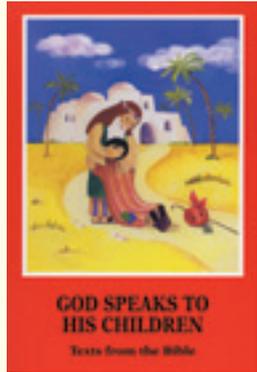


Feed a Child with the Word of God

Aid to the Church in Need began its Child's Bible project in 1979 – the International Year of the Child. Since then it has printed and distributed over 50 million copies of God Speaks to His Children in 172 different languages. It is the Catholic Church's most successful Child's Bible ever.



The Catholic Church's most successful Child's Bible ever!

With Bible stories from the Old and New Testaments and beautifully illustrated by Spanish Nun Sr Miren Some this inspiring book can also teach the Faith here in Australia: with your family, godchildren, in your parish or school.

A beautiful gift idea for Baptism, First Holy Communion Confirmation and other religious occasions.

A complimentary copy of the Child's Bible is available with any donation to help the work of Aid to the Church in Need for the poor and persecuted Church.

If you would like a **FREE** copy please tick the box on the response coupon that accompanies the Mirror newsletter.



A catechist in Nigeria teaching from the Child's Bible

A birthday gift for heroic Sisters

IN one corner of Nigeria, the Daughters of Mary, Mother of Mercy are unsung heroes. They teach the Catholic Faith as well as ministering to the poor, the elderly, the infirm and young orphans.

Working in schools, hospitals and orphanages, the Sisters have developed their apostolate across Kwara State in west Nigeria, bringing help and hope to thousands of disadvantaged people.

Now the 73 Sisters are celebrating the order's 50th birthday and, as a special gift from ACN, they have requested what they are calling a "pastoral van".

The van will help the Sisters reach out to more needy people in some of the remotest regions,

and allow regular visits from their religious superiors anxious to help and provide moral and practical support.

Reverend Mother Mary Casimir Nwadiukwu, the Superior General, writes: "Our mission is to bear witness to the mercy of God in love and fidelity through care of the poor, the aged, the needy.

"The region is very vast... the roads are very bad. We shall be very grateful if our request is granted."

ACN has promised Mother Mary and the Sisters \$20,000 – so they will get their much-needed birthday present.

And, with vocations on the increase in Nigeria, we are giving \$33,000 to help accommodate six new novices at Our Lady of Fatima convent in Jos.



Sisters caring for orphans in Hope House, Keduru, southern Nigeria

Your help will go to support these and other similar projects in Nigeria and around the world



Aid to the Church in Need

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 Report by John Pontifex (2012) Photographs by ACN unless stated



Comfort my people,

says your God (Isaiah 40:1)

NIGERIA IN CRISIS

A Special Report



Bombed but not forgotten: St Theresa's Catholic Church, Madalla, after an attack by extremists on Christmas Day 2011.

Photo © EPA/LUSA

FRIGHTENED and bewildered faithful in Nigeria have appealed for help amid reports of a sudden upsurge of violence and oppression.



Bishop Martin Igwe Uzoukwu of Minna

Extremist group Boko Haram has carried out bloody attacks in which communities across the ethnic, religious and political spectrum have suffered.

Among those in the direct line of fire are the Christian faithful, with Church leaders across the country describing a new era of persecution.

But they refuse to give way to extremists' demands that Christians should leave or face the consequences.

In this special report, we assess the impact of the sudden escalation of terrorist activity and show how you are helping to comfort the afflicted.

In Madalla, a town outside the capital, Abuja, ACN provided urgent assistance after a bomb blast on Christmas Day ripped through St Theresa's Church, leaving 44 dead and 81 injured.

Speaking from Nigeria, Bishop Martin Igwe Uzoukwu of Minna told us: "Our people have suffered so much but our response should not be one of anger but

one of peace and justice.

"May God bless Aid to the Church in Need for your kindness and support. We are praying for all of you."

His thanks are echoed by other bishops, especially in troubled northern Nigeria, where ACN is prioritising key projects.

These include training seminarians, providing Mass offerings for priests in remote parishes, supplying ACN Child's Bibles and helping Sisters ministering the Word of God and reaching out to the poorest of the poor.

Reports from Nigeria show that, in spite of the persecution, the Church is growing. ACN's help is urgently needed in a country which boasts 5,000 seminarians – more than any other African country.

Such young people are Nigeria's hope. Your love and your compassion are crucial if that hope is to bear fruit – fruit that will last.

Helping the suffering Church today



Aid to the Church in Need www.aidtochurch.org

Killed on Christmas Day

“THEY were people who had come simply to rejoice in the birth of Our Lord. For this, they were slaughtered.”

Until that moment, Bishop Martin had remained calm and controlled. Suddenly you could hear the distress in his voice.

Speaking to Aid to the Church in Need from his diocese in central Nigeria, the Bishop of Minna was describing what happened at St Theresa's Catholic Church, Madalla, when a bomb exploded during Mass on Christmas morning 2011.

In the explosion 44 people died and 81 others were injured.

The vast majority of those who died were very young. They included four-year-old Emmanuel Dike, who was killed alongside his father, brother and sister.

Also killed were seven-month old Chiemerie Nwachukwu and his mother, Florence.

For Chiemerie's grieving father it was a bleak end to a year which had begun so brightly with his marriage to Florence.

Giving details of the victims, Bishop Martin said: **“Those who died were martyrs. They will be remembered forever.”**

The bishop said St Theresa's Church was so badly damaged structural engineers had warned of its imminent collapse.

But, refusing to give in to despair, the bishop set out plans to restore the church, as well as the priest's house (presbytery), school rooms, parish hall and office, which were also badly damaged.

So that rebuilding work could get underway without delay, ACN responded to an appeal from Bishop Martin by providing immediate assistance of \$33,000. Key to the restoration initiative at St Theresa's is to create a centre for trauma counselling and dialogue, encouraging inter-faith cooperation and joint action on community projects aimed at tackling poverty.

Bishop Martin said: **“The support that you at ACN can give us will help bind our wounds and enable us to grow even in this time of suffering.”**



Fr Isaac Achi calms his parishioners after the Christmas Day 2011 bomb attack on St Theresa's Catholic Church, Madalla. Photo © EPA/LUSA

News just in:

ACN has committed to help repair two damaged churches in Tafawa Balewa parish, Bauchi state, in northern Nigeria. They are among 12 churches that were targeted last year, five of which were repaired and re-roofed by the faithful themselves.

With the assurance of better police protection and urgent pleas for help from the parish communities, the charity decided it was imperative to provide help.



Bomb victims four-year-old Emmanuel Dike (left) and Chiemerie Nwachukwu, aged eight months

Boko Haram – waging ‘a war on Christians’

AS we went to press, extremist group Boko Haram was carrying out attacks in northern Nigeria almost every day, targeting markets, police, military, mosques, schools and churches.

Founded in 2001/2, Boko Haram, which literally means ‘Western education is forbidden’, is described as a Jihadist organisation carrying out violence in a bid to replace secular government with Islamic *Shari'a* law.

Reports from Nigeria state that in the first two months of 2012 at least 100 Christians were killed by Boko Haram.

Declaring “a war on Christians”, a Boko Haram spokesman recently said the extremists wanted to

eradicate Christians from certain parts of the country.

He added: “We will create so much effort to have a proper Islamic state that the Christians will not be able to stay.”

Calling for prayer, action and increased security, Church leaders condemned acts of retaliation against Boko Haram.

Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama of Jos, a focal point for Boko Haram violence, said: “When I visit the people, I see the injustice they suffer. I want to share their agony and pain.

“We must not look at the suffering as a sign that God has condemned us. Rather it is a challenge and sets us on the road to union with him.”



Fr Isaac Achi surveys the wreckage at St Theresa's Church, Madalla, after a bombing on Christmas Day 2011. Photo © EPA/LUSA

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Seminarians: Nigeria's hope

NIGERIA has more than 5,000 seminarians – more than any other country in Africa.

Many of them know they will work in the most dangerous parts of the country, where Christians are a target for extremists.

In northern Nigeria – the focus for the bulk of extremist activity – the Church is still very young, so ACN is prioritising help for seminarians there.

And we are supporting more than 50 seminarians in Jos, Central Belt, where there has been an upsurge of attacks. They wrote: “Our personal goal is that we will be solid, happy and joyful priests. This becomes the work of a lifetime.”

Key assistance – books, cassocks, retreats, medical care and transport – also goes to those on pastoral placement.

Others receiving help include 98 seminarians of the Missionary Society of St Paul (MSPs) in the capital, Abuja.

Since their foundation 35 years ago, 225 MSP priests have been ordained, working in countries as diverse as Sudan and Sweden as well as the UK.

