

**ACN launches Lent Calendar
featuring stories of Modern Martyrs and a campaign to
raise funds for persecuted Christians**

During Lent and Easter, the Pontifical Foundation Aid to the Church in Need will honour and remember those modern martyrs who heroically offered their lives for God and their communities and collectively call-to-mind those who have been abducted and still remain in captivity, by sharing their stories in an online Lenten calendar. The calendar tells a new story or martyrdom or religious persecution each day. All the testimonies featured in the ACN Lent Calendar are from the 21st-century and are witnesses to the love and dedication of our brothers and sisters in faith. The calendar can be viewed on ACN's website:

www.aidtochurch.org/lent2020

In addition to the Lent calendar, ACN Australia will launch an **online campaign** featuring powerful videos that share the stories of:

**Chorister Sarah Yohanna from Nigeria
18-year-old Akash from Pakistan
Fr Frans from Syria
and Fr Ragheed Ganni from Iraq**

All of the individuals spoken about in the videos suffered a martyrdom of blood by defending or publicly celebrating their Christian faith.

In countries including Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, India or Somalia, being a Christian can mean death at the hands of fanatical extremists. Other examples of martyrs featured in the ACN Lent calendar knew that they were putting their lives in danger, yet chose to stay, living a heroic charity. Some were serving the poorest of the poor or fighting injustice for the love of Christ and they were murdered as a result. These include priests and nuns – in Haiti, Mexico and El Salvador – who willingly risked their lives to follow Christ's call.

"Their stories are present-day examples that can inspire and increase our dedication and love for others," explained ACN Australia's National Director, Mr Bernard Toutounji.

"Through the Lent calendar, we also want to encourage prayer for the liberation of

those Christians that have been abducted and are still being held captive, or unjustly imprisoned because of their Faith. Reading through these modern martyr's stories is a powerful, emotional and spiritual experience. To watch the video testimonies of those that loved Christ so much, who followed his Word so closely that they gave their own lives to share Christ with others, causes you to reflect on your own Faith.

What can I learn from this extraordinary act of love? How will knowing this story change my own priorities in life? In this season of Lent where Catholics are encouraged to pray, fast and give alms. I hope the ACN Lent calendar will be a catalyst to prayer and that engaging with these stories will move you to give a gift to *Aid to the Church in Need* so that we can continue to support the communities that these martyrs were forced to leave behind."

Donations can be made to *Aid to the Church in Need* via their website by visiting:
www.aidtochurch.org/lent2020

Over the phone: **1800 101 201**

or via post:
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