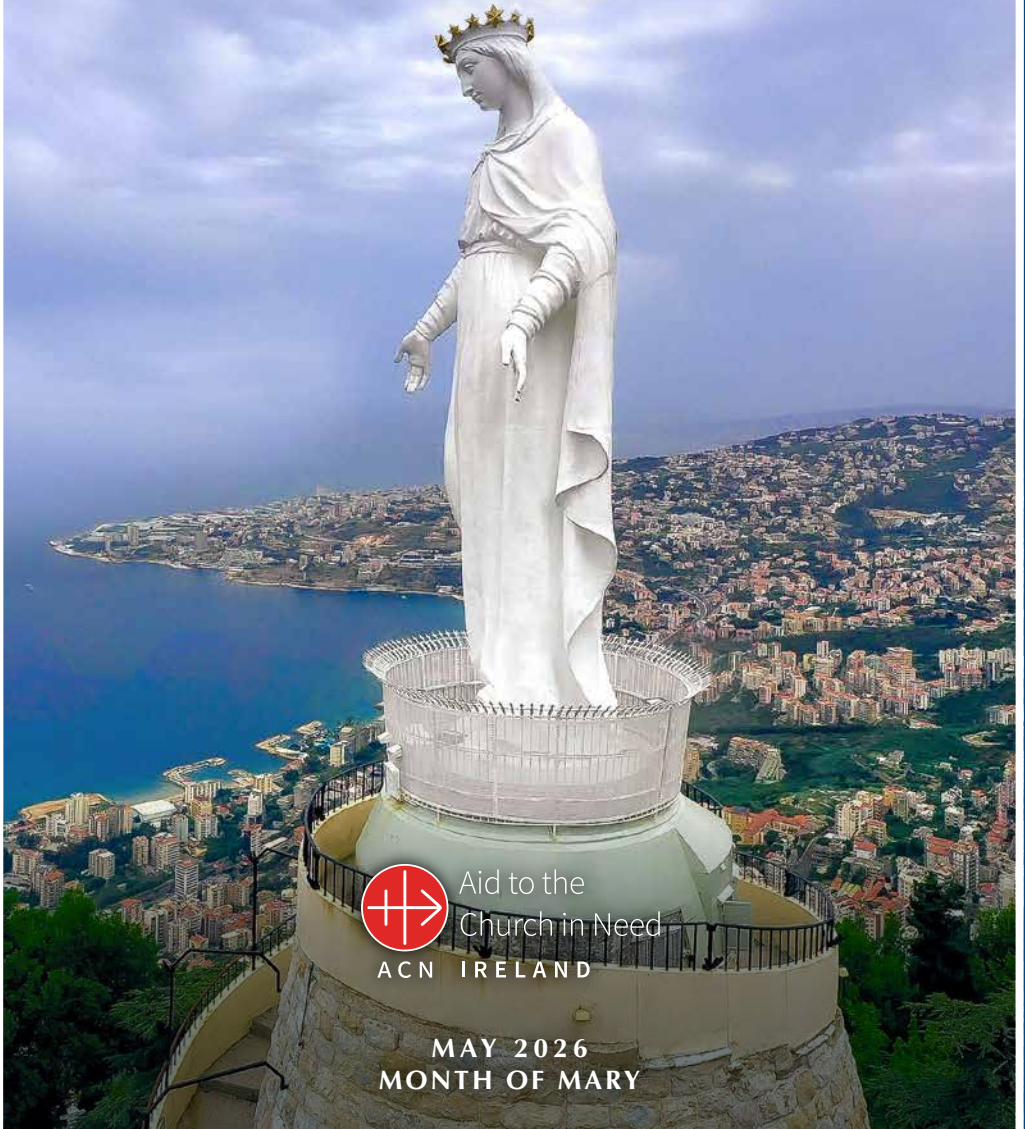


ORDINARY TIME

MIRROR

Our Lady, Pray for Us



Aid to the
Church in Need

ACN IRELAND

MAY 2026
MONTH OF MARY



Aid to the
Church in Need

ACN IRELAND



National Pilgrimage to Knock

Saturday May 16, 2026

To give thanks to God for all the blessings
he showers on us, Aid to the Church in Need
is delighted to announce details of our
national pilgrimage to our Eucharistic and
Marian Shrine at Knock, Co. Mayo.



Chief Celebrant
Bishop William Shomali
from Jerusalem will speak about
the plight of the suffering Christians
in the Holy Land.



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or to organise a bus, please contact us by

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Contents



INTRODUCTION

- A Living Faith Amid Cedars and Crisis – *Michael Kelly* 4

FEATURES

- The Rosary Endures – *Michael Kelly* 6
- The Coming of the Holy Spirit – *Fr. Anton Lässer CP* 8

PROJECT NEWS

- **Success Story!** Winter Warmth for 18 Parishes in the diocese of Lutsk – *Ukraine* 10
- **Success Story!** A Vehicle for a Remote Parish – *Papua New Guinea* 13
- Some Much-Needed Retreat Days for 54 Priests – *Rwanda* 14
- A Crucial Host Baking Machine for the Convent of the Poor Clares – *Malawi* 18
- Mass Stipends for 16 Priests in the Diocese of Mar del Plata – *Argentina* 20

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION

- The Most Beautiful Month of the Year – *Mary Kenny* 24
- The Great Fr Flanagan is a Powerful Example – *Bishop Kevin Doran* 26

MAY CROSSWORD 30

- Lord Hear Our Prayers... 31

Cover image: Our Lady of Harissa, Lebanon.

INTRODUCTION

A Living Faith Amid Cedars and Crisis

MICHAEL KELLY,
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LEBANON: Maronite nun Rose Therese in an excursion to the “forest of God’s cedars” in Bcharre.

© Ismael Martínez Sánchez

Dear Friends,

Just recently, I wrote about my visit to the **Holy Land** and renewed hopes for peace. That was cruelly shattered, and now more than a million people in **Lebanon** – many of them from the minority Christian community – have been forced to flee from war.



In the land of the ancient cedars, where the Gospel first took root, devotion to the **Blessed Virgin Mary** pulses at the heart of Lebanese Catholic life.

For Maronites — the largest Catholic community in Lebanon — and Melkites, Greeks, and others, Mary is not a distant figure but a tender mother and powerful protectress. She is honoured as *Our Lady*

of Lebanon, Patroness and Queen of the nation. Her image adorns homes, shops, taxis, and even barbershops.

More than 300 churches bear her name in this small country. Amid war, economic collapse, political instability, and regional tensions, Lebanese Catholics turn to Mary with a fervour that unites generations and, remarkably, crosses confessional lines.

Lebanon’s Marian heritage draws from Scripture and tradition. The Gospels record Jesus’ ministry in the region of Tyre and Sidon. Tradition holds that the Virgin Mary accompanied him and waited in the village of Magdousheh — now home to the Shrine of Our Lady of Mantara, or ‘*Our Lady of Waiting*’. Melkite Catholics maintain this sanctuary, where pilgrims seek her intercession for patience and hope.

Such biblical echoes reinforce the sense that Lebanon is holy ground touched by the feet of Christ and his Mother.

The crown jewel of Lebanese Marian piety is the Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in Harissa, perched 650 meters above sea level overlooking the Bay of Jounieh and Beirut. The Virgin stands with arms outstretched toward the capital, as if embracing and guarding the nation. A chapel beneath the statue and the later Basilica of Our Lady of Lebanon complete the complex.

Every year, especially during this month of May and on the feast of Our Lady of Lebanon (the first Sunday of May), hundreds of thousands of pilgrims converge on Harissa. Many walk for miles, sometimes through the night, reciting the Rosary or singing hymns.

Confessions flow continuously alongside Masses. Estimates suggest up to 1.5 million visitors in May alone. The shrine draws not only Catholics but also Orthodox, Druze, and Muslims, who venerate Mary as a model of purity and maternal care. This shared reverence makes Harissa a powerful symbol of unity in a diverse, often divided society.

The Shrine of Our Lady of Beshwât in the Beqaa Valley gained attention in 2004 when a reported miracle involving a statue drew over a million Christian and Muslim pilgrims.

In today's Lebanon blighted by war, Marian devotion holds profound importance. Pilgrims at Harissa pray for peace, healing, and perseverance. Young people, families, and the elderly find in Mary a source of consolation and courage. Her intercession is sought for vocations, for the sick, and for the future of Lebanon's Christians, who comprise roughly a third of the population yet play a vital role in the confessional political system.

Lebanese Catholics' love for Mary echoes the cedar's resilience — deep-rooted, fragrant in prayer, and lifting hearts heavenward.

Lebanon's Christians know, Mary watches over Lebanon like a queen and mother. In a world of uncertainty, her outstretched arms at Harissa remind believers that the same Mother who stood at the Cross and rejoiced at the Resurrection stands ready to lead her children to Christ in the midst of their suffering.

In the words of the liturgy and popular devotion, Lebanese Catholics continue to sing: through Mary's intercession, may the Lord preserve this beloved land, strengthen its faith, and grant it the peace that only the Prince of Peace can give.



MICHAEL KELLY

Director of Public Affairs, ACN Ireland



The Rosary Endures

MICHAEL KELLY

It has become popular for some people to dismiss the Rosary as if it something from the past – but that is a mistake. It remains a prayer that has an enduring appeal. In the quiet rhythm of beads slipping through fingers, Catholics have long found a profound encounter with the mysteries of Christ.

The Rosary, a cherished devotion uniting vocal prayer with meditation on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, stands as one of the most accessible yet powerful treasures of the Catholic faith.

Its name derives from the Latin *rosarium*, meaning ‘*crown of roses*,’ evoking the spiritual bouquet offered to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Far from a mere repetition of words, the Rosary invites believers into contemplative union with the Gospel, fostering deeper faith amid the trials of every age. The roots of the Rosary trace back to the early practice of imitating the 150 psalms through repetitive prayer. Monks and laypeople, unable always to recite the full Divine Office, used beads or knotted cords to count 150 ‘*Our Fathers*’ or ‘*Hail Marys*’. This ‘*Psalter of Our Lady*’ evolved gradually.

By the 12th and 13th centuries, the Hail Mary — drawn from the angelic greeting in *Luke* 1:28 and Elizabeth’s meeting Mary

in *Luke* 1:42 — gained prominence. The addition of the name ‘*Jesus*’ and, later, the petition “*Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death*,” completed its form.

Tradition attributes the Rosary’s structured emergence to **St Dominic**, founder of the Order of Preachers. Amid the Albigensian heresy in southern **France** — which denied the Incarnation and the goodness of creation — Dominic preached tirelessly. The tradition holds that in 1208, the Blessed Virgin appeared to Dominic, presenting the Rosary as a spiritual weapon against error and sin. She urged him to teach it as a means of contemplating Christ’s mysteries while invoking her intercession.

Though historical scholarship notes the devotion developed organically with Dominican promotion playing a key role, the Church has long honoured this tradition, seeing in it Mary’s maternal guidance.

Dominicans spread the practice across Europe. In the 15th Century, figures like **Blessed Alan de la Roche** revived and organised it through Rosary confraternities. Mysteries were assigned to the decades: initially focusing on the joys, sorrows, and glories of Christ and Mary. By the late 15th Century, the structure solidified — Our

Father, ten Hail Marys, Glory Be — with beads aiding focus.

A pivotal moment came in 1571 during the Battle of Lepanto. As Ottoman forces threatened Christian Europe, **Pope St Pius V** called for Rosary prayers. The Christian victory on October 7 was attributed to Our Lady's intercession, leading the pontiff to establish the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary (originally Our Lady of Victory).

In his bull *Consueverunt Romani Pontifices*, Pius V formally endorsed the 15-decade Rosary with its Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries. Subsequent centuries saw further enrichment. **Pope Leo XIII**, the '*Rosary Pope*,' issued 11 encyclicals promoting the devotion between 1883 and 1898, urging its recitation especially in October. He highlighted its power to combat modern errors, foster virtue, and draw souls closer to Christ through Mary. In 2002, **St John Paul II** added the Luminous Mysteries — the Baptism of the Lord, the Wedding at Cana, the Proclamation of the Kingdom, the Transfiguration, and the Institution of the Eucharist — enriching contemplation of Christ's public ministry.

Today, the full Rosary comprises 20 decades, prayed in sets of five according to the day of the week.

In our fast-paced, distracted world, the Rosary remains remarkably relevant. It can counter anxiety in prayer, and spiritual fragmentation by grounding believers in

the central mysteries of salvation.

As a '*school of contemplation*,' it trains the mind and heart to ponder Scripture amid daily life. The repetitive prayers quiet the soul, allowing the Holy Spirit to illuminate scenes such as the Annunciation (God's humble entry into history) or the Crucifixion (redemptive love's cost).

St John Paul II described it as a "*compendium of the Gospel*," where Mary guides us to Jesus, much as she did at Cana: "*Do whatever he tells you*" (John 2:5).

Its importance shines especially in times of crisis. At Fatima in 1917, Our Lady identified herself as "*the Lady of the Rosary*" and repeatedly urged the daily recitation of the Rosary for peace and the conversion of sinners. She promised that this prayer, offered with penance, could avert wars and obtain graces for souls.

This is at the heart of the spirituality that guides the world of Aid to the Church in Need, since the charity is under the patronage of Our Lady of Fatima and often the people who we serve live in parts of the world where it is challenging to live the faith.

In an era marked by geopolitical tensions, moral confusion, family breakdown, and cultural attacks on life and faith, Our Lady's call informs our work and urgently echoes.

The Rosary becomes both armour against evil, and a pathway to personal and societal healing.

FEATURE

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

FR ANTON LÄSSER CP

© Jesus Huerta \ JMJ 2023

Dear Friends,

The *Book of Nehemiah* is a jewel among the writings of the Old Testament and is very much of relevance to us today. During the difficult time of rebuilding, following the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity, Nehemiah proclaims to the people, “*The joy of the Lord is your strength*” (8:10).

And so let us raise our hearts and minds this Paschal season and rejoice mightily in the Lord.

In this way we prepare ourselves, in the Marian month of May, for Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit, who brings redemption and healing, and who



enfolds us in the goodness, beauty and holiness of God.

Jesus says of Him: “*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things*” (John 14:26). “*He will glorify me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you*” (John 16:14).

The Holy Spirit is the self-giving and self-communicating God, who desires to “*dwell in us,*” to fill our whole being, our thoughts, words and actions, with his grace and make us like to God.

“*God is love, and he who lives in love, lives in God and God in him*” (1 John 4:16). It is then – and only then – that the promises of Jesus become reality: “*The one who hears you hears me...*” (Luke 10:16).

“Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me” (Matthew 10:40). Whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works... Because I am going to the Father (cf. John 14:12). “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

Without the working of the Holy Spirit all this is quite impossible – indeed there can be no Christian life. To see the hidden work of the Holy Spirit in those around us is always something joyful and uplifting.

For example, when he brings about a respectful attentiveness that fosters an atmosphere of goodwill and love. When he inspires a sense of confidence and patient tolerance that makes space for peaceful growth and maturing.

When he inspires creativity and moves us to action. When he brings about something new, wholesome, or fruitful within us. When he raises us up, empowers us, makes

us beautiful and pleasant, or renders us creative and attentive, strong and clear, efficient and fruitful.

Again and again, it is my privilege – as it is of all of us at ACN – to experience and savour in our daily encounters the workings of this divine Bridegroom of the soul. Sometimes in the meeting of hearts and minds, sometimes in the beauty and perfectly fitting quality of projects and initiatives.

Openness to the Holy Spirit, to his gifts and ways of working, and savouring his fruits is like an elixir of life, leading us to the joy in the Lord which is our strength.

With these thoughts I extend to you my heartfelt wishes for a grace-filled Feast of this May 24.

F. Anton Lässer CP

FATHER ANTON LÄSSER CP

Ecclesiastical Assistant, ACN International



SUCCESS STORY!

Winter Warmth for 18 Parishes in the Diocese of Lutsk

UKRAINE



The winter of 2025/26 was an especially harsh one for people in **Ukraine**. Even before that the soaring energy costs and the widespread destruction of the energy supply system in the war had already caused great suffering, but last winter was even harder.

Even the parishes were scarcely able to maintain their heating, and the priests and religious sisters working round the clock to help those in need were facing real risks to their own personal health.

Consequently, **Bishop Vitaliy Skomarovskyi of Lutsk** in Northwest Ukraine turned to us for help to provide *“Warmth for those serving God and their communities and not abandoning them*

even in the darkest days.” This heating was also for the benefit of children, elderly and other vulnerable people seeking help within the church premises.

Thanks to our generous benefactors, we were able to give €40,000 and to provide firewood and heating pellets for 18 parishes in the Diocese of Lutsk.

The bishop has since written to us to express his profound gratitude. *“Your support is extremely important and has literally saved us during this difficult time.”* Today, when people in Ukraine are forced to live under constant threat of attacks and long periods without electric power, a warm house is nothing less than a pledge of security and a spirit of endurance.

“Thanks to your help, our priests and their parishes have managed to survive another cold winter. On behalf of our diocese, our parishes, priests and all the faithful, I wish to thank you for your priceless help in providing these heating materials.”

“We owe it to you and to your kind hearts that so many people – and especially children and elderly people – have been able to keep warm. What you have given us is not only physical warmth, but also the feeling that we’re not alone. It is light in the darkness, warmth in the midst of icy cold, and a sign of hope in times of despair.”

© Reinhard Backes



UKRAINE: Bishop Vitalii Skomarovskyi of Lutsk.



UKRAINE: Heating material for 18 parishes in the Diocese of Lutsk.



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Save Lives, Save Souls, Save the Faith



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SUCCESS STORY!

A Vehicle for a Remote Parish

PAPUA NEW GUINEA



The Diocese of Mendi lies in the Highlands of **Papua New Guinea** and consists of 31 parishes with an additional 300 or more outstations, scattered across this remote rural and mountainous landscape.

The largest of these is the parish of St Joseph, in Margarima, which has a further 17 widely scattered outstations. Consequently, the distances the priests have to cover are considerable.

Fr George Mathew, the parish priest, was facing a real problem. His old vehicle had already clocked up over 270,000 km and was suffering ever more frequent breakdowns, so that it was constantly in the garage for repairs.

Not only was he unable to visit his Catholic faithful as usual, but the repairs were costing a great deal of money. His mechanic urged him to have the car replaced as soon as possible, but he simply didn't have the money to do so.

So his Bishop, **Donald Francis Lippert** of Mendi asked us to help Fr Matthew and his parish. He was not disappointed. Thanks to our kind friends and benefactors, we were able to provide the €26,000 needed for a

reliable all-terrain vehicle, able to cope with the challenging road conditions.

The bishop has written to thank all of you for your help. *"The province of Hela, where the parish of St Joseph is situated in Margarima, continues to be afflicted by senseless and brutal tribal conflicts. But the Church in Hela has not abandoned the people here and is quite possibly the only glimmer of light in the midst of all this darkness."*

"This sturdy new vehicle makes it possible for Father George to visit all his outlying outstations and to be there for his people in these difficult times. In this way you, the benefactors of ACN are accompanying him on his travels with your solidarity and your prayers."



PAPUA-NEW GUINEA: Parishioners of St. Joseph Church with the new car.

Some Much-Needed Retreat Days for 54 Priests

RWANDA



© ACN

The Diocese of Gikongoro lies in the south of **Rwanda**. It includes 20 parishes with around a quarter of a million Catholic faithful. Although the name of the diocese is not exactly familiar to most people abroad, nonetheless many Catholics around the world have heard of the Marian shrine of Kibeho, which lies within the diocese.

Our Lady is honoured here under the title of “*Nyina wa Jambo*,” or “*Mother of the Word*.” The shrine was formally recognised by the Catholic Church in 2003 and ranks alongside such shrines as Lourdes and Fatima as the pre-eminent pilgrim shrine of this kind on the African continent, with a growing number of pilgrims, including many from other continents.

In 1981 Our Lady appeared here for the first time to three young girls. A year later they were granted a terrifying vision which just a decade later was to become a brutal reality.

The children saw a river of blood, people killing one another, countless unburied corpses, severed heads ... The genocide of 1994, which in just 100 days claimed the lives of almost 1 million people, followed just a year later by the bestial slaughter of 5000 people in a refugee camp not far from Kibeho, were a brutal reminder of what happens when people forget God and give themselves over to hatred.

The apparitions in Kibeho were a warning from the Mother of God and the shrine in

Kibeho is now a permanent memorial, where the victims are remembered and the people of Rwanda are urged, with God's help, to pray and strive to see that no such thing should ever happen again.

During the tragic events of the 1994 genocide many, many schools, presbyteries, parishes, convents, and health centres were ransacked, looted and almost destroyed. At least 10 priests were murdered and others were forced to flee, with just three priests left working in the diocese.

In the aftermath everything had to be repaired or rebuilt, including the people's souls. Initially it was difficult to encourage young people to embrace the religious life, since these young people were so deeply spiritually traumatised. However, in time Church life was gradually rebuilt and there were new vocations. Today there are 54 diocesan priests working in the ministry once again.

For **Bishop Célestin Hakizimana** the preaching of the Good News and the strengthening of the people's faith are the highest priorities. At the same time, however, his priests are the ones the people first turn to in all their needs, so it is vital for these priests to be spiritually strengthened for their demanding ministry, so that they can proclaim and witness to the Gospel, joyfully and with total conviction.

The bishop would like the priests of his diocese to be able to benefit from regular six-day retreats. He explains: *"This time of spiritual recollection is an opportunity for the individual to withdraw from his everyday activities and distance himself physically from his usual environment, and so take time out to rest, meditate, pray and contemplate."*

"In our diocese we attach great importance to this time of retreat and reflection. After their intensive pastoral activities our priests need this time of quiet contemplation in order to recover spiritually and physically and gather new strength."

So he is turning to us for help, since the diocese does not have the resources to pay for such retreats. It will cost around €110 for each priest to participate in this six-day retreat.

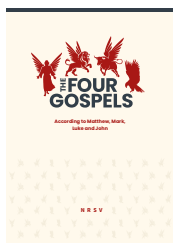
Would you be willing to give one or more of these 54 priests of the Diocese of Gikongoro the chance to benefit and return with new strength to their ministry in the parishes?



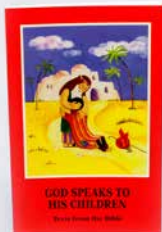


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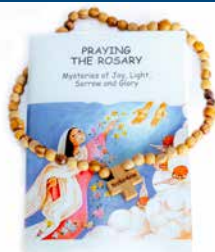
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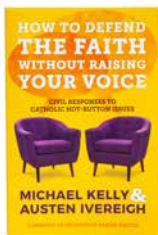
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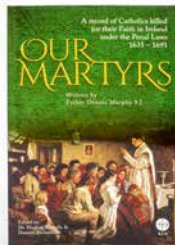
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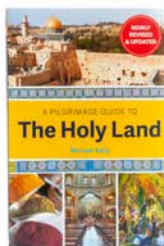


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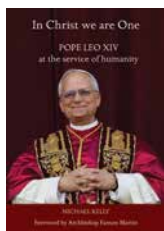
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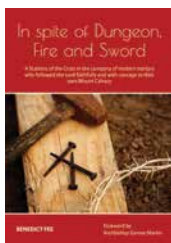
**Olive Wood Crucifix on stand
or Olive Wood Crucifix
for wall** – €20



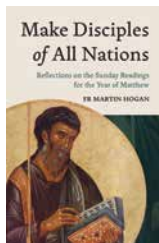
**Olive Wood Jerusalem
Rosary Beads**
– €10



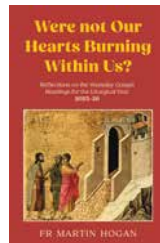
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Burning Within Us?**
– €12.99

A Crucial Host Baking Machine for the Convent of the Poor Clares

MALAWI

Sister M. Chiara Ng'ambi,
Monastery of the Poor Clares.

Most of the hosts, or altar breads, which during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass become the Body of Christ in the hands of His priests, are in fact manufactured by contemplative religious sisters, working in prayerful silence.

This work is not only ideally suited to the contemplative life but at the same time represents a vital service to the local church, since every parish needs these host in order to be able to celebrate the Holy Eucharist – the source and summit of the Church's life.

Baking and cutting out the hosts is a task requiring great care and dexterity, since the slender wafers are very fragile and need to have exactly the right consistency. Modern technical equipment

is of great assistance here, since the work is otherwise extremely slow and laborious and it can be a struggle for the sisters to produce the quantity required.

The community of Poor Clares in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe in **Malawi**, in southern Africa are also engaged in this task, which they perform not only as a means of supporting themselves, but also as a contribution for the support of the local church – since the number of Catholics, and hence also of hosts required, is growing constantly.

So they are asking us for help to purchase the necessary technical equipment. **Sr Maria Chiara Ng'ambi** explains: *“Our way of life is entirely contemplative. We live a life of prayer for*

the Church and for the whole world, and so contemplation and quiet work are at the very heart of the Gospel. In this way we support ourselves by the work of our hands and entrust our lives to divine providence.”

They also sew liturgical vestments, though of course these are not required in the same quantity as the hosts, which need to be produced in great quantities on a daily basis.

The sisters live in poverty and share what little they have with the poor who come knocking on the convent door. Malawi is already one of the poorest countries in the world and prices are rising constantly. Indeed, in October 2025 an ongoing drought obliged the government to declare

a state of emergency.

Archbishop George Desmond Tambala fully supports the request of the Poor Clares and writes: *“This project is urgently necessary for the support of the sisters. And at the same time it will also help our archdiocese to have enough hosts for celebrating the Eucharist. I hope and pray that you will be able to help.”*

We have promised €28,500 for the specialised equipment required. These sisters are praying for you and for the whole world. **Will you help them to help the diocese and the same time provide for their own continuing support with the work of their own hands?**



MALAWI: The community of Poor Clares in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe.

Mass Stipends for 16 Priests in the Diocese of Mar del Plata

ARGENTINA

Fr Gonzalo Domench.



Since ancient times the Catholic faithful have supported their priests and showed their appreciation for their ministry by means of Mass stipends.

In essence this involves asking the priest to celebrate Holy Mass for a particular intention and in return supporting him with a financial contribution or an equivalent contribution in kind.

This is not a matter of *'paying'* for the Holy Mass – which is impossible – but of expressing love and gratitude in return for such a priceless gift.

At the same time, however, the financial aid given in the form of such Mass offerings is an indispensable support for their life and ministry, especially in many poorer

countries where priests receive virtually no other form of financial remuneration.

In return the Holy Mass is the most precious spiritual gift imaginable that we can make to others, including our own loved ones – and especially for the souls of our dear departed ones.

Every year we are able to help thousands of priests in many different countries around the world by passing on your Mass stipends to them.

Among them are the 16 priests of the diocese of Diocese Mar del Plata in **Argentina**, who are working in some of the poorest parishes and are only too happy to celebrate Holy Mass for your intentions.

At the same time your gifts are a precious help to them as they work among the poor in a country that for many years now has been suffering a severe economic crisis and rampant inflation.

Fr Gonzalo Domench is one of these priests who regularly receive your Mass offerings.

We would like to pass on to you the words of thanks he has written to you all: *“The parish that God has entrusted to me as its priest is a community on the outskirts of the town of Necochea. It is deeply marked by the world of suffering, not only on account of the poverty and inequality, and also because the duties of our ministry include the town hospital and the cemetery.”*

“As their priest I endeavour to encourage, guide and accompany the people in every way. Your Mass stipends make it possible to cover the cost of our Social Security and pensions contributions, which would be quite impossible without your help.”

“I hasten to thank you for thinking about us and giving us the chance to pray for your intentions. It does us a great deal of good to know that we are not alone. Please be assured that there is a priest here who, though far away, holds you in his heart, prays for you and intercedes for you.”

We have no doubt that Fr Gonzalo and his fellow priests can continue to count on your support in the future.



ARGENTINA: Mass Intentions for 16 priests supporting social welfare and retirement.

TRAINING OF PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS

Our aid has always focused on the theological training and qualification of seminarians. After all, future priests will ultimately be spiritual pillars and safeguard sacramental life.

Therefore, our educational assistance mainly flows into countries where the suitable and continuous training of future priests is endangered or not adequately ensured due to poverty, war, or persecution.

10,991 SEMINARIANS SUPPORTED

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

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

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

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PAPUA NEW GUINEA
Seminarians from
the Wabag diocese.

The Most Beautiful Month of the Year

MARY KENNY

May is a beautiful month of the year, and I recall, in my schooldays, the graceful processions organised around Maytime devotions to Our Lady.

There was an extended garden at my convent boarding school, known to us as ‘*The Park*,’ and under the tree-lined blossom in May we schoolgirls would walk in procession, wearing our white veils and singing hymns.

It was a sweet ritual, in which the Litany of the Blessed Virgin was recited. So poetic is this communal prayer that James Joyce never forgot it and cited it in his great classic autobiographical work, the ‘*Portrait of the Artist*.’ “*Mystical rose; Tower of David; Tower of Ivory; House of Gold; Ark of the covenant; Gate of heaven; Morning Star.*” To which each chorus response was ‘*Ora pro nobis.*’

Perhaps we relished our Maytime procession as a break from lessons indoors, but ritual is powerful, and embeds in the human psyche a deep understanding that remains mystically meaningful.

It is a matter of great regret that so many of these traditional rituals and ceremonies have been discarded in the process of modernisation.

Consider the old Jewish saying about faith: “*First, do; then, believe.*” Doing, participating, re-enacting a communal activity – these things are so psychologically significant.

Those Maytime processions were about Marian devotion; but they were also about creating a space for reflection, for the cadences of repetition, for the pilgrimage concept of walking together.

And of course, they had a deep reach, too, into Irish history, culture and the collective unconscious.

As we know, during the Penal Times of Irish history – starting in the 17th century – the Mass was prohibited. Masses were said in remote places – the ‘*Mass rock*’ in wild countryside – and in secret places too.

But women, in particular, developed a devotion to the Rosary, which could be said in the family home, or where two or three were gathered together privately.

The Rosary, narrating the cycle of the Blessed Virgin’s life, became ‘*the woman’s prayer.*’ Biographies and memoirs of Irish life frequently underline the role of the mother – or grandmother – summoning the family together to recite the Rosary.

After the Rosary came the ‘*trimmings*’ – again, often a Litany to the Blessed Virgin, and a few more prayers, or perhaps psalms like the De Profundis, added for the living and the dead.

Marian devotion became central to Irish Catholic life in those decades when the consciousness of a national identity was being formed.

Irish Protestants made a huge contribution to the development of a national cause – from **Wolfe Tone** to **Douglas Hyde** – and indeed to the revival of the Irish language. In the past, Protestants often had more access to education (Trinity College Dublin excluded Catholics until more than forty years after Emancipation in 1829).

But at the grass roots, Catholic devotion sustained the populace through so many hard times – and that devotion was most frequently focused on Mary, known in Gaelic as ‘*Mhuire*.’

The Irish form of greeting is inclusive of the Mother of God: ‘*Dia is Muire Dhuit*.’ God and Mary be with you.

The apparition at Knock in 1879 was an important signifier of Marian devotion in Ireland. It came at a time when the West of Ireland was threatened by a second Famine, or waves of mini-famines. Our Lady of Knock brought to the people of the area a sense of being heard, and being spiritually nurtured, just when hope was most desperately needed.

It might even be recalled that when, a century later, Monsignor James Horan was rallying the community to build the airport at Knock – in the teeth of opposition from the political class in Dublin – that pioneering priest would also invoke the support of the BVM.

When aeronautical experts suggested that the mountainous terrain around Knock would make the site unsuitable for landing bigger aircraft, Monsignor Horan said Our Lady would ensure it could be done.

Knock is now both a vital (and safe) airport for the West of Ireland and a beacon of faith as a shrine.

The Marian character of Irish faith traditions can be seen in the many roadside statues and wayside grottos – often also featuring **St Bernadette of Lourdes** – around the Irish countryside.

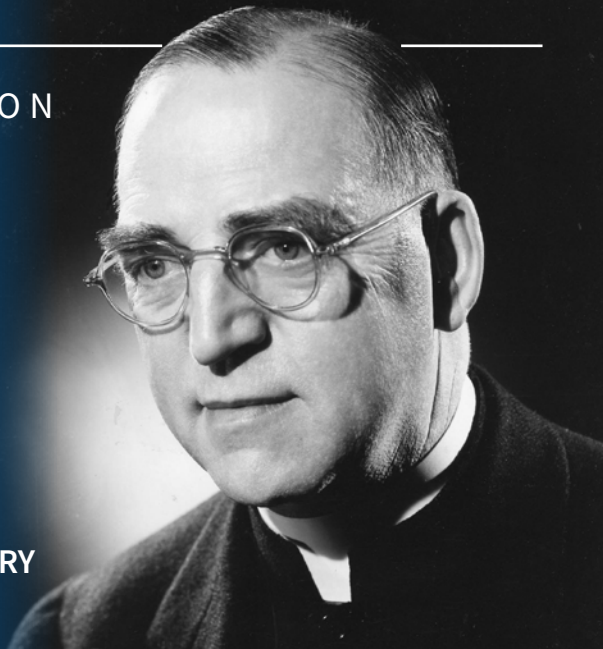
Up until recent times, it was common enough for home owners to give their house a name which invokes Mary: ‘*Stella Maris*.’ ‘*St Mary’s*,’ ‘*Tigh Mhuire*.’

And in those schoolgirl processions of Maytime, so many of us girls were called Mary, in one form or another: Máire, Marie, Miriam, Maria, Maureen, Marian.

Our first two female Presidents, Robinson and McAleese, were ‘*Mary*’ because, in their generations that name was the most frequent tribute to a devotion central to Irish heritage.

The Great Fr Flanagan is a Powerful Example

BISHOP KEVIN DORAN
BISHOP OF ELPHIN AND ACHONRY



It was wonderful to receive the good news from Rome that the Servant of God, **Fr Edward Flanagan**, has been declared Venerable by **Pope Leo XIV**.

Fr Flanagan was born in Ballymoe, Co. Galway, in the Diocese of Elphin, on July 13, 1886 and, following his primary education in Drimatemple National School, went to the College of the Immaculate Conception, Summerhill College, Sligo, to complete his secondary education.

Like so many young people in his day, the young Edward emigrated to the United States, where he became a priest of the Diocese of Omaha.

In a time of crisis, when many young people were living rough on the streets and

getting in trouble with the law, Fr Flanagan founded '*Boystown*,' which flourished to become a place where young people could feel at home, and have all the advantages of a solid education and formation for life.

Since 2017, Fr Flanagan's '*heroic virtue*' (the measure of his holiness), has been carefully considered by the Vatican's Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, leading up to the Pope's decision.

His virtue shows clearly in many aspects of his life. One was the courage with which he pursued his vocation to the priesthood, in spite of difficulties with ill health.

Another aspect of his holiness was his desire to help young people realise that they are loved by God. He expressed this

in his own actions as a ‘father,’ and in his statement that he never knew a child who wanted to be bad.

“Kindness and love will open the heart of any problem boy.” On a visit to Ireland in 1946, he raised serious questions about the imprisonment of children and the conditions in which they were forced to live and work.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Fr Flanagan stood up against the sectarianism of many in the establishment, and the racist ideology of the Ku Klux Klan, and insisted on welcoming young people of all races and religions in Boystown, on the basis of their need.

During the Second World War, when Japanese workers and their families in the United States were all interned as ‘hostile

aliens,’ Fr Flanagan arranged for many of them to be set free to come and live in Boystown, where he provided them with a home and with employment.

When the war was over, he devoted what remained of his life to visiting some of the countries which had been most impacted by violence (The Philippines, Japan and Germany) to support efforts to provide the best possible care for homeless children. It was during one such visit in **Germany** that he died of exhaustion.

Fr Flanagan’s life and virtue have much to say to us today, in a wealthy country where so many children are forced to live with homelessness, and in a world in which we still find it so easy to define people as ‘hostile aliens.’



In recent years, the Fr Flanagan Memorial Centre has been developed by the parishioners in Ballymoe, it includes a memorial garden and a pilgrim centre. The website for the centre is <https://fatherflanaganvisitorcentre.ie/>.

A one hour documentary movie on the life of *Fr Flanagan Heart of a Servant* has been completed, and is scheduled for broadcast by RTÉ in the coming months.

With the formal recognition of our own Fr Flanagan as 'Venerable', I invite people of faith, and especially those who work with young people, to take him as a model of Christian living and to pray for his Beatification (the next stage of the process, when he would be declared 'Blessed').

This would normally follow the recognition of a miracle, attributed to the intercession of Fr Flanagan. I encourage people to pray through the intercession of Fr Flanagan for healing for family members and friends who are sick, and to make contact with me, or with the Father Flanagan League of Devotion, if you believe that an unexplained healing has taken place.

Father Flanagan Prayer Cards and Medals are available from the Memorial Centre in Ballymoe.

Bishop Kevin Doran is Bishop of Achonry and of Elphin.



Pope Leo XIV declares Boys Town founder Father Flanagan venerable.



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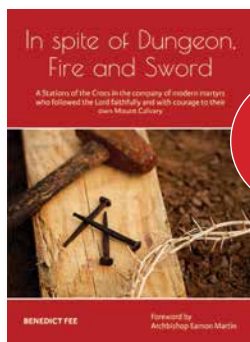
€5.99

Dilexi Te, Apostolic Exhortation to all Christians on Love for the Poor by Pope Leo XIV



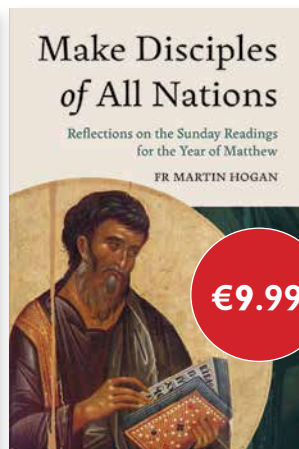
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Were not Our Hearts Burning Within Us? and *Make Disciples of All Nations* are two new titles from Fr Martin Hogan on weekday and Sunday reflections for the coming liturgical year.



€6.99

In spite of Dungeon, Fire and Sword, meditations on the Way of the Cross, reflecting on the 'martyrs of our times' by Benedict Fee.



€9.99

If you haven't already purchased your *Liturgical Calendar for Ireland 2026* (Ordo), it's not too late!!



€12.99

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MAY CROSSWORD

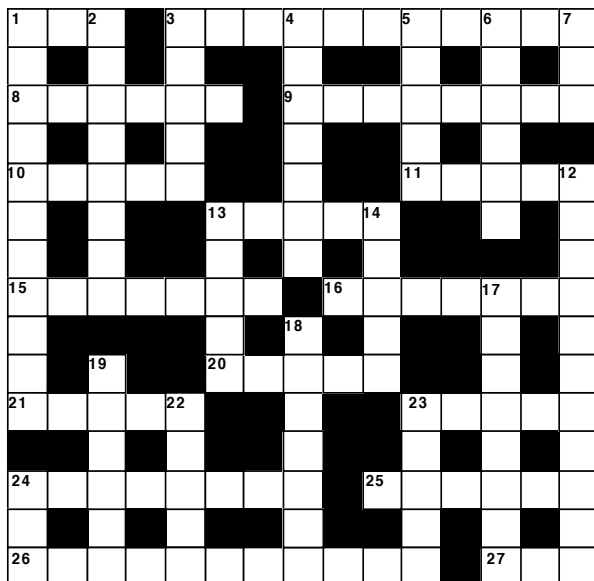
We are pleased to share with you our latest ACN crossword. We will print the answers in next month's edition.

Enjoy!

April Solution

Across 1 Little finger, 7 Ava, 9 Stag, 10 Wooing, 11 Whin, 14 Perth, 15 Avoid, 16 Spun, 18 Added, 21 Erode, 22 Rabbi, 23 Denim, 24 Uses, 25 Veldt, 26 Saucy, 29 Baby boomer, 34 Horn, 36 Ram, 37 Participated.

Down 1 Lot, 2 Togo, 3 Lewd, 4 Froze, 5 Nonet, 6 Rath, 8 Annunciation, 9 Square number, 12 Morose, 13 Idled, 14 Prawn, 17 Pebble, 19 Dummy, 20 Drive, 27 Adopt, 28 Comic, 30 Bump, 31 Drop shot, 35 Red.



ACROSS

- 1 Equip with weapons (3)
- 3 Town that was destroyed as well as Pompeii in the eruption of 79 AD (11)
- 8 Part of the body often called the voice box (6)
- 9 Prior (8)
- 10 Extreme pain (5)
- 11 Ireland's smallest county (5)
- 13 Made a witty remark (5)
- 15 Sea fish of the cod family (7)
- 16, 20a & 26a
Poem by Joseph Mary Plunkett about the fact that Jesus is ever-present to those who look for Him (1,3,3,5,4,3,4)
- 20 See 16 across
- 21 One part of a game of whist or bridge (5)
- 23 Brownish-yellow (5)
- 24 Elegant in movement or form (8)
- 25 Remove the paper surrounding a present (6)
- 26 See 16 across
- 27 Belonging to us (3)

DOWN

- 1 What a goalkeeper achieves if the opponents fail to score (1,5,5)
- 2 Stranded (8)
- 3 Sweetness from bees (5)
- 4 Bun (7)
- 5 Blacksmith's block (5)
- 6 The second book of the Old Testament (6)
- 7 Married lady's title (3)
- 12 One employed to keep a residence clean (11)
- 13 Esau's brother (5)
- 14 Given medicine in prescribed amounts (5)
- 17 Up until now (8)
- 18 A child just learning to walk (7)
- 19 Gilbert and Sullivan operetta set in Japan (6)
- 22 Got to one's knees (5)
- 23 Imperial weight measure (5)
- 24 Wildebeest (3)

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

‘Lord Hear Our Prayers...’

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

We also invite readers, to pray for these intentions.



“I pray for peace for my family and our business.”

“I pray that my son will recover from alcohol.”

“I pray for my health and safety at night and for the health of my family.”

“I pray for the welfare of my grandchildren.”

“I pray that the health of my lung and heart doesn’t get worse.”

“I pray for the health of my friend.”

“I pray for Carmel, Brigid, Noreen and all of the family.”

“I pray for Ryan and Alishia in Boston, that they work well in mind and body and that he looks after himself there.”

“I pray for the sanctification of priests. May they make the right decisions and always behave appropriately in their ministry.”

“I pray that my grandson will be safe when travelling to the US this summer.”

“I pray that the war in Iran ends and that Christians affected in the Lebanon suffer no more pain.”

Please send your intentions, in strictest confidence, to prayers@acnireland.org or write to 151, St Mobhi Road, Dublin 9 marking your envelope ‘*petitions*’.



Aid to the
Church in Need

ACN IRELAND



Month of Our Lady



O great Mary,

Mary, greatest of Marys, Most great of women,
Hear the petition of the poor; spurn not the wounds
and the groans of the miserable.

Let our devotion and our sighs be carried through thee
to the presence of the Creator, for we are not ourselves
worthy of being heard because of our evil deserts.

O powerful Mistress of heaven and earth,
wipe out our trespasses and our sins.

AMEN

(From an Eighth Century Irish Litany to the Mother of God).