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Communion of the embattled Saints: The Church in China is young.

“An unfeigned Christian life is the surest means of converting atheist persecutors of the Church and healing the evil of persecution at its very roots. That is why the conversion of the Christians in the free world is of infinitely greater value to the persecuted Church than any material aid.”

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

Dear Friends,

I moved house recently. Only the basic essentials came with me. They included a rosary of jade, in translucent green, made in China. The arms of Jesus on the Crucifix are stretched out powerfully towards Heaven. A priest – a friend of old Father Petrus Han – made it, in the evenings, with the self same hands that consecrate the bread and wine, and which, at the moment of absolution, make the sign of the Cross.

The priests of China are very poor. If young men should come and knock at their door in future and ask to enter the seminary, there will be scarcely the barest financial resources available. In a number of regions of the People’s Republic, seminarians gather together in secret in cramped rooms. The handful of books they do possess are passed from hand to hand like a treasure.

In Serbia too the need of the Church is great. The wounds of the terrible Balkan wars have not yet healed. In such a complex religious, national and ethnic situation, a

united clergy is of vital importance for the country. Yet at present Serbia’s 31 Catholic seminarians are studying in four different countries and at 10 different universities. There is no Catholic seminary. Hence, for the Catholic bishops of Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro, the construction of a seminary and theological faculty is an urgent



“Christianity is emerging more and more as a viable answer to the emptiness of meaning that communism has left behind.”

priority. Thanks to your help this is now to be built in Subotnica, the only predominantly Catholic town in Serbia.

In China society is changing at breathtaking speed. Christianity is emerging more and more as a viable answer to the emptiness of meaning that communism has left behind. The Catholic families are stronger. It is from them that vocations to the priesthood are springing. Will the Chinese seminarians of today be as faithful as all the loyal priests who suffered under Mao? Father Han was studying medicine when he entered the

seminary. As a priest he spent eight years in prison and almost 20 years in labour camps. There he suffered all kinds of abuse and appalling solitude. His faith matured and in the end he was able to say: “Now I am very grateful for all those years in captivity. They have made me aware just how precious my life as a priest is.” Will the priests of tomorrow also be filled with this kind of

spirit? Much depends on the spiritual formation they receive in the seminaries. Earlier this year Pope Benedict XVI proclaimed a World Day of Prayer for the Church in China, for

24 May. He composed a beautiful prayer to Our Lady for this occasion: “Our Lady of Sheshan, sustain all those in China, who, amid their daily trials, continue to believe, to hope, to love. May they never be afraid to speak of Jesus to the world, and of the world to Jesus.” With your help, we will continue to commit ourselves to this goal. I bless you,

P. Joaquin Allieret

International Ecclesiastical Assistant



China's faith and hope – and your charity

“Faith is the substance of hope,” writes Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical *Spe salvi*. It is this deep faith that has given the Christians of China the courage to hope for better times in the midst of persecution.

There is now “greater religious freedom than in the past”, yet nonetheless, “grave limitations remain”, so that for the Vatican “the present College of Catholic Bishops of China cannot be recognised as an Episcopal Conference”. Extracts from the Pope’s letter of 27 May 2007 to the Catholics of China. For Catholics, poverty and oppression continue to be a daily reality, and indeed many fear that after the Olympics the hardships will once again intensify. China’s Catholics are putting their hope in Christ – and in us also, in your loving charity.

You are answering their prayers: In the south of China, for example, where there is a shortage of priests, we are helping with the training of catechists (€4,000) so that they can assist the priests in their pastoral work, help with parish administration and take on whatever tasks they can to help out. In the north – and elsewhere – the religious Sisters and novices often have to live separately from one another, in the homes of Catholic families. But vocations are growing, and we are helping to build a convent with its own chapel, study areas and living accommodation (€20,000). Where churches are falling to ruin, like in the west of



What more can they do? China's Christians live and pray – and count on your help.

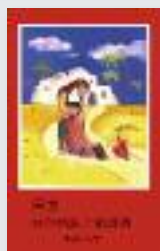
China, we are contributing to their repair (€7,700). Where Catholics are finding it hard to spread the Faith, we are helping them to print pamphlets and fund other means of communication (€28,000), so that for them too the ‘Communion of the

Saints’ can be a living experience. Faith, Hope and Charity – it is a wonderful Christian duty to be able, with the help of these virtues, to bring comfort and joy to our oppressed brothers and sisters in China. ●

Guarded like a treasure – the Child’s Bible

God speaks to his children – to his Chinese children too. 237,000 *Child’s Bibles* have now been distributed in the country, and the demand is still growing.

Indeed, it is growing worldwide. In 2007 we printed and distributed 1,126,500 new copies. This year another 1,212,500 will be added, including new languages such as Maconde for Mozambique and Karen for Burma. And *I believe*, ACN’s *Little Catholic Catechism*, is also becoming a



worldwide favourite. Since 2007 another million copies have been added to the total, including 10,000 in Chinese.

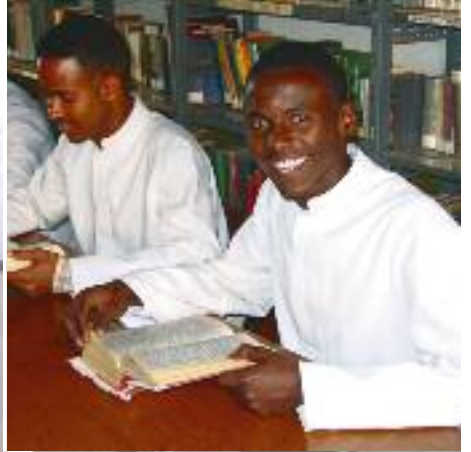
Both books are “of priceless value for catechesis and above all for the family apostolate”, writes the bishop of Melo in Uruguay. In many countries, including China, these books are guarded like a treasure. They have just two copies for each parish... Will you help us to increase this treasure, so that more people can share in it? ●



A priceless treasure: Chinese children with their “jewel”. ●



Seminarians – a vocation of love



A life for God – from the formal clothing of the new seminarian, right through his studies, to ordination and public profession.

One does not become a Christian for oneself, one always becomes a Christian for others – these words of the Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar apply particularly to seminarians. “It is a vocation of love” – to borrow the words of St Therese of Lisieux, now a Doctor of the Church.

Around the world the number of seminarians is growing; under Pope John Paul II it doubled in fact. But their training, which is crucial to the human and professional quality of these future priests, is expensive. Thanks to your generosity, we were able to help no fewer than 15,743 seminarians financially last year. There will be just as many this year. Our help is needed everywhere – in Africa, Latin America, Asia and in Central and Eastern Europe. This help can take many forms; sometimes it involves construction and renovation work, as in the diocese of Hinche (**Haiti**), or in Santiago de

Cuba (**Cuba**), or again in Ouessou (**Congo**). Sometimes it takes the form of scholarships, as in **Cameroon**, **Pakistan** and the **Czech Republic**. But ultimately it always involves service for others. As Deacon Roger from the diocese of Tsiroanomandidy in **Madagascar** writes: “The Word of God, which I have sought out and wish to fulfil in my life, means this: ‘The Son of man came not to be served but to serve.’ (Mk 10:45).” In other dioceses these future priests see themselves as “apostles of peace” – for example in the seminary of Christ the King in Pakistan, a country marked by growing Islamic fundamentalism. On average you give **200 Euros** per year for each seminarian. But the requests from around the world are piling up. They are praying for us and asking our prayers for them – and many of their bishops are wondering if we could perhaps manage to be still more generous... ●





Repeatedly and insistently, Pope Benedict XVI pleads for peace in Lebanon. The only way is that of dialogue, he urges. This is the way being followed by Maronite Christians in the archdiocese of Baalbek and Deir el Ahmar, a region in the Bekaa Valley surrounded by Islamic settlements. As Archbishop Simon Atallah (photo) writes, the pursuit of this stony path demands “leaders with a solid professional, human and spiritual formation”. He thanks you for helping the six seminarians of his diocese to acquire this formation, which also includes every kind of service within the seminary. And he is praying that the number, not only of his own seminarians but also of our benefactors, will increase.



Hans-Peter Röhlin,
President

The Last Word

Here and now

It is strange how certain things have great importance in a particular context but elsewhere lose all their significance. So it is that when I am travelling, my normally indispensable house keys lie there all but forgotten. And when I am in Lisbon, my German language is of little use to me. And so the value of things does not reside exclusively in what they are themselves but depends essentially on when and where their use is appropriate.

The same thing is true of our words and actions. It is often the circumstances that determine whether a word or action will have a good or bad effect. Just a simple remark or gesture can make people laugh – or again, in another context, can enrage someone or deeply hurt them. Sometimes it is no more than a matter of the tone of voice. That is why I constantly beg God to give me the wisdom to find the right words and the right action at the right moment and in the right place.

PS. And remember, God himself is not a God of the past or of the future, but of the present moment, and so we can only talk to him here and now...

Need, love and thanks – Your letters

Moved by the Holy Spirit

I don't know how it happened that I felt called to help your charity ACN. I believe it was the Holy Spirit, to whom I pray every day for support and encouragement, in order that everything I do may serve God and help towards the redemption of my soul. I am a pensioner and will be only too happy to help ACN as much as I can.

A woman from Bydgoszcz, Poland

Our own pocket money

Together with my brothers and sisters I am sending you €90.50 that we have saved up from our pocket money. We are sending it to you so that you can buy 90 prayer books, or a bicycle, or a tank full of petrol. I hope that we can help you with this modest sum. We are praying for you.

Bathilde, aged 12, from Tours, France

Under strict control

We are so grateful to have received the subsidy for the construction of our

convent. This is incredible to us, since we never met before, and how unworthy we are... As we live in a country without real freedom and in a specially controlled diocese, often our life is very difficult. It is the loving support from you that helps us to go on. Even though this project may be difficult, we firmly believe that God will complete what He has begun. Once again, our sincerest gratitude and God bless you all.

The Mother Superior of a community of nuns in China

Not forgotten

Please find enclosed a donation of \$50. Please use part of the money for helping poorer people to attend the World Youth Day 2008, as well as for other projects of ACN. I know it has been a while since the last donation, but please be assured that ACN is not forgotten, just as Father Werenfried continues to be looking down on your good work.

A woman from Greenfield Park in Australia

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, 12–14 Benhill Avenue, Sutton, Surrey, SM1 4DA, tel. 020 8642 8668. (Registered Charity No. 1097984).



If you give by standing order, or have sent a donation recently, please accept our sincere thanks. This Mirror is for your interest and information.

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