

SEASON OF LENT

MIRROR

Come and Walk in the Holy Land

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Aid to the
Church in Need

ACN IRELAND

MARCH 2026
MONTH OF OUR NATIONAL APOSTLE



Aid to the
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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.



If you would like to find out more information,
or to organise a bus, please contact us by

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Cover image: Michael Kelly of Aid to the Church in Need prays for the intentions of ACN benefactors at the stone where the body of Jesus was anointed inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem's Old City.

INTRODUCTION

Will you come as a Pilgrim to the Holy Land?

MICHAEL KELLY,
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem.

© Lane Lee, Wikipedia

Dear Friends,

The crypt under Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity was eerily quiet as I ascended the few steps that lead to the spot that changed history forever. This is the birthplace of Jesus, one of the most hallowed places on earth – normally the queue to touch this spot would snake all the way around the 1,700-year-old church, but today I am alone before the holy manger.

Bethlehem, a Palestinian town in the West Bank just eight kilometres from Jerusalem, used to host around two million Christian pilgrims every year. It was just getting back to normal after the Covid-19 pandemic when the war triggered by the October 7 Hamas attacks on Israel started.



As I arrive in early February, my visit causes a little ripple in Manger Square – visitors are unusual now, with many people thinking that the Holy Land is dangerous.

Christians have been hit particularly hard – they make up fewer than 2% of the people of the Holy Land, and many have emigrated. The absence of pilgrims has left many of them destitute and in need of charitable help from Aid to the Church in Need.

Most Christians in Bethlehem were employed helping pilgrims. Whether as tour guides, waiters or hotel staff, the Christians of Bethlehem offered a warm welcome to pilgrims from all over the world.

More important than this, they offered a living witness to the faith that their ancestors received directly from Jesus himself when he walked these streets 2,000 years ago.

We call the Christians of the Holy Land *'living stones'* for while the stones of the churches attest to the sites made holy by the Lord's presence, these *'living stones'* daily hallow this place because they keep the flame of faith alive – even in the most difficult circumstances.

As I ascend from the manger, in the church dedicated to **St Catherine**, a Palestinian Christian woman is kneeling in prayer with her three children – they pray aloud the Our Father in Arabic, as countless believers have done here for generations.

The Holy Land is not a theme park for visitors, it is home to a vibrant Christian community that are determined to stay, for they know all too well that without them, the Holy Land is a museum.

Their message to the Christians of the world is clear, ***"please come back – don't be afraid."***

As **Bishop William Shomali**, himself born in Beit Sahour near Bethlehem where the angelic host first proclaimed the birth of Jesus to the shepherds, explains to me: *"Christians who come here to the Holy Land grow in faith, but they also strengthen our faith – they*

assure us that we are not alone and our own faith grows as we share with them the beauty of this land – the Fifth Gospel."

The term Fifth Gospel is an apt one, for in walking in the footsteps of Jesus in the Holy Land, the Gospel comes alive as never before. Places like Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Capernaum and Nazareth become familiar rather than just places we know from the Bible.

In the Holy Land, I made Bishop Shomali and all the other people I met a promise. I promised them that this autumn – in October – Aid to the Church in Need Ireland will lead a pilgrimage of solidarity to be with the Christian people of the Holy Land, as well as visiting the sites associated with the earthly life of Christ.

Will you come with me, and help us keep that promise?

In ACN, we always say that the people we are honoured to serve may be tested in faith, but we are being tested in love.

Bishop Shomali says, *"don't be afraid – take Christ at his word and come back to the Holy Land, we need you, we depend on you."*



MICHAEL KELLY

Director of Public Affairs, ACN Ireland



INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN SOLIDARITY

ACN launches Special Pilgrimage to support Holy Land Christians

The Western Wall and
Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem.

© Reinhard Backes

As part of our mission to support Christian communities who are under pressure, Aid to the Church in Need is delighted to launch a special pilgrimage of solidarity to the Holy Land this October.

If you would like more information, please email Michael Kelly on michael@acnireland.org or see the flyer accompanying this edition of the Mirror.

FRIDAY OCTOBER 2 – ARRIVE IN THE HOLY LAND

As pilgrims, we make our way to Dublin Airport and check-in for our Lufthansa flight to Tel Aviv via Frankfurt. On Arrival in the Holy Land, we will be met by a local Palestinian Christian guide who will accompany us for the pilgrimage and

Michael Kelly of Aid to the Church in Need and author of *An Irish Pilgrimage Guide to the Holy Land*.

We will board our coach for the short trip to Bethlehem, and check into the Christian-owned and managed Manger Square Hotel – just metres from where Jesus was born – for four nights with dinner and breakfast.

SATURDAY OCTOBER 3 – BETHLEHEM

After breakfast, we will take the short walk to the **Church of the Nativity** where we will spend the morning and celebrate Mass for the intentions of all the pilgrims. Here we will visit the birthplace of Jesus, and pray at the Holy Manger as well as the chapels of St Joseph, St Jerome, the Holy Innocents and the Church of St Catherine.

Leaving the Church of the Nativity, we will make our way to the **Milk Grotto** – by tradition where the Mother of God nursed the infant Jesus and a revered site of pilgrimage for couples hoping for a baby – before joining our driver and taking the short drive to the Shepherds Fields, where the angels proclaimed the birth of Jesus.

After lunch with the Mayor of Bethlehem and local Christians, we will continue to Ein Karem and visit the Churches of the Visitation (where Mary met Elizabeth) and St John the Baptist.

Afterwards, we will return to the hotel for dinner, and optional Rosary at the Church of the Nativity.

SUNDAY OCTOBER 4 – JERUSALEM

After breakfast, we take the short drive to the holy city of **Jerusalem** and enter the Old City to the iconic Church of St Anne, and visit the nearby **Pool of Bethesda** – where Jesus healed a man paralysed for over 40 years.

Close by, we will begin the **Via Dolorosa** – **the Way of the Cross** – and follow the stations of the cross through the markets and narrow streets of the Old City, the highlight for many pilgrims.

The *Via Dolorosa* brings us to the **Church of the Holy Sepulchre**, the site of Calvary and the Lord's Tomb. Here we will celebrate

Mass and take some time to reflect upon this site, sacred to Christians for more than 2,000 years.

Afterwards, we will enjoy some free time in Jerusalem to reflect and have lunch, before visiting the **Western Wall** – the last remaining part of the Temple where Jesus as a child taught the Jewish elders and later expelled the moneychangers.

Afterwards, we will return to the hotel for dinner and conversation with local Christian families about life in the Holy Land.

MONDAY OCTOBER 5 – MOUNT OF OLIVES

After breakfast, we will drive to the **Mount of Olives** in Jerusalem where we will take our group photograph and experience the view of the Old City that Jesus wept over as recorded in the Gospel.

We will make our way to the highest point on the Mount of Olives to the **Dome of the Ascension** that marks the site where Christ ascended into heaven.

Afterwards, we will take the short walk to the Pater Noster Church which marks the site where Jesus taught the disciples the 'Our Father' when they pleaded with him to teach them to pray.

We will then prayerfully make our way down **Palm Sunday Road** – the route

Jesus took on the First Holy Week – visiting **Dominus Flevit** (where the Church commemorates the Lord weeping over Jerusalem), the Garden of Gethsemane, and the Church of the Assumption which was funded by Catholics from all over the world, including from Ireland.

After lunch, we will celebrate **Mass in the Church of St Peter in Gallicantu**, where St Peter denied Jesus three times and see the dungeon where Jesus was held the night of the first Holy Thursday.

We will then walk to **Mount Zion** and visit the Church of the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary where the Mother of God ended her earthly life, the Tomb of King David and the **Room of the Last Supper**.

Afterwards, we will return to the hotel for dinner and a chance to hear about some of the work of Aid to the Church in Need in supporting Christians in the Holy Land.

TUESDAY OCTOBER 6 – JERICHO AND BETHANY

This morning we leave Bethlehem and visit **Bethany** for Mass, the place where Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

After an opportunity to visit the **Tomb of St Lazarus**, we will drive via the Baptismal Site where Jesus was baptised by St John the Baptist. Here we will have the opportunity to renew our baptismal vows, before proceeding to the Dead Sea.

At the **Dead Sea**, the lowest place on earth, we will take some time to relax and float on the water near Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found.

Afterwards, we will continue to **Jericho** – the oldest city on earth – to see the Mount of Temptation where Jesus was tempted by the devil, and the Sycamore tree of Zacchaeus.

We will then drive along the Jordan Valley to Nazareth and check into the Christian-owned and managed Legacy Hotel for four nights, dinner and breakfast.

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 7 – NAZARETH AND CANA IN GALILEE

After breakfast, we will spend our morning exploring the city where Jesus lived as a child. We make our way on foot to the **Basilica of the Annunciation** to celebrate Mass. Visiting the lower level of the basilica, we will see the remains of Mary's house and where the Angel Gabriel visited her. Here inscribed on the altar are the Latin words *'Here the Word was made flesh'*. Adjacent to the basilica is St Joseph's Church, the site of Joseph's workshop and the house of the Holy Family.

A short walk from the basilica is Mary's Well, here we will have the opportunity to draw water from the same well as the Virgin Mary.

After some time for a traditional lunch, we will take the short coach journey to **Cana**. Here we will visit the Wedding Church, the site of Jesus' first miracle, turning the water to wine. Couples on the pilgrimage can take part in the ceremony to renew their wedding vows, while special prayers will be offered for spouses who are deceased or cannot be present.

In the lower level of the church, we will see artefacts from the site before having an opportunity to taste and purchase some wine from this sacred site.

Afterwards, we will return to Nazareth for dinner in our hotel. In the evening, there will be the opportunity to participate in Eucharistic Adoration at the site where the Word became flesh.

THURSDAY OCTOBER 8 – SEA OF GALILEE

This morning we will make our way to the **Mount of Beatitudes overlooking the Sea of Galilee**, Capernaum and Tabgha.

After some time to listen to the reading of the Sermon on the Mount, we will continue to Capernaum and see the old synagogue and the excavations of St Peter's house.

Afterwards, we will visit the site of the multiplication of the loaves and fish at Tabgha, and the Church of the Primacy of St Peter.

We will then enjoy lunch on the shore of the Sea of Galilee before taking a boat trip on the lake, and reflect on the experiences of Jesus and his disciples on the water.

Before returning to the hotel, we will visit Magdala and celebrate Mass in the chapel at the home of **Mary Magdalene**.

In the evening, we have the opportunity to participate in the candlelit Rosary procession at the Basilica of the Annunciation.

FRIDAY OCTOBER 9 – MOUNT TABOR

After breakfast, we will drive to **Mount Tabor** and ascend by taxi for Mass at the Church of the Transfiguration where Jesus is transfigured and speaks to Moses and Elijah.

We have some time to enjoy the view of the **Valley of Armageddon** before returning to Nazareth for free time and dinner at the hotel.

SATURDAY OCTOBER 10 – DEPART TEL AVIV

On our final day, we will have an early breakfast before taking our coach to Tel Aviv for the return flight to Dublin via Frankfurt.

FEATURE

Experiencing the Presence of God's Love

FR ANTON LÄSSER CP



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Dear Friends,

I am constantly amazed by the wisdom and great wealth of experience that our beloved Church possesses about human nature. During my trip to **Turkey** to commemorate the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, I encountered this wisdom once more, as we meditated on the words of the Nicene Creed.

In a different way, we find this same wisdom in the appointment of our new ACN president, **Cardinal Kurt Koch**, by our **Holy Father Pope Leo XIV**. We are delighted at this news and offer him heartfelt welcome. Please read his message on this month's appeals letter.



Another example of the Church's understanding of our human nature, which again fills me with joy, is the grace of Lent.

The Church grants us this time for spiritual healing. By responding to her call for renunciation, we gain new freedoms – freedom to examine and correct our old habits; freedom to put at the centre of our life what is truest and most vital, namely Our Lord Jesus Christ; freedom to translate our love and compassion for our fellow men and women into practical action. Lent is the opportunity to set ourselves free so that we can love.

Is it not often the case that the things we call our own tend to possess us more than we possess them? This is exactly what Jesus means when He says, *"You cannot serve both God and Mammon"* (Matthew 6:24).

Permit me to offer you a practical tip at this point: Rather than offering up something rather trivial this Lent, offer up something that you know is not good for you or for your neighbour, because it enslaves you or takes up too much of your time – for example television, your mobile phone, social media or similar habits. And use the time this frees up for a closer encounter with Jesus – by reading the Scriptures, prayer, and works of practical charity.

Jesus' command to *"Go out into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to all creation"* (Mark 16:15) also reflects this understanding of human nature. For St Augustine's words ring true for every one of us: *"Our hearts are restless till they rest in You."*

True peace, loving security and complete human fulfilment are to be found only in Christ's Gospel. And so, this missionary command of Jesus serves the true goal and highest good of man – and especially of those called to mission, because it is them who, above all, most directly experience the presence and working of God's love.

In this issue of the Mirror, we introduce you to some of these missionaries, who in their life and ministry show how Jesus' call to mission can bring salvation and life.

With my profound gratitude to you for helping us to support these missionaries, I send you my warmest greetings.

F. Anton Lässer CP

FATHER ANTON LÄSSER CP

Ecclesiastical Assistant, ACN International



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Turkey: Visit to the SAT 7 Turk studios in Istanbul.

Christ in 21st Century Ireland

NIALL COLL

Bishop of Raphoe Dr Niall Coll.



The work of Jesus begins on wounded ground; among people whose lives are already complicated and unfinished. He does not wait for ideal conditions. He calls people as they are, in the midst of struggle.

The Church – the Holy People of God in every generation – lives by that same pattern: called first, understanding later. Faith is not something we master before we move. It is something we learn by walking.

We live through a difficult period in the life of the Church and of the world. We live in a strongly secular culture shaped by individualism and materialism. Religious practice has declined. The abuse crisis has damaged trust. Beyond our shores, war and violence scar human lives –

not least in **Gaza, Ukraine** and **Sudan** – where innocent people continue to suffer grievously. We live in a troubled world marked by conflict, by displacement, poverty and fear.

And yet many have not stopped following. Some of them may follow more quietly now, more cautiously, sometimes with questions and wounds of their own. But they are still praying. Still coming to Mass. Still gathering for funerals. Still bringing children for baptism. Still searching – often tentatively – for meaning, hope and grounding. Faith has not disappeared. But the way people follow has changed.

The question before us is not whether the Church will return to the high levels

of practice of fifty or a hundred years ago. The real question is whether we are willing to follow Jesus as He calls us now, in the circumstances we actually face.

We are reminded that the Word of God is not just ink on a page, but God speaking into real human lives. Sometimes it consoles. Sometimes it challenges. Sometimes it asks more of us than we would like. But it always invites response; movement. Turn around. Change direction. Follow me. God is close. Life does not have to remain as it is.

It is also worth noting that even in the strongly secularised society, there are small but real signs of a renewed interest in the Word of God, especially among some younger people. It seems that some find the well-being focus in school, college and wider culture to be threadbare, and they are discovering a renewed curiosity about scripture, a search for silence and meaning, and a willingness to listen rather than dismiss. It will be interesting to see how this trend unfolds.

The Gospel does not spread primarily through influence or argument. It spreads because people choose, day after day, to follow Jesus in ordinary lives – caring for neighbours, welcoming the stranger, standing with the poor and taking responsibility for the world God has entrusted to us.

Following Jesus always has consequences. It draws us towards those who are vulnerable. It sharpens our concern for the poor and the forgotten. It deepens our responsibility. To follow Christ is not only to pray and to believe – it is to live differently.

As we look to the future, people are not looking for a Church that pretends to have everything sorted. They are looking for a Church that is credible because it follows Christ honestly – admitting failure, practising real repentance, standing with the wounded and remaining faithful when things are hard.



Bishop Niall Coll pictured with his mother Mrs Kathleen Coll in St Eunan's Cathedral during his installation as Bishop of Raphoe.

SUCCESS STORY!

A Chapel for the Village of Golo Popa

INDONESIA

INDONESIA: Fr Ferdinand Tahul opening the new chapel of Golo Popa.



© ACN

A little while ago we received an appeal for help from **Indonesia**. The Catholic faithful in the village of Golo Popa on the island of Flores had no church of their own and were forced to gather in the village school on Sundays for Holy Mass.

But although this was only a makeshift solution, many faithful came nevertheless. However, on weekdays, when the school was in use for teaching, they had nowhere to gather to pray and worship, for baptisms, weddings or other Church activities.

Parish priest **Fr Ferdinand Tahul** told us at the time that the Catholic faithful, though very poor themselves, had made great efforts to raise money for a village

chapel. In fact they had been collecting money and materials for several years, but it was still nowhere near enough.

Yet it was important to them to have a fitting chapel where they could honour God appropriately. *“The people live their Catholic faith with great joy, and theirs is a very living faith,”* he told us, when asking for our help.

His appeal met with your usual generous response, and we were able to send him €28,000, thanks to which the new chapel has already been built and consecrated. Now Fr Ferdinand has written back joyfully to thank you all.

“Thanks to the commitment of the faithful and the generous help we received from ACN, the work is now complete. The faithful all worked very hard and even the women helped with the building work. Now our community can celebrate Holy Mass in the new chapel and we were also able to celebrate Christmas there for the first time. We can see how the people are becoming still more involved in the life of the Church and how more and more people are coming to church. Our heartfelt thanks for your generous help and may God grant you all his richest blessings!”



INDONESIA: Construction of chapel of Golo Popa.

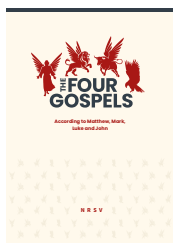


INDONESIA: The Golo Popa community in procession to the new chapel.

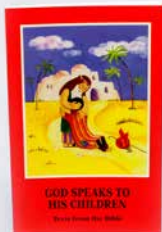


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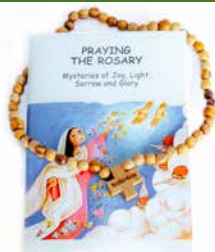
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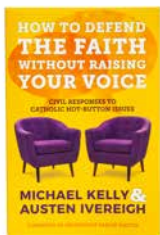
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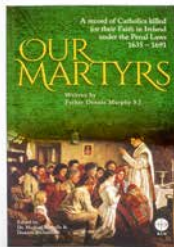
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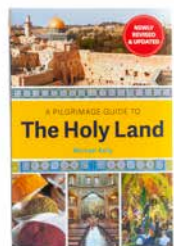


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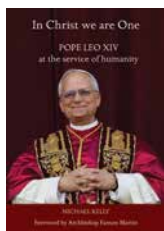
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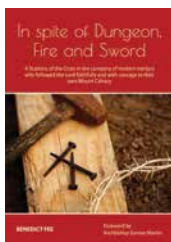
**Olive Wood Crucifix on stand
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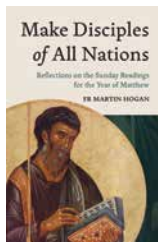
**Olive Wood Jerusalem
Rosary Beads**
– €10



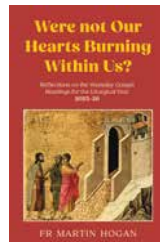
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SUCCESS STORY!

Renovation of a Convent for a Community of Missionary Sisters

SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE



The Portuguese-speaking country of **São Tomé and Príncipe** is the second smallest nation in Africa. It consists of two principal islands and lies just off the West Coast of Africa.

Most of the population of this crisis-ridden nation, whose economy is overwhelmingly dependent on tourism and agriculture, are living in poverty. Since almost everything has to be imported, prices are very high.

Around 70% of its population of approximately 220,000 people are aged 30 or under and offering them a prospect of hope for the future is a challenge. It is difficult even to give them access to a good education and appropriate medical care, and equally difficult to provide adequate employment and sound living conditions.

The Catholic Church is striving to give the people hope. Since the country is so small, there is only a single diocese. And while the majority of the population are Catholics, the sects and Pentecostal communities are continuing to spread.

Bishop Manuel António Mendes dos Santos, who has since retired, previously explained it to us like this: *“It is hardly surprising, given the magic/animistic culture that is characteristic of the general population. The young people especially are easily swayed by the Adventists, who offer a Bible-based community, while others are drawn to religions that claim to drive out evil spirits and promise happiness and success in life.”*

Before he retired, Bishop Manuel invited various religious communities

to his country to help in the work of evangelisation. Among these was the young Brazilian congregation, the “Missionaries of Merciful Consolation” (*“Missionárias da Consolação Misericordiosa”*).

This community is now working in the Holy Trinity Parish, based in the town of Trindade. The parish serves a vast area which includes several rural communities, scattered over what were formerly cocoa and coffee farms.

The sisters have come to help in the various areas of the missionary apostolate, above all in catechesis, youth work and the family apostolate. But they are also trained in the social communications media, and so the idea is for them to work as well via the diocesan radio station ‘*Rádio Jubilar*’ and via the Internet.

Bishop Dos Santos had high hopes for this initiative and wrote, *“I believe theirs will be a very important instrument of the new evangelisation of this people, who are entrusted to our pastoral care.”*

The sisters needed a place to stay, of course, and were offered a house that had been formerly used by the Claretine Fathers. However, it was in urgent need of renovation, and neither they nor the bishop had the necessary resources.

Thanks to your generous donations, we were able to provide €18,000 to cover the cost of the most important work.

Our heartfelt thanks to all of you for your contributions!



SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE: Ministry Sisters “Missionárias da Consolação Misericordiosa” in the parish of Saint Trinity.

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.

Please donate what you can at
acnireland.org/donate
or call **01 837 7516**



PAPUA NEW GUINEA
Seminarians from
the Wabag diocese.

A Youth Congress on Evangelisation in the Amazon Region

BRAZIL



The Diocese of Juína lies in the heart of the Amazon region and covers a vast territory of nearly 48,000 square miles (122,000 km²). Yet it has just 14 parishes, which include a total of 380 local communities.

Sadly, experience has shown that many young people have drifted away from the Church. This fact has prompted **Bishop Neri José Tondello** to sit down together with the youth leaders in the diocese and consider how best to rekindle the enthusiasm of as many young people as possible for their Catholic faith.

This gave rise to the idea of organising a congress for the young people in the diocese, at which young people could

rediscover a sense of joy in their faith and be encouraged to feel part of a larger community.

The bishop writes, “*The 2026 diocesan youth congress will mark a milestone in the evangelisation of the young people in the diocese of Juína. Its aim is to strengthen young people and win them over to the faith and at the same time encourage them to become involved in the communities.*

If we are to implement this project successfully, we need the support of all the communities, including the priests, families and movements; this is crucially important. We are all called to work together so that young people can gain a profound experience of faith.

We are conscious of the importance of this event, which nevertheless represents a challenge for us. It is obvious that the diocese must gather all its resources in order to help our young people, who are wandering through our towns and parishes, waiting to find something that will awaken them to life. Our sheep need a shepherd, and so we are counting on your prayers, your support and your commitment so that we can together fulfil this mission of saving and strengthening our young people.”

The Congress is entitled “*Pilgrims of Hope*” to reflect the fact that this was

then the Holy Year of Hope. The aim is to encourage the young to see that they are precious to the Church and need to be given the chance to deepen their faith. It could also possibly be a way of awakening spiritual vocations, which the Church in the Amazon region so urgently needs.

The Congress is planned for August 2026 and over 1500 young people are expected to attend. The diocese is doing all it can to raise the necessary funds, but they will still need help. **We are proposing to support this important event with a contribution of €8,600.**



BRAZIL: Pastoral visit to indigenous communities and settlements by Bishop Neri Jose Tondello.



Aid to the
Church in Need

ACN IRELAND

Save Lives, Save Souls, Save the Faith



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SUCCESS STORY!

A Vehicle for Pastoral Work in the Apostolic Vicariate GUATEMALA



With an area of over 14,000 square miles (36,000 km²) the apostolic vicariate of El Petén covers more than a third of the total territory of **Guatemala**. But it is thinly populated with only around 900,000 inhabitants.

The journeys are long and distances are measured not in miles or kilometres but in hours, given the appalling state of the roads which make every journey far longer than one would normally expect. And some of the parishes are larger even than entire dioceses in other countries.

The overwhelming majority of the population somehow manages to scrape a living from the land. Many families live in real poverty and have no access to education or medical care. Drugs, corruption, unemployment and social inequalities make life hard for the ordinary people.

Bishop Mario Fiandri has been in charge of the vicariate for almost 17 years now. He explains: *“What really matters here, in our pastoral work in El Petén, is not the job titles or ideas, and we shouldn’t be concerned above all about things like money, paper, material or other external activities. Instead the most important thing is visiting the people, real personal contacts, a pastoral outreach of encounter in which we devote*

time to people – the young and the elderly, to children and adults, the sick and healthy, the poor and abandoned, to those who are close to the Church but also to those who have wandered away from the Church and who criticise us.”

To this end he visits the various parishes on average three times a week, often travelling for hours on end. In fact the journeys to the most far-flung villages can even take as long as 15 hours, and this can only be achieved in a powerful and sturdy vehicle.

The vehicle the bishop currently uses is already 20 years old and frequently breaks down. And so he is asking us for help to purchase a sturdy all-terrain vehicle so that he can travel to as many of the parishes as possible.

We have already promised him €18,000. Are you able to help this local church in need?



Hail Glorious Saint Patrick



Patrick, our national apostle, is one of the most revered figures in our history and culture. As our **patron saint**, he played a pivotal role in **spreading Christianity throughout Ireland and transforming the lives of our people** and shaping the country's identity.

While the exact location of Patrick's birthplace is still debated, it is believed to be somewhere in **Roman Britain**, most likely Wales. He was born around **385 AD** into a Christian family.

Patrick's early life was marked by a lack of devotion to his faith, as he himself admits in his Confessions: ***"I was a sinner, and I was ignorant of the true God."***

At the age of 16, Patrick was kidnapped by Irish raiders and taken here, where he was sold into slavery. During his six years of captivity, Patrick deepened his faith in Christianity, often **finding solace in prayer and meditation**. He writes in his Confessions: *"I would go into the woods and to the mountain to pray, and I would be there, in the woods, from morning till evening, no matter what the weather."*

Patrick's experience here had a profound impact on him. He eventually escaped back to Britain, but he felt a **strong calling** to return to Ireland and share the message of Christianity with the very people who had once held him captive. He writes: *"I had a dream in which I saw a man coming towards me with a*

letter... and he said to me, 'Come and walk with us.' And I turned back, and behold, I was naked, and I was ashamed."

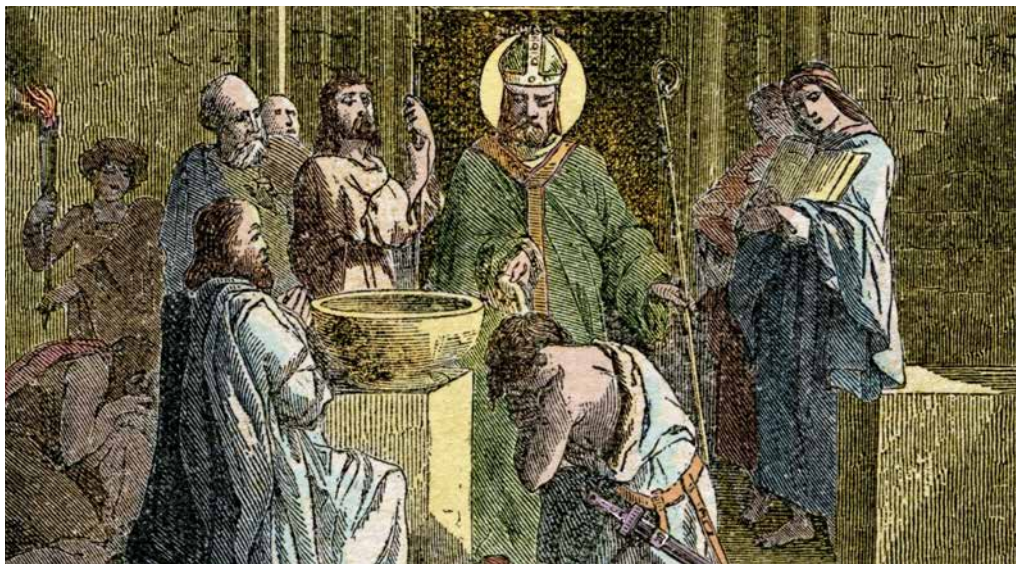
Patrick's dream was a turning point in his life. He interpreted it as a call to return to Ireland and share the Gospel with the Irish people. He spent several years studying for the priesthood and eventually became a bishop, returning to Ireland around **432 AD**.

Patrick's approach to evangelising Ireland was unique in that he incorporated elements of Irish culture and symbolism into his teachings, making Christianity more accessible and appealing to the native population. He used the **shamrock**, a three-leaved plant, to explain the concept

of the Holy Trinity (three persons in one God), and he incorporated existing pagan festivals into Christian celebrations.

This approach not only helped to **convert** many Irish people to Christianity but also ensured that the Christian faith took root and flourished.

Today, Patrick's **influence** extends far beyond Ireland. He is revered as a saint by the Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the Anglican Communion. His story is a testament to the power of faith, perseverance, and dedication, reminding us that one person can have a profound impact on the world. His feast day, **March 17th**, is celebrated by people of Irish descent around the world.



St Patrick baptising the faithful, an engraving by Diodore Rahoult, Italy 1886.

Patrick's Confessions are a unique window into the life and thoughts of a remarkable individual. Written in Latin, they are a personal account of his life, his faith, and his calling. In them, Patrick reveals his **humility**, his **gratitude**, and his **passion for sharing the Gospel with others**. The Confessions are a testament to Patrick's enduring legacy, offering insights into the mind and heart of a **true apostle of Christ**.

Tradition holds that Patrick died on 17th March 461 AD, in **Saul**, County Down. His remains are said to be buried in Downpatrick, where a church now stands in his honour.

At this time of year when we reflect on Patrick's life and legacy, we are reminded of the **enduring power of his message**. His Confessions offer a glimpse into the heart of a remarkable individual, driven by a passion for Christ and a love for the Irish people. His legacy continues to inspire and transform lives, making him one of the best-known figures in Irish history.

Happy Saint Patrick's Day!



St Patrick's journey to the hill of Tara.

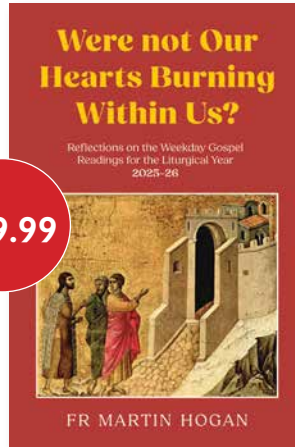


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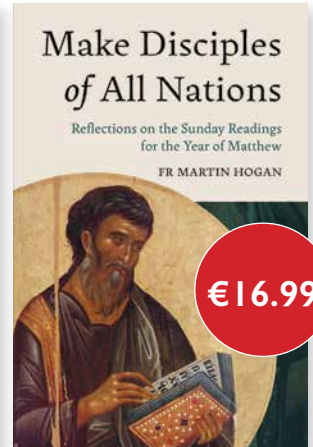
€5.99

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

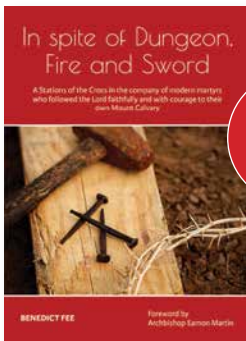


€19.99

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.



€16.99



€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.

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



€12.99

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MARCH CROSSWORD

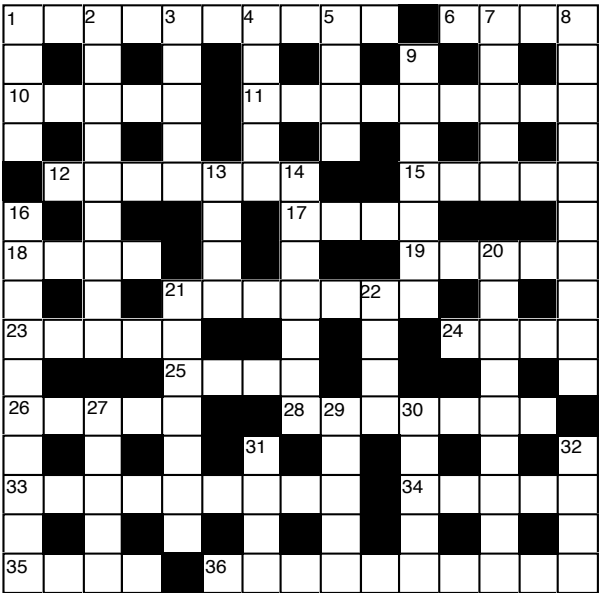
We are pleased to share with you our latest ACN crossword. We will print the answers in next month's edition.

Enjoy!

February Solution

Across 1 Joint account, 7 Out, 9 Brag, 10 Arable, 11 Flea, 14 Study, 15 Toner, 16 Peck, 18 Lopes, 21 Enemy, 22 Wrong, 23 Samoa, 24 Ions, 25 Negev, 26 Stick, 29 Lost, 33 Ablaze, 34 Plug, 36 Wee, 37 Metropolitan.

Down 1 Jar, 2 Iago, 3 Tuam, 4 Chart, 5 Ogled, 6 Toil, 8 Thanksgiving, 9 Brother-in-law, 12 Intern, 13 Trays, 14 Salem, 17 Enough, 19 Plank, 20 Swine, 27 Tuber, 28 Cramp, 30 Seem, 31 Bell, 32 Spit, 35 Urn.



ACROSS

- 1 Wavering; delay (10)
- 6 Mimicked (4)
- 10 Imprecise (5)
- 11 Name often applied to the robin (9)
- 12 Bumped against others in a crowd (7)
- 15 Weak glue (5)
- 17 Novel by Jane Austen (4)
- 18 Percentage or speed (4)
- 19 Kingly, royal (5)
- 21 Ghost, or the 24th James Bond movie (7)
- 23 Slumbered (5)
- 24 & 36a
Characteristic Christian prayerful remembrance of the crucifixion (4,2,3,5)
- 25 Idi, twentieth century Ugandan dictator (4)
- 26 Alongside a vessel at sea (5)
- 28 Type of shark (7)
- 33 Magnificence (9)
- 34 Building added to a complex (5)
- 35 Decomposes (4)
- 36 See 24 across

DOWN

- 1 Possess (4)
- 2 & 8d
Formally append one's 'John Hancock' (4,2,3,6,4)
- 3 Nice surprise (5)
- 4 Curt (5)
- 5 What a bookie will quote you (4)
- 7 Strategies (5)
- 8 See 2 down
- 9 Get ready (7)
- 13 Walk lamely (4)
- 14 Go down (7)
- 16 Intruder (who might be prosecuted) (10)
- 20 Musical instruction - in 'sliding' manner (9)
- 21 One's ability to keep going (7)
- 22 Part of a ladder (4)
- 27 Gallic brilliance (5)
- 29 Actress and TV personality Ms Winfrey (5)
- 30 Unit of Swiss currency (5)
- 31 The foot of a horse (4)
- 32 Mathematical line (4)

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.



“That peace returns to the Holy Land and Christians reclaim their lives.”

“I pray that God helps me to overcome personal problems I have been facing for quite a while now.”

“I pray that St Patrick intercedes for Ireland and that people become inspired to follow in his footsteps this March.”

“For John and his family who are trying to manage a terrible loss.”

“For all who are grieving. I pray that God gives them the resolve to place their trust in him and keep going.”

“For those who spend time on the roads. May God protect them and keep them safe.”

“For those struggling with any form of addiction. I pray that Christ’s love heals them.”

“For farmers who are finding it difficult in this poor weather.”

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



St Patrick's Breastplate



Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down,
Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.

AMEN

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Registered Charity No:
CRA in RoI: 20023768
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