, the country is marked by positive developments: For example, in October 2018, after ten years, the Supreme Court overturned a death sentence on the Christian Asia Bibi for allegedly insulting the Prophet Mohammed. In light of this, Cardinal Coutts has even made reference to a new “time of hope” for the Church in Pakistan.

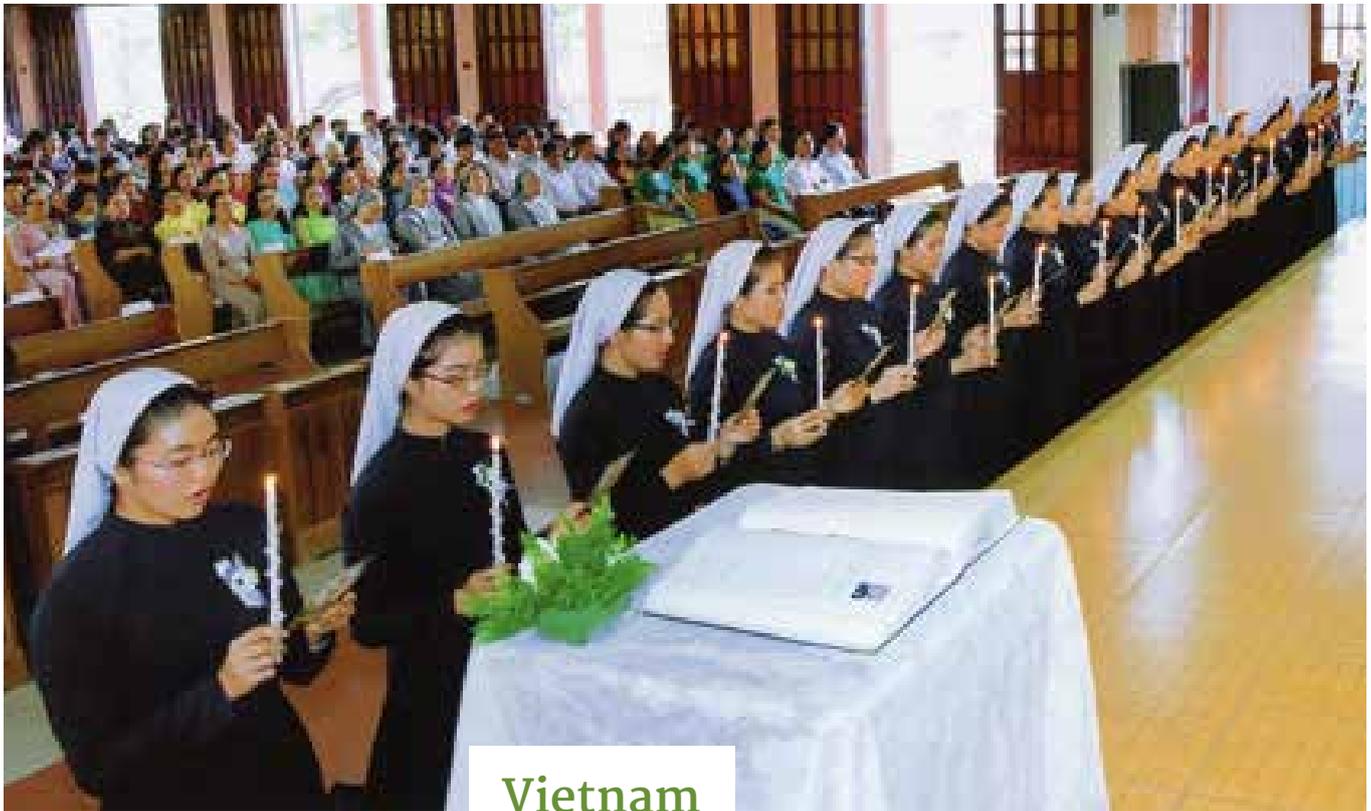
ACN would like to continue supporting the Church in Pakistan on its way to

a better future. This includes funding pastoral initiatives, but the formation of priests, religious and the laity also play an important role. For example, the National Commission for Family and Life, supported by ACN, trains the laity to prepare young couples for marriage and to offer pastoral care for families and couples. “The well-being of families is crucial to the future of the world and the Church,” said Bishop Samson Shukardin, Chairman of the Commission.

ACN also supports the construction of church buildings in all dioceses of Pakistan. Unfortunately, due to the threat of terrorism, it is often necessary to implement security measures at places of worship, including the installation of surveillance cameras, as well as the erection of walls around church buildings.



Catholics, Muslims and Sikhs planting an olive tree at a peace meeting.



Vietnam

95 Sisters of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Nha Trang, South Vietnam, taking their vows.



Although Vietnam, a communist-ruled, Confucian country, has made signif-

icant economic progress in recent years, it still ranks among the poorer middle-income countries. Consumer-oriented thinking and the desire for a higher standard of living drive people to the cities on a massive scale. The resulting process of upheaval and crisis of faith has also been observed with great concern by the Church. ACN supports the Catholic Church in its efforts to restore stability and perspective to the faithful.

predominantly benefit male and female religious and diocesan priests.

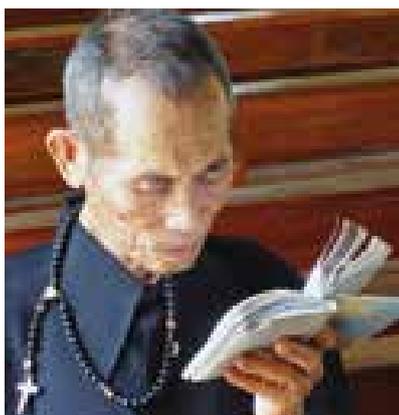
The Church is also concerned about religious freedom. Although the government has recently shown itself to be more tolerant of religions, the Bishops' Conference criticised the 2016 Religions Act for not defining the freedom of faith and religion as a human right, but instead as a grace that must be requested. Due to war damages and climate changes, numerous renovations and new constructions of places of worship are still necessary. We continue to try to take these circumstances into account with moderate construction aid. For their part, many dioceses are careful to keep their own contributions as high as possible and to only use ACN grants for supplementary purposes. This is a welcome development, because nothing makes us happier than local churches becoming more self-sufficient.

Number of projects

□ 140 ✓ 139

Type of projects

🔔 22 🎯 23 🕯️ 1
 📖 1 🎤 0 📄 0
 👤 78 🏠 0 👤 14



As a result of the rural exodus and growing migrant labour, traditional values and customs in Vietnam are increasingly being lost. While young parents frequently seek work in the cities, their children usually grow up with their grandparents. Against this background, in 2017 the Bishops' Conference launched a three-year programme for the pastoral care of families and began to adapt its catechesis to social upheavals. Such challenges can hardly be overcome without new priests and sisters who are sufficiently trained. Our help for the Vietnamese Church therefore also includes stipends and training allowances, which

>> The Church tries to be a home for families that are falling apart as a result of migrant labour. <<



Fabian Alotau with his wife and daughters; he used to beat his wife. But the pastoral care of his family helped him to change his behaviour. Today he is the family counsellor in the diocese.

Papua New Guinea

Number of projects

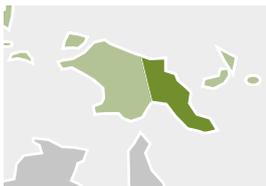
□ 42 ✓ 23

Type of projects

🔔 3	🎯 6	👤 4
📍 0	🎤 0	📖 0
👥 4	👤 2	👤 4

Head of Section

Irene Eschmann



Papua New Guinea is the largest and most populous state in Oceania.

The country has one of the most diverse ecosystems on earth and a myriad of different cultures with around 830 languages. Most of the approximately 8 million inhabitants profess Christianity, and about half are Catholics. Many people feel left behind and uprooted by the country's rapid technological progress. ACN supports the local Church with numerous support measures, mainly for family pastoral care. The Church is also active with social initiatives to strengthen people psychologically and to anchor them more deeply in the faith.

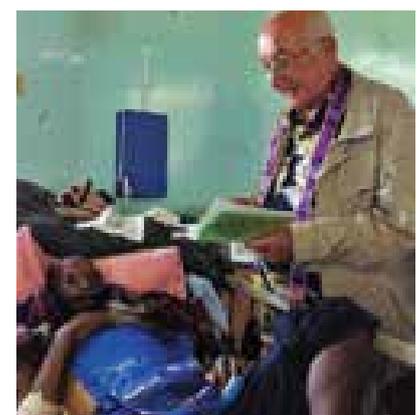
Many people in Papua New Guinea feel unable to cope with the rapid changes brought about by digitalisation and globalisation. Social uprooting, a high level of crime, drug and alcohol addiction, domestic violence and child abuse are often the consequences. Additionally, the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea has only been in place for a few generations, so it is often not yet deeply rooted. Here people often lack faith as a depend-

able support system. For this reason, the Catholic Church is focusing more and more on family pastoral care and social initiatives, so that people do not feel left alone in facing the mounting challenges and can envision a future for themselves. ACN supports the local Church in these activities.

>> Those who have been uprooted need faith as a reliable means of support. <<

Once again, we supported an extensive pastoral programme in the diocese of Wabag that will be carried out over a period of three years. Most of the faithful there live in a mountainous region, which is difficult to access. Thirteen committees of the diocese organise pastoral and social initiatives in the parishes which cover nearly all the areas of daily life. They also guide the faithful so that they can continue the projects independently in the future. Deepening the faith and improving the actual circumstances of life thus go hand in hand. In addition, we were able to purchase new vehicles for pastoral care for several dioceses in the country and support needy priests with Mass stipends.

A priest visiting sick people in a hospital.





Philippines

Number of projects

□ 87 ✓ 78

Type of projects

🔔 17 🎯 8 🏠 5
 📍 0 🗣️ 3 📖 4
 👤 14 👤 6 👤 21

Head of Section

Reinhard Backes



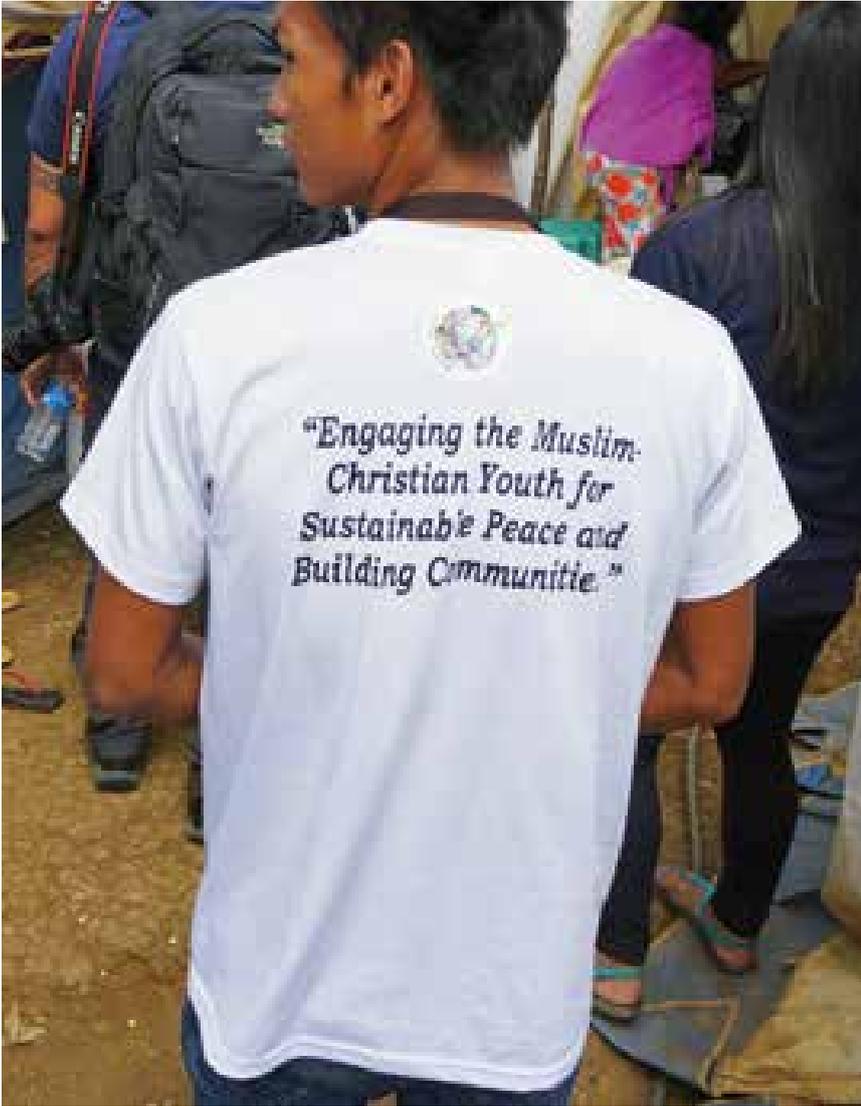
The history of the Catholic Church in the Philippines goes back 400 years. Today,

80% of the population profess the Catholic faith. However, the Church's relationship with President Rodrigo Duterte remains tense, partly because he has already had thousands of alleged drug criminals executed without a trial. Not only problems such as drug dealing, but also social inequality and growing materialism are noticeable everywhere in the island nation. ACN is particularly instrumental in helping poorer dioceses to maintain the necessary structures. Another focal point of our assistance is the funding of pastoral care – especially for the refugees on the Mindanao archipelago.

The Mindanao archipelago, on which a relatively large number of Muslims live, occupies a special position on the Philippine islands. Islamist terrorist groups want to establish an Islamic state there. In May 2017, several hundred Islamist fighters nearly razed the city of Marawi to the ground, killed numerous people and took hostages.

Those who were able to escape the bloodbath fled from the terrorists in mortal terror. ACN provided emergency aid to the refugees. Meanwhile, its main focus is on providing pastoral and therapeutic support for the traumatised. In 2018, for example, ACN supported a project to help 200 men, women and children who had been imprisoned for months and suffered physical and emotional anguish. These include raped women and girls. Christians and Muslims alike are cared for.

» Faith and dialogue are our guides to reconciliation. «



One of the students involved in the “Youth for Peace” project in Marawi to promote dialogue between Muslims and Christians.



Students promote dialogue between Christians and Muslims.

The massacre on Mindanao ultimately prompted a further initiative by the local Church, which is also supported by ACN: In the “Youth for Peace” project, Christian and Muslim students visit refugee camps, where thousands of refugees from Marawi are still living. The students help the refugees, regardless of their religious affiliation, and are visible proof

that peaceful coexistence is possible, even in the wake of the terrible events of 2017. For the local bishop Edwin de la Peña y Angot of Marawi, dialogue and the reconstruction of peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims are a top priority. ACN will continue to support his peace and reconciliation initiatives.



A refugee child in a Christian refugee camp after the terrible siege of Marawi.



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

2 Corinthians 5:14

Our mission

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

Our vision

A world in which Christianity can thrive everywhere.

Our guidelines

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



Our values

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. Trust

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



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

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

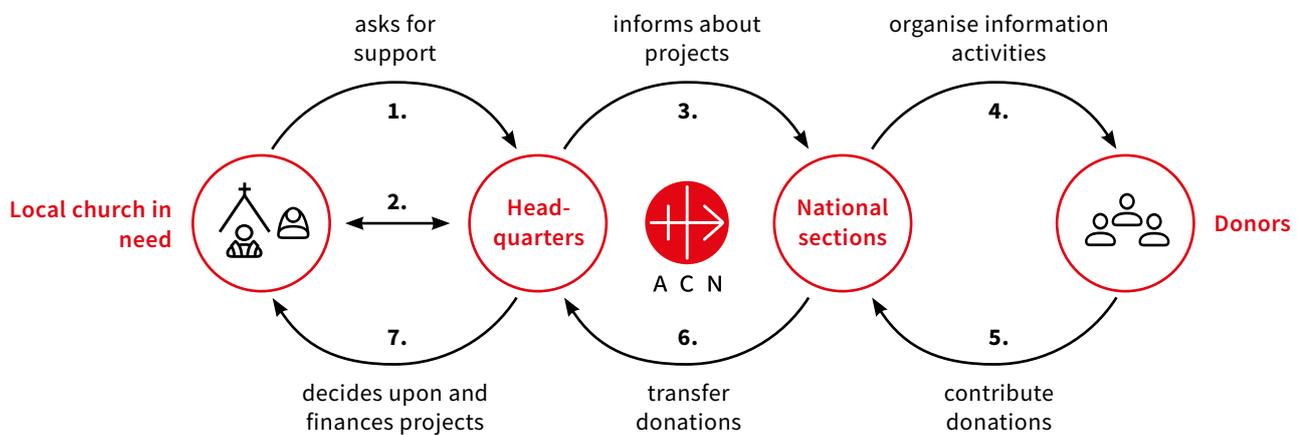
It is our moral duty to channel the donations we receive with the utmost care. For it is our mission to promote ecclesial and spiritual communion between those who suffer for their faith in Jesus Christ and those who possess a compassionate and generous heart. And we will remain faithful to this credo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

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

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



Donation cycle



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

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

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

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.

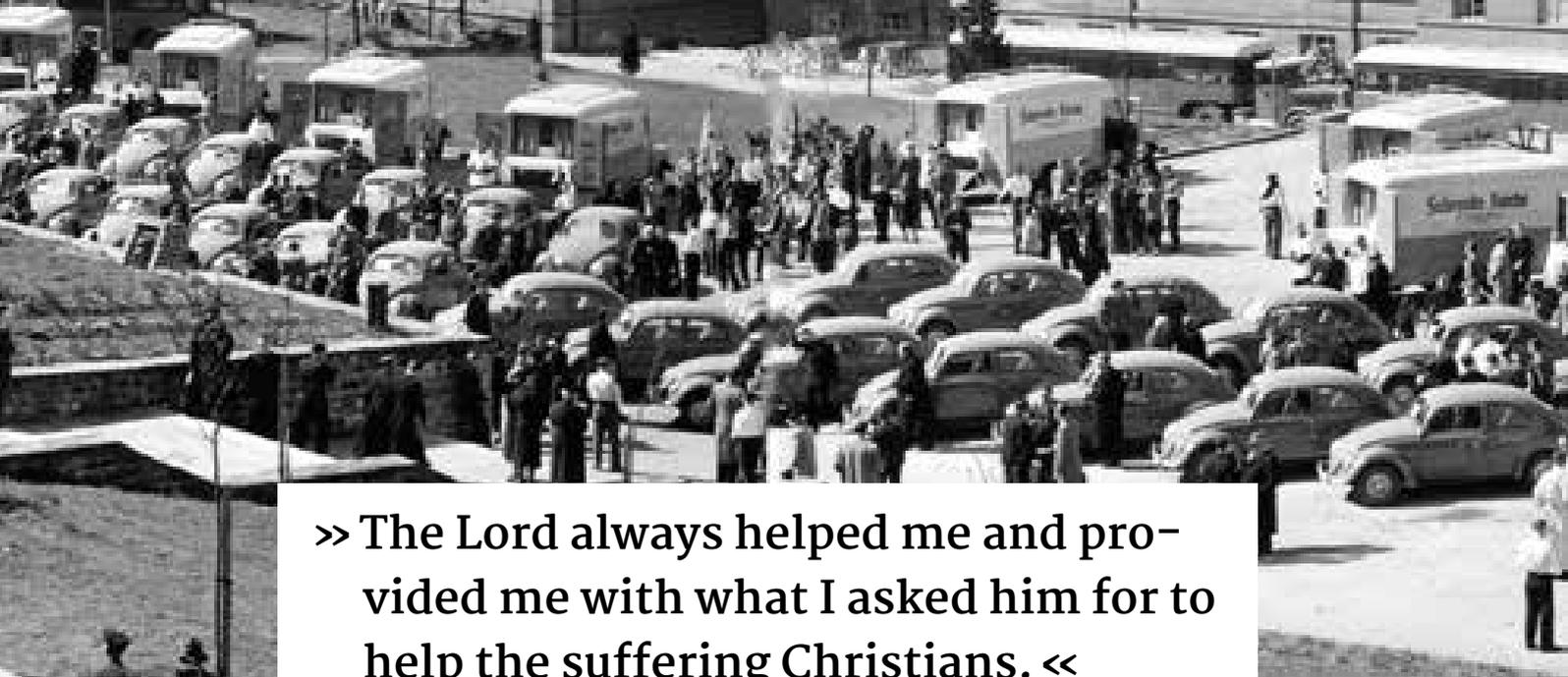
3. ACN headquarters informs the national offices about local fundraising projects and financing through benefactors.

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

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

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

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



» The Lord always helped me and provided me with what I asked him for to help the suffering Christians. «

Father Werenfried van Straaten, founder of Aid to the Church in Need

A glimpse into history reveals the lasting impact that our founder Father Werenfried van Straaten still has today. In his spirit, we remain active worldwide

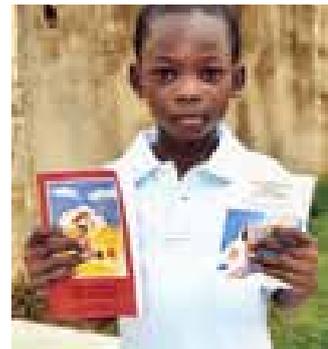
in helping the cause of persecuted and suffering Christians. This will continue to remain true in the future.



1947 Father Werenfried van Straaten calls on the people of Belgium and the Netherlands to help displaced Germans, including 3,000 priests (hence the original name “Ost-priesterhilfe”). This aid to former enemies was a unique act of reconciliation.

1975 Relocation of the international headquarters of Aid to the Church in Need from Rome to Königstein/Taunus

1979 Start of the “Children’s Bible” project. The Bible has since been translated into 191 languages; more than 51 million copies have been published and distributed to date



1950 Start of the “Chapel Truck Initiative” – 35 trucks are converted into “mobile chapels” for persons displaced from their homeland

1984 Recognition of Aid to the Church in Need by the Holy See as a Universal Public Association of Pontifical Right

1952 Start of aid for the persecuted Church behind the “Iron Curtain”

1989 Political turning point in Eastern Europe, aid for reconstruction and new evangelisation in the former Eastern Bloc countries

1953 Foundation of the International Building Order to construct houses and churches for the poor

1956 After the Hungarian uprising, the local Church is assisted

1992 Start of the project for reconciliation with the Russian Orthodox Church

1959 Start of the Asian Assistance Fund and first encounter of Father Werenfried with Mother Teresa in the “House of the Dying” in Calcutta

1997 50th anniversary of Aid to the Church in Need

1962 Father Werenfried participates in the Second Vatican Council; start of aid to Latin America

2003 Father Werenfried dies on 31 January at the age of 90 in his place of residence, Bad Soden/Taunus

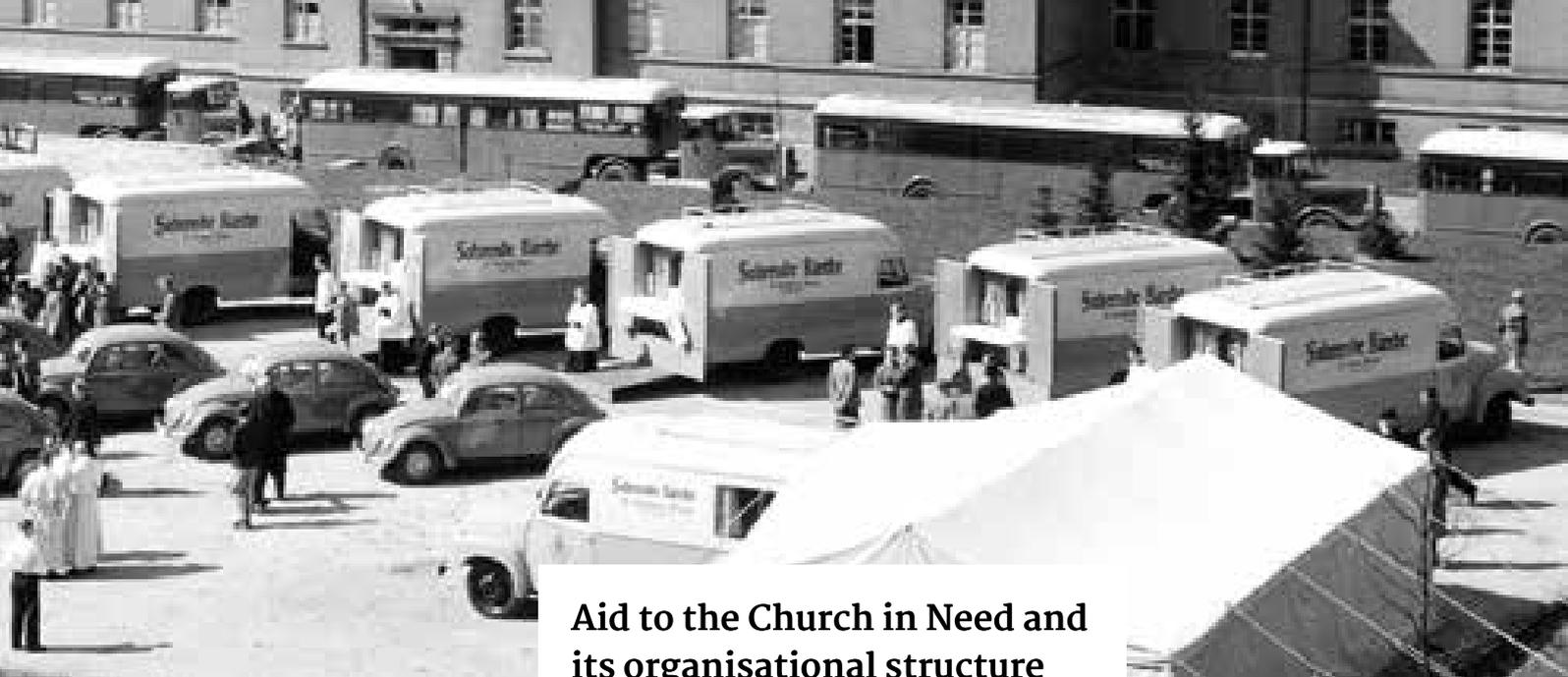
1965 Start of aid in Africa

2007 Pope Benedict XVI asks ACN to strengthen its commitment in the Middle East

1966 The congregation of the “Daughters of the Resurrection” is founded; the first educational facilities for young African women are constructed in the Congo

2011 Elevation of Aid to the Church in Need to a Foundation of Pontifical Right by Pope Benedict XVI





Aid to the Church in Need and its organisational structure

Mauro Cardinal
Piacenza
President



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

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

Thomas
Heine-Geldern
Executive President



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

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



Father
Martin Barta
International
Ecclesiastical Assistant

Philipp Ozores
Secretary General



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



Regina Lynch
Director of Projects

Eric Dupont
Director of
Administration



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



Mark von
Riedemann
Director for
Public Affairs and
Religious Freedom

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Aid to the
Church in Need

ACN INTERNATIONAL



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