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Future 'shepherds' for Peru. Seminarians and deacons of Tarma diocese pray before the crib.

"Let us make peace with one another, in our hearts.

Let us forget the old hostilities. Let us reach out our hands to one another in gentleness and kindness. Let us restore love. For the tiny weeping Child in the Manger is Emmanuel, God-with-us. And God is Love."

**Father Werenfried (1913-2003),
founder of Aid to the Church in Need**

Dear Friends,

Christmas. The carols will ring out again, like an echo of the angel voices: "Silent night, holy night..." Yet the thunder of the guns will brutally drown out these gentle sounds. Exactly 59 years ago Fr Werenfried was painfully aware of this profound contradiction. But it did not discourage him. On the contrary, an inner force compelled him to proclaim both the joy and the challenge of Bethlehem. And so he wrote a letter to stir up consciences. With the power of his prophetic voice he reminded the people of the burning relevance of St Luke's account, for "there was no room for him at the inn because 'his own' were lacking in love. This is the dark root of all the wars and devastations". Then as now, no room for Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The Son of God and of the Virgin Mary, the infinite God, is born among animals. He has come in order to make us children of his Father. If the world would only embrace this new life, there would be

peace and no wounded victims, no exiles, no burned-out homes.

But the light will still shine out this Christmas. In thousands of Cuban homes, in the darkness of the Caribbean night, the radiance of the Christ Child will shine forth. You have helped to bring his image



"Wherever Christians gather around the Manger of Bethlehem, the light of God's love will shine from the Child."

here. Then, in the town of Guane, in Cuba, an aged catechist will be able to tell his friends once more what he considers to be a summary of the entire Gospel: "If God is not Father, then we are not brothers and each one of us is neighbour only to himself." Around the world, wherever Christians gather around the Manger of Bethlehem, the light of God's love will shine from the Child, the Sun in Mary's arms. And so each one of us will be able to see that God is the true Father of love and that in his Son every man is a brother.

In his encyclical *Deus Caritas est*, Pope Benedict XVI has told us: "The Christian's programme is 'a heart which sees'. This heart sees where love is needed and acts accordingly." In this spirit, we have selected three Christmas gifts on your behalf, in order to give joy to the Child in the Manger.

Thanks to your generosity they will be signs of peace and fraternal charity. 100,000 Bibles will go to Ukraine, mopeds to religious Sisters in Vietnam and chapels for remote rural villages in Mozambique. They all speak of Emmanuel, God-with-us, who intervened in our history and transformed it. For it was he who made space in our narrow hearts so that we could welcome our neighbour. I rejoice that during Mass on this Holy Night I will be able to enter into the Father's house, together with you and your families. And in this place of hospitality we will find peace, thanks to the Child in the Manger.

P. Jacques Allienor

International Ecclesiastical Assistant



Following God in thought and deed

During his recent visit to Germany Pope Benedict XVI pointed out the royal road towards reconciliation for us all. “If we follow God in all that we think and do, then we draw closer together, we gain freedom and thus true fraternity is born.”

Starting from God to create fraternity – this is brought about by dialogue in all its forms. In Mindanao in the Philippines, Father D’Ambra has been practising such dialogue with Muslims for over 15 years. For Christians in this predominantly Muslim region of the Philippines, as in other

Islamic regions, dialogue is essential to survival. Father D’Ambra is trying to establish this above all among young people. They produce joint theatre performances, radio and television programmes and edit newspapers together. They call



Kazakhstan. Young pilgrims come to honour Our Lady of Ozyornoe. First they unite with the suffering of Jesus...



... then in the church of the Queen of Peace they celebrate resurrection and reconciliation.



productions. We have promised them €15,000 for the current year and again for next year.

Starting from God – this is something that is also happening at the shrine of Ozyornoe in Kazakhstan. It is a place of miracles. During the persecution of the Soviet era the people here were close to starvation. Then a sudden three-day thaw melted the snow and created a lake with countless fish. In thanksgiving for their salvation the people built a shrine here to Our Lady Queen of Peace. Next year 400 young people from five different countries will gather here

for a meeting of reconciliation. To accommodate them the premises of the former nursery school next to the shrine of Our Lady now need to be extended. We are contributing €6,000 to support this meeting of fraternal charity. Will you help us? ●



The stage is set for reconciliation: young Christians and Muslims in Mindanao practise for real peace.



In Sri Lanka, too, this Catholic youth organisation follows programmes which cultivate peace.



In the seminary chapel – prayer, the power source of vocations

Lviv – the dream has become reality

The dream of Cardinal Myroslav Lubachivsky and Father Werenfried has come true. Last year in Lviv, west Ukraine, the Holy Spirit Seminary, which trains candidates for the Eastern-rite Catholic priesthood, was formally consecrated. Now the attached Faculty for Theology has also been completed. At the Mass to celebrate the beginning of the new

academic year the rector of the seminary reminded the 203 seminarians of the hope and determination of Father Werenfried and the generosity of the benefactors of ACN, which together made this wellspring of faith in Ukraine possible. The joy and jubilation of the students tell us plainly that it was worth it; this land indeed has a future. ●



Your Christmas gifts for the Church in need

€5 – Bibles for Ukraine

Christmas is the feast of the Good News. For almost 2,000 years Christian believers – followers of the incarnate Son of God – have carried this message out into the world in deed and word, and especially through the Book of books, the Bible. In **Ukraine** the Ukrainian-language Bibles sponsored by ACN have all been distributed, but people's hunger for the message of love, after so many years of suffering under Communism, remains insatiable. Many families still have no Bible, and a number of seminarians could also use a personal Bible for their prayers. The Ukrainian Catholic bishops have no funds to commission a new print-run, so they have asked us for 100,000 copies of the full Bible for their cash-strapped dioceses. We have promised **€300,000** to help cover the costs. Will you give **€5** and so make a gift of the complete Good News to a catechist, a family or a seminarian? ●



Many Bible schools lack sufficient copies of the Holy Scriptures for their teaching work, as here in Kiev-Vyshhorod.

€50 – Mopeds for religious Sisters in Vietnam

“In that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night ... they went with haste ... all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.” (Luke 2:8 foll.) Among the shepherds of today there are many religious Sisters. But the people of goodwill are not always “in that region” and the heralds of the Good News are often overburdened. For the Sisters of the *Congregation of the Miraculous Medal* in **Vietnam** many problems could be resolved simply with a bicycle – though a moped would be still better. Then they could ferry sick people to the hospital and give religious instruction in remote villages. We have promised the Bishop of Kontum at least one moped for a group of 27 religious of this congregation. If just 24 of you could give **€50** each, then the moped for these ‘shepherdesses’ could soon be standing by the crib. And if you give more, then we can help other Sisters so that they too can proclaim the Gospel in their particular region. ●



A moped for the ‘shepherdesses’ of today, so that the Sisters can carry the Good News to many more people.

€100 – Chapels for Mozambique

A lodging for God – the families in the 19 widely scattered villages which make up the parish of Majune in **Mozambique** would like nothing more dearly... In fact they plan to build three chapels: one in Chipwipwi, dedicated to St Francis of Assisi; one in Mukulungu, for St Teresa of the Child Jesus; and a third in the village of Micoco, for the Holy Family. They want God's presence to be visible. But the monthly income of an average village family is just €9. They need this much to care for the elderly, the widows and orphans. Their prayers are so precious, and how gladly they would come to the Manger of the Lord! The missionaries in the Lichinga diocese would eventually like to build a lodging for God in every single village in the parish; so far they have asked us to help for the first three. If 40 of you can give us **€100** each, then a chapel can be built. But we have promised three, for at Christmas time it must not be said that there was nowhere for the Christ Child to lay his head. ●



Thanks to you, the parish of Namicapo already has its chapel. In Majune they are still waiting.



God is here again, visible and redeeming

With tears in their eyes they stood there and gazed at the little figure of “El Niño Jesus”, the Christ Child in the crib. God has not forgotten us – this was the message one read in their tears. From 1970 until 1997 there was officially no Christmas in Cuba, the island of state-proclaimed atheism. And so the Child carries a message – God is here again, visible and redeeming. In hundreds of thousands of Cuban homes the Christ Child is reviving the life of souls, prompting questions about



faith and salvation, especially now at Christmas time. The Cubans and the Church in Cuba are infinitely grateful. “Only God can know what you have done for us,” writes one bishop. “He will reward you, as only He can.”



Hans-Peter Röhlin,
President

The Last Word

A blessing for the family

Some of you may remember me talking twice about a handicapped boy called Leo. Now his parents have told me: “On October 5, 2000, our eldest son, Leo, was born in the most difficult of circumstances. Days, months, even years of uncertainty followed. The doctor’s gloomy diagnosis of handicap presented us with some hard challenges.

“Recently Leo took part in a circus project at the school for handicapped children. He was a magician – his first great performance. With a broad smile and beaming face, Leo won the acclaim of the whole circus audience. Leo is a battler and has developed a strong personality. His laughter and his positive approach have an infectious capacity and constantly give us new strength and courage. Leo has taught us that life can still be mastered, despite all the obstacles.”

A handicapped child can be a special blessing. Is that not a clear sign of God’s handiwork? He himself became a child in order to redeem us. The Child in the Manger shows us that this life is indeed worthy of redemption, despite all the obstacles, and even when this life sometimes seems more akin to a circus. We only have to believe in the blessing of life, as Leo does. The divine Child will do the rest.

Need, love and thanks – Your letters

A living sign of the presence of Christ Christmas is just around the corner. You can see how you are making Christmas happen every day in many places around the world. A feeling of gratitude arises in people’s hearts for now they have a space where they can celebrate the love of God, and homes where their human dignity is restored. You are the living sign that He is merciful and cares for people’s needs and necessities throughout the world. For me ACN signifies the presence, the birth of Jesus every day. Happy Christmas!

A woman from Brazil

Carrying on the wishes of Fr. Werenfried
Enclosed please find a cheque for \$150: for Mass Stipends, for the Centre in Goma, and for the Africa Family Life Federation. Thank you for the Rosary Beads from Bethlehem. My first Rosary was received from you 13 years ago. It is an honour to have received five sets of beads over the years, all blessed by Pope John Paul II. Many Rosaries have been

said on them and no doubt will be for years to come. It was very interesting to read the Mirror and the Annual Report. You certainly are carrying on the wishes of Fr. Werenfried. God bless his soul. God bless you.

A woman from Sydney, Australia

Your generosity places a responsibility on us

Our heartfelt thanks for the help that ACN has given our seminary. Every gift is an expression of the kindness of God the Lord, who makes use of good people on earth. The generosity we have received places a responsibility on us too.

The archdiocesan seminary in Poznan, Poland

Camillo, the Christ Child and Cuba

For Camillo and the other children, who are bringing the image of the Christ Child to people in Cuba (Mirror 4). May the merciful God bless Cuba.

A woman from France

Where to send your contribution for the Church in Need:

Please use the **Freepost** envelope – it saves you money and helps us.

In Ireland: Aid to the Church in Need, 151 St Mobhi Road, Glasnevin, Dublin 9, tel. (01) 8377516. (Registered Charity No. 9492).

In Great Britain: Aid to the Church in Need, 1 Times Square, Sutton, Surrey, SM1 1LF, tel. 020-8642 8668. (Registered Charity No. 1097984).



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