



Seeking Sanctuary: Christians who have fled Boko Haram (courtesy of Diocese of Maiduguri)

Suffering inflicted on Maiduguri diocese

- 5,000 faithful killed
- 100,000 faithful displaced
- 7,000 widows
- 10,000 orphans
- 350 churches and presbyteries destroyed – in many cases more than once
- 30 Sisters and 200 catechists displaced
- 26 out of 46 priests in the diocese currently displaced
- 4 out of 5 convents deserted
- 22 out of 40 parish centres and chaplaincies deserted and occupied by terrorists
- 32 out of 40 primary schools deserted

Source – Catholic Diocese of Maiduguri

Sowing the Word

In Sokoto diocese, northern Nigeria, ACN is supporting 61 catechists working in 21 parishes.

Tony Zender, ACN's Africa projects head, visited the diocese recently to see the catechists' work.

In Malumfashi – where people are open to Christianity despite following traditional religions – he visited Fr Cornelius Tagwai, director of the diocesan Catechetical Centre.

Tony said: "37 student catechists are being trained under very modest conditions."

The course runs over two years, with breaks so students can return home to help at seedtime and harvest.

Tony added: "In St John's Parish, Gidan Kurma, we met Fr Richard who is the first resident priest here. He has 13 outstations and is assisted by 10 trained catechists."

"In the main station he has 1,300 parishioners and it is not unusual to have some 350 baptisms each year, many of whom are adults."

Fr Richard's parents were converts and he was the first Hausa priest to be ordained.

Without catechists, Fr Richard would not be able to pastor his flock, and without you Sokoto Diocese would not be able to support the catechists. Thank you for your support and love.

"We have to be very strong in our faith. My church – St Martin's – was attacked and set on fire during Holy Week but we are not afraid. We trust in God."

Rosena



Rosena, one of the first female catechists from Ganye, in Yola diocese, northern Nigeria

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? (Rom 8:35)

ACN Nigeria update



Holding on in faith: Mass at a church in Yola, northern Nigeria



Bishop Oliver Dashe Doeme of Maiduguri with ACN emergency aid (courtesy of Diocese of Maiduguri)

Their loved ones have been killed, their young ones kidnapped and their churches desecrated – but they refuse to give up hope.

Christians in northern Nigeria have been bombed, murdered and chased from their homes but they are determined to keep faith and start afresh.

Their bishop, Oliver Dashe Doeme, quotes St Paul: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution...? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

Bishop Oliver's Diocese of Maiduguri lies in tatters.

With 5,000 faithful dead and more than 350 churches in ruins, entire communities have fled Boko Haram. Who can they turn to?

Aid to the Church in Need is providing emergency help for people fleeing persecution – many hiding in the mountains, in caves or forests and in neighbouring Cameroon.

ACN has responded with water, food, clothes, medicine and shelter.

The charity offered more help after Christians began returning home, buoyed by hopes that success in beating back Boko Haram would increase with the election of a new government.

In addition, ACN is re-building St

Stephen's Church, Dutsen Wai destroyed by extremists, helping 60 catechists working in the deserts of the north-west and providing a generator and security lights at a church school in Kaduna threatened by Islamists.

Other examples of ACN aid include: Child's Bibles for youngsters in the capital, Abuja; building a chapel at a maternity hospital in Osogbo run by Sisters and formation of seminarians in Zaria, where extremism is rife.

Bishop Oliver writes: "We feel the warmth of your prayers and solidarity. We are committed to witnessing to the Gospel and are willing to pay the price when the time comes." ●



Aid to the Church in Need

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Report by John Pontifex and John Newton Photos: © Aid to the Church in Need (except where stated)

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Helping the suffering Church today



Aid to the Church in Need

Helping them follow **God's call**

Young men are still offering to serve Jesus as priests even though they are putting their lives at risk from the growing threat of extremism.

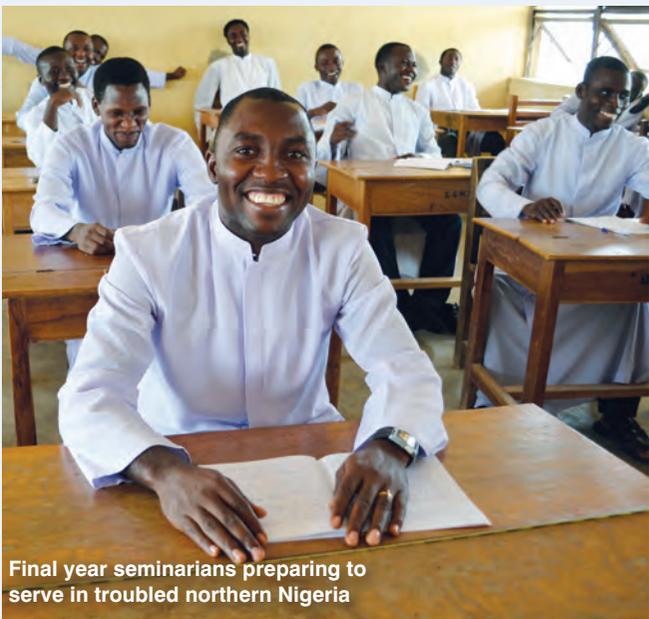
Today there are more than 300 seminarians at St Augustine's Seminary, Jos.

Just two years ago, Aid to the Church in Need helped build a new perimeter wall to secure the site after extremists tried to torch the monastery next door.

Now the immediate need is Mass offerings to support the teachers at the seminary.

Aid to the Church in Need will be helping 17 teachers support themselves – and they will be helping you, our benefactors – by offering Masses for your loved ones.

St Augustine's rector Fr Sylvester Dagin told us: "I cannot thank you enough and the entire family of Aid to the Church in Need for your constant kindness towards the missions." ●



Final year seminarians preparing to serve in troubled northern Nigeria

In search of **hope and forgiveness**

Bishop Oliver Dashe Doeme of Maiduguri stands in the remains of a Catholic church in Bahuli, Maiduguri diocese targeted by Boko Haram

"The brutality and callousness with which our people have been killed can only be compared with Islamic State in Iraq and Syria."

Words taken from a fresh report produced by priests from Maiduguri, the diocese worst affected by Boko Haram, whose pledge of allegiance with IS has now been accepted by the Islamist terror group.

With 85 percent of Maiduguri diocese under Boko Haram control at the time of writing, latest estimates state that 100,000 faithful have been displaced including 30 Sisters and 26 priests.

Countless numbers of women have been forced to convert to Islam, just like the 200 schoolgirls kidnapped in April 2014. To date nothing is known about them.

Aid to the Church in Need is helping victims of persecution with food, water, medicine and shelter – help coordinated by Bishop Oliver Dashe Doeme of Maiduguri.

The \$65,000 aid package has been followed up with assistance for priests and catechists sheltering in neighbouring dioceses.

Thousands of Christians began returning to their homelands after Nigeria's military began pushing back the militants.

Father Gideon Obasogie from Maiduguri diocese told ACN how he and Bishop Oliver visited faithful just back to their towns and villages.

He said: "Their homes were terribly looted, their churches and rectories razed down. They discovered that their aged parents who had stayed behind had been killed for refusing to recant their faith."

ACN is rebuilding churches, providing counselling, offering Christian education and catechesis and distributing ACN Child's Bibles. Fr Gideon added: **"With security so tight, people are very scared and when they get home they find there is nothing there, but our faith has been purified through persecution."**

During his visit, Bishop Oliver prayed with the faithful. He mourned with people grieving and prayed for separated loved ones to be reunited.

The bishop called on people to forgive Boko Haram: **"We must remember the core**

values of our Christian faith: We must not seek vengeance; we must love our enemies and those who persecute us. For in love we are saved."

Please help ACN fulfil its promises of love to those in need. ●



Nathalie Ritzmann

"We ask Jesus, the victor over death, to lighten the sufferings of our many brothers and sisters who are persecuted for his name, and of all those who suffer injustice as a result of ongoing conflicts and violence."

Pope Francis
Urbi et Orbi Easter Sunday address 2015

Supporting Sisters' school for the **deaf and blind**

Sr Eucharia Ugwu, the headmistress of St Francis' School for the Deaf and Blind in Ahilejime in south-east Nigeria, was overjoyed when Aid to the Church in Need agreed to help build the school's new chapel.

But a little while later she wrote and told us: "As we prepare to start the building project, we are faced with some difficulties.

"The support given to us by Aid to the Church in Need, when combined with our local contribution, is not sufficient.

"Prices have gone up in an unprecedented manner. For example, a bag of cement now costs about 2,300 [Nigerian] Naira and may still go higher."

Before the school was set up, these children were seen as "good-for-nothing and considered objects of derision" but now they are cared for by the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus, who educate them, and teach them about the love of Jesus.

A new chapel would mean an end to services held under the trees. Please help them. ●



St Francis' School for the Deaf and Blind