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“I have returned from Africa consoled, for those I met there are people of prayer. They have been tested like Job and have often lost everything. Their spirit of total renunciation was a precious lesson for me and their sense of humour springs from the conviction that God holds the world in his hand and not one hair on their heads will be harmed without his knowledge.”

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



Photo: Croix du Benin

“In Thy sacred service”: Cardinal Bernardin Gantin, a great African light.

Dear Friends,

The seemingly endless marble steps in the Vatican had intimidated me somewhat. As I waited for Cardinal Bernardin Gantin, I felt I had a difficult task before me. A door opened. With a light step and a kindly smile the cardinal came in. Serious and attentive, he listened carefully to me. His answer was a combination of mercy and firm clarity. He filled me with hope. That was the kind of man he was. Cardinal Gantin became the first African cardinal to be called to a variety of responsible positions in the Vatican. His motto was “In Thy sacred service”. In his life he lived this spirit of service, which included a deep devotion to Our Lady. He was called to his eternal rest this year, on the anniversary of Fatima. The Holy Father emphasised that Cardinal Gantin “is a wonderful synthesis of African identity and gospel values”.

Cardinal Gantin was a symbol of the other Africa – not the one portrayed by the media, who only tell us about catastrophes,

about the rapidly falling life expectancy, the countless wars, corrupt politicians, cruel exploitation, rapid spread of Aids... As Saint Paul writes, “where sin abounded grace did much more abound”. (Rom 5:20) Those who are wise in this world tell us that Africa is heading for the abyss. Yet even in this dark night, the Church dis-



“With us, put your faith in Africa, in her warmhearted people, so full of cheerful courage and steadfast spirit of service.”

cerns the beginnings of a new dawn. In his latest encyclical Pope Benedict XVI offers us the example of one particular African nun, Saint Bakhita, as a sign of hope. Five times she was sold as a slave. When she was finally liberated, her body bore 144 scars from all the whippings she had received. Yet through her shone Jesus, the Risen One, “the sun that has risen above all the shadows of history”. (Spe salvi, 49) For “to reach him”, the Pope writes, “we also need lights close by – people who shine with his light”. This Sudanese

religious can bring us closer to God, the God who liberates, for she herself discovered this decisive truth: that she was “known and loved and she was awaited” by her Lord and Shepherd. (Spe salvi, 3) Saint Bakhita and Cardinal Gantin have many brothers and sisters in Africa today who share this hope. Theirs is a heroism of

faith and of love. Faithful men and women, devoted catechists, religious and bishops who show an exemplary commitment to others; growing numbers of priestly vocations... Like Father Werenfried,

we believe in the future of Africa. We know that during the next few years a great deal is at stake there for the future development of the universal Church. Help us to help here; together with us, put your faith in Africa, in her warmhearted people, so full of cheerful courage and steadfast spirit of service.

P. Joaquin Allieroli

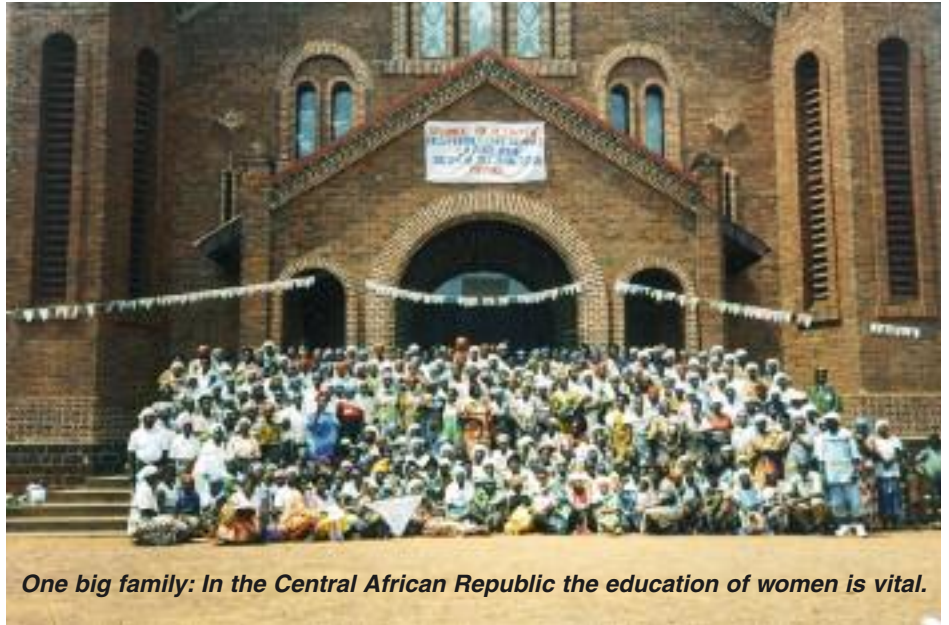
International Ecclesiastical Assistant



No less than the salvation of the world

Zimbabwe – a lawless land, a land of violence; violence against Christians too. Priests are beaten up, bishops threatened. Many victims are in need of medicine, and still more are in need of bread. Thanks to you, we have been able to help. Now this help must continue, and not just in Zimbabwe.

Africa is a continent in need but also a continent of hope. Daily the calls for help arrive. Some 99 priests out of a hundred have only their Mass stipends to live on. Around 20 percent of what you give us goes to Africa. It is worth it, for the Church there is more alive than ever. One seminarian in every five comes from Africa today. In **Benin** alone 519 are expected at one new



One big family: In the Central African Republic the education of women is vital.



By the light of faith: A gathering of catechists in Madagascar.



Praying in Sudan, a top priority for our aid in Africa.



A symbol of hope: Saint Josephine Bakhita, from Darfur in Sudan.

seminary. In Koupela, in **Burkina Faso**, they are extending the seminary. Throughout Africa, you are supplementing the basic funding from Rome so that all the seminaries can survive, despite the massive rises in food, water and energy prices. They teach the message of Christ, whole and unadulterated. For they share a noble goal, as exem-

plified in the religious institute of Bukavu in the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, where the *Daughters of the Resurrection* study. Sister Leocadie puts it in a nutshell: it is the sanctification of all mankind.

It starts with the construction of a new convent for the Pallottine Sisters in Kibeho, **Rwanda**, where Our Lady appeared 27 years ago to a schoolgirl, as “Nyina wa Jambo” or “Mother of the Word”. It continues with our aid in **Zimbabwe**, with the construction or extension of chapels in countries like **Togo** and **Burundi**, with the formation of the laity, as in **Mali**, of novices in **Guinea, Congo** and the **Central African Republic**... Everywhere, the Church is flourishing, thanks to your help. But without this help, their cries will go unanswered and the suffering will stifle the salvation that we all need. ●



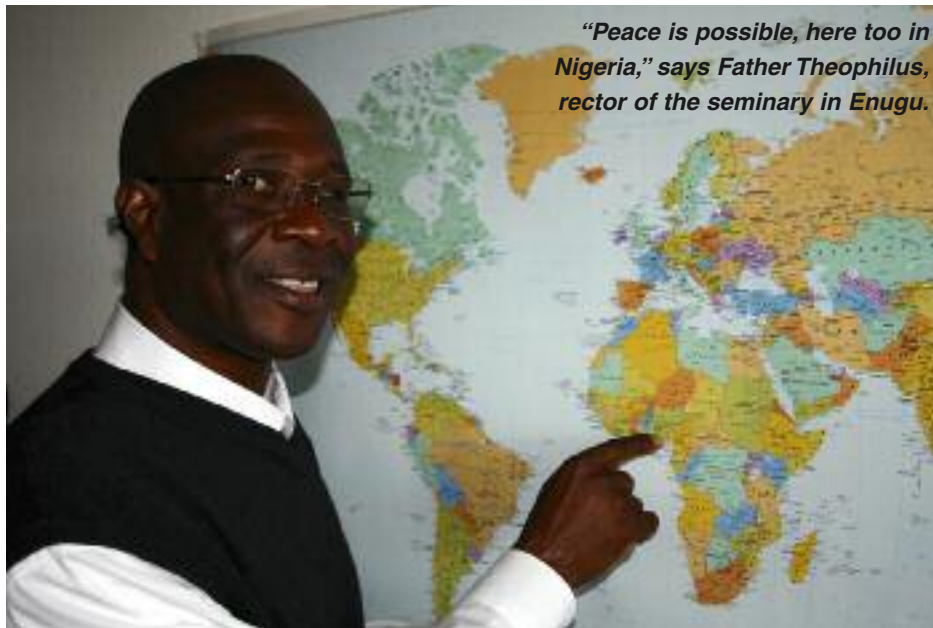
The catechetical centre, Natitingou, Benin. They need a proper kitchen here.



Construction work in Kibeho: The new convent of the Pallottine Sisters.



“Man is redeemed by love”



“Peace is possible, here too in Nigeria,” says Father Theophilus, rector of the seminary in Enugu.

“True peace is rooted in justice. It unfolds in love and reconciliation.”... “The deepest cause of all disharmony in the world is man’s rejection of God.”... “Man is redeemed by love.”

Two great Popes, John Paul II and Benedict XVI, have in numerous writings pointed the way towards reconciliation, and ACN, as a charity of pontifical right, has sought to follow this way in innumerable small services of love. It might be the repair of a church after a war; or help for refugees who want to return to their homes, for example in **Bosnia** or **Sudan**. It might be support for the life and ministry of Sisters in **Burundi**, who are organising pilgrimages of reconciliation in a country torn by tribal warfare and

hatred. Anything that brings men nearer to God is a service of reconciliation. Hence the training of young men who wish to consecrate themselves to God in the priesthood is also a form of reconciliation, for they will lead others to God. In Novosibirsk, **Russia**, where Catholic priests are few, you are helping Bishop Werth to provide solid formation for the young men in his pre-seminary. You are also helping Orthodox seminarians throughout **Russia** – no fewer than 1,130 of them last year, in fact. Often the path of unity is blocked by a simple lack of information and exchange. And so we are also supporting meetings between Orthodox and Catholics. One notable breakthrough was the showing of a film on Russian state TV about Pope Benedict XVI, to mark his birthday, including a



Pilgrimage of reconciliation: Catechists and Sisters in Burundi.



Training for a shared future: Orthodox seminarians in Saraktash, Russia.



16 April 2008. Benedict XVI: “My beloved Orthodox brethren...”

message of greeting from the Pope to the Russian people. All this and much more is made possible, thanks to your love. ●

Kontagora – on the front line of mission

“Light of the Nations” – this is the motto of Bishop Timothy Carroll. It is a daily challenge, for Bishop Timothy is striving to win souls for Christ in the Nigerian heartland.

Drilling wells for the people of traditional African beliefs is a form of pre-evangelisation, he tells us. Teaching them to read and write, using the *Child’s Bible* among other things, is already evangelisation. Five

of his priests are doing just this in Kontagora in the north-west, where Islamic preachers are now also appearing, backed by abundant petro-dollars. “Either we evangelise these people now or we abandon them to other religions for ever,” the bishop writes. “Now” means that we are helping for three years – for bread, petrol, books, chapels (see photo). The sum of **€750** will keep one of these five mission stations



going for a full month. “Help us to sow the seed of love in the soil of these people,” Bishop Timothy adds. He is not asking for himself, but for the Church on the front line of mission. He is asking for us all. ●



In Colombia the role of reconciliation played by the Church cannot be overstated. For over three decades the country has been torn apart by violence. But for some years now there have been regular meetings between rebels and government representatives, brokered by the Catholic bishops. These men of God are the mediators and guarantors of goodwill. One such man is Bishop Guillermo Orozco of the diocese of San José del Guaviare, on the edge of the jungle, seen here (photo) at one of these meetings. Already their mission as mediators is being seen as a model for other crisis regions. "Your generosity is the foundation of peace," says Bishop Orozco. "Our prayers are our thanks, and we offer them with such great joy!"



Hans-Peter Röhlin,
President

The Last Word

Unity and diversity

Since the earliest times we have known the tensions between unity and diversity, both in our social life and in the Church. The more that genuine, God-grounded relations are forged among men – for herein lies the true root of unity – the more this unity can unfold in a rich diversity.

But where there is no more diversity, but only monotonous uniformity, no true unity can arise or develop. It is not the wearing of an identical uniform, the adoption of the same opinions or the performing of the same actions that can create the kind of unity that God has shown us in his Trinity. God is One and at the same time Three. He manifests to us a unity in which the three Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – retain their own individual personality. This is the model for every form of Christian striving for unity.

And so the person who opens himself to God and gives space within himself to that inner voice, that existential call, does not lose his own personality but rather only then truly gains it, and can then also truly give himself to others.

Need, love and thanks – Your letters

An eyeopener

I read the book about The Bacon Priest you sent some time ago. It was an eye-opener re the poverty and generosity of people. I am reading it again and it makes me realise how well off we are - a roof over our heads, a pension and food on the table. Enclosing a donation for the poor people your priests works for. Let us pray for each other!

A benefactor from Ireland

Helping the Church in China to grow

This donation of £2,540 is the result of my Annual Plant Sale, which did even better this year. Please use this money for China, especially for the training of seminarians.

A benefactor in Henfield, UK

ACN has given me a new lease of life

I have been a benefactor for five months now. But it seems as though I have had a

bond with ACN for a very long time, for it gives me a great feeling of joy to help other people who are suffering more than I am. I got to know ACN through the television, and your work has given me a new lease of life. Before that I never thought about helping others. I felt a great emptiness in my heart, but didn't know how or what to do to fill this emptiness. Thanks to ACN, I have found the happiness of love, which is God.

A benefactor from Manaus, Amazonia, Brazil

Never to forget the martyrs again

The April and May issues of the Mirror undoubtedly go far beyond a mere "witness". Ever since I have known about ACN I have been conscious of the great depth and power that lies in this work. May God help me never again to forget all these martyrs.

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



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