

Parish of Bangor, Member of Ards Pastoral Community

Parish Priest: Very Rev Joseph Gunn St Comgall's Presbytery, 27 Brunswick Road, Bangor, Co Down, BT20 3DS
T: (028) 9146-5522 E: bangor@downandconnor.org W: www.bangorparish.com Office Hours: Mon-Fri 9.30pm to 1pm.

The Ascension of the Lord - 28 & 29 May 2022

Your prayers are requested for

Recently Deceased:

May McCaffrey (Holywood),
Yawhan Woo (Korea), Veronica Bintley,
Sheila Adair.

Anniversaries: Liam Logan, Colin
McDonagh, Neil Murray, Thomas Brown,
Robert Johnston, Teresa Shields, John
McKenna, Gerry Murray, David McHenry.

COLUMBANUS COMMUNITY FOLK FESTIVAL

Bangor 12-19 June.

Full week of events.

Headline act:

St Comgall's Parish Centre,
with Mairtin O Connor trio and
Celtic Storm

Saturday 18th June.

Tickets £10 children free with a paying
adult. All info on www.ardscce.co.uk

BAPTISM REGISTRATION

Evenings only until further notice at 6pm.

Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Please register online SIDE BAR under
'Sacramental Preparation'



BANGOR PARISH PODCAST

You can listen to the Parish Podcasts
STATIONS OF THE CROSS by

clicking on the audio files on the website or
by searching for "Parish of Bangor Podcast"

in the apple or google podcast Apps.

Then subscribe to our channel so that you will receive all the
latest podcasts straight to your device.

**Bethany Bereavement
Support Group**
we are here to support and listen.
Confidential. **075 1085 2157**

**St Vincent
de Paul
Helpline**
077 0367 9384

SUNDAY MASS TIMES THIS WEEKEND

ST COMGALL'S CHURCH, DONAGHADEE

Sunday 29th MAY @ 9.00am

ST COMGALL'S CHURCH BRUNSWICK ROAD

Saturday vigil 28th May @ 6.30pm

Sunday 29th MAY @ 10am & 12noon

*Please note that the Covid sanitising regulations have not changed and will
continue to be strictly observed.*

DAILY MASS NEXT WEEK – 30th MAY to 3rd June

Morning Mass: Monday, Wednesday to Friday at 9.30am

*St Comgall's Brunswick Rd - Requiem Mass Veronica Bintley –
Tuesday 31st May at 10am*

*St Comgall's Church, Donaghadee – Requiem Mass Sheila Adair –
Tuesday 31st May at 10am*

A number of Masses including funerals are recorded.

These can be accessed by clicking on the link below:

www.churchservices.tv/bangor

Solemn Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament has resumed on
every Monday . Adoration will last from after Morning Mass until
4.00pm with the intention of prolonging it later until 9.00pm as
heretofore subject to there being sufficient adorers on the rota.

Please let us know if you are interested
in being part of the evening rota.

Meeting of New and Returning Eucharistic Ministers – Bangor Parish

Monday 6th June at 7pm in St Comgall's Church,
Brunswick Road

Under discussion will be the commissioning of
the new Ministers of the Eucharist and allocation
of duties. Please notify the office of your
intention to attend.

PRAYING WITH THE ICONS

under **The Four Saints** found in
'Parish Today'

**This is a 8 Page Bulletin
so please scroll down!**

Full Copy Of The Sunday Missalette Can Be Found On The Parish Website Under "News"



DOWN and CONNOR

DIOCESAN TRUST

**VACANCY SACRISTAN
BANGOR PARISH, BRUNSWICK ROAD, BANGOR, BT20 3DS**

A vacancy has arisen for a Sacristan within Bangor Parish, where the responsibilities in the role will include:

✠ The maintenance of the sacristy where the church's liturgical items are kept including vestments, sacred vessels, and books etc.

✠ Ensuring that the sanctuary is set up for mass, other services, baptisms, and funerals, ensuring all the requisite books and sacramental vessels etc. are in place, and that afterwards the sanctuary is cleared, and the church is left secure and tidy.

The terms are based on a permanent appointment requiring 15 hours attendance each week, work pattern to be agreed. Ability to work flexible hours is required from the post holder from time to time.

Rate of Pay - £9.50 gross per hour.

Full details relating to the vacancy can be found on the Diocesan website at:

<http://www.downandconnor.org> clicking on the tab: **JOB VACANCIES**

and on the Community NI website, where terms and conditions relating to the role can also be accessed by way of a Role Profile and Employment Application form. Application packs can also be obtained from the Parish Office.

We welcome applications from anyone who feels they meet the criteria and are interested in playing an active part in the Parish.

Closing date for applications will be 12.00 noon on Friday 10th June 2022

Down and Connor Diocesan Trust is an Equal Opportunities Employer



Sr Paschal McMeel, who for 55 years was a sister & abbess at the Poor Clare monastery on the Cliftonville Road until its closure in 2012, went home to God in the Poor Clare Carlow monastery on 8th May 2022.

The month's mind Mass for Sr. Paschal will be celebrated in the Sacred Heart Church, Oldpark Road, Belfast at 12 noon on Saturday 4th June. Celebrant will be Bishop Donal McKeown.

Sr Paschal was much loved and respected in Belfast and beyond. Blessed with a wonderful personality, she made numerous friends throughout her life taking all their worries and anxieties to the Lord in prayer.

May she enjoy the peace and happiness of heaven.

Please find below the link to the **Safeguarding Office Spring 2022 E-Bulletin**. Newsletter - available to view on our website <https://downandconnorsafeguarding.com/newsletters/>

Issue 74 of *Sharing the Good News* for circulation to parishes for use in newsletters, parish mailing lists, as well as on websites and social media pages. The March issue is attached in PDF and image (jpeg) format to optimise sharing online. The current issue can also be linked to and downloaded from the home page of www.catholicbishops.ie.

LIVING CHURCH: "Come Away and Rest Awhile" CARA RETREAT

Are you a parent of a young person with a disability? Would you like to take some time out to pray, reflect and meet other parents? If the answer is yes we would love you to join us for a parents retreat at: Drumalis Retreat Centre beginning **Friday 24th June**, 6pm until Saturday 25th June, 4pm For information or to register your interest contact: Louise McQuillan Tel: 07922437679 Email: l.mcquillan@downandconnor.org

St Comgall's Parish Youth Club

As we emerge from the severest of the Covid restrictions the future of the Parish Youth Club needs to be examined. Finding and retaining qualified youth club personnel was already difficult pre-Covid, it is evermore so now.

So that legal safeguarding staff/child ratios may be achieved it has been necessary to reduce the club activities to two nights per week.

In order for the club to continue new volunteers are required. They must be at least 18 years old and prepared to be vetted.

If sufficient volunteers are not forthcoming the management committee will face the decision whether to mothball the club or close it. Your assistance is indispensable.

Please contact the parish office with your details if interested before 31st May 2022.

St Comgall's Parish Youth Centre is looking for enthusiastic youth workers to allow us to remain open.

If you are interested or know someone who might be have a look on JobsApplyNI website.

Applications close on **3 June 2022**.

<https://www.jobapplyni.com/Vacancy/VacancyDetail?Id=1548183§or=Any%20Sector&keyword=Youth&location=All%20Locations&filter=All&listpage=3>

Pilgrimage to Fatima – 2022, Down and Connor Diocese 8 - 15 SEPTEMBER 2022 | 7 NIGHTS

Led by Bishop Noel Treanor D.D.
Pilgrimage directors: Fr G. McCloskey PP
and Fr Sean Gilmore PP - Return flights
from Dublin to Lisbon - Coach from
Belfast to Dublin airport - 7 nights at
Hotel Avenida - Breakfast, lunch and
dinner each day - Airport transfers -
20kg check-in bag per person - Free
travel insurance up to 79 years. **£689**
per person sharing.

For Bookings contact: Joe Catney
028 9071 4001 / 07776 425631
Pilgrimage Directors: Fr G McCloskey
PP 028 4484 1208 & Fr Sean Gilmore PP

**Bethany Bereavement Support
Group** we are here to support and
listen. Confidential. **075 1085 2157**

**Mass is Live Streamed and can be
accessed via the Parish Website**

www.bangorparish.com

Obligation to attend Sunday/Holyday

Mass: With the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, it is encouraging to see a return to a fuller liturgical life in our parishes. Thankful that we can once again gather as communities of faith, the Irish Bishops have announced that attending Mass on Sunday and Holydays of Obligation will from Easter Sunday (17th April 2022) once again be deemed an essential expression of faith. As always, those whose health is vulnerable or who are unwell will not be under any obligation to attend Mass.

The All Ireland Rosary Rally will take place in Knock on **Saturday 4th June** from 1.30 pm. The main celebrant will be Archbishop Okolo, Papal Nuncio to Ireland. Homilist: Bishop Michael Duignan. Rosary Talk: Fr. Marius O'Reilly. If interested in travelling by coach, contact Paddy 07979501228 or Siobhán 07857251422 by text anytime or call after 5pm.



CALENDAR OF SAINTS DAYS

MAY / JUNE 2022

Thursday 26 May

Saint Philip Neri, Priest

Wednesday 1 June

Saint Justin, Martyr

Friday 27 May

Saint Augustine of Canterbury, Bishop

Thursday 2 June

Saints Marcellinus & Peter, Martyrs

Sunday 28 May

The Ascension of the Lord

Friday 3 June

Saint Kevin, Abbot

Tuesday 31 May

The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Saturday 4 June

Saint Charles Lwanga & Companions, Martyrs

Prayer Online: Come and join us at... www.soulparemission.com Who are we? We are a new interactive prayer website created by Jacinta Crockford DipTH, Spiritual Director living in Down and Connor. What's on offer? A variety of PDF meditations on Mother Teresa, St John Paul II, Ignatius Spirituality to name but a few. Lots of content to Dive into! There you will find - Podcasts on Faith, Friendship & Knowledge; Rosaries, Prayers and Marian Consecration. Come and join us and be part of the prayer movement online!

Saturday at 8.30pm – Prayerful Reflections during Live Eucharistic Adoration. Meditations on the Catholic Internet TV – Shalom World.org Just click on the following link to access this time of prayer. www.swprayer.org Please be assured that I will be including all the parishioners and their families during these live intercessory prayers.

St Anne's PTA Car Boot Sale

Our final monthly car boot sale is on Saturday, June 4, 9am to 1pm. All proceeds go to Donaghadee FoodBank. Bring your household treasures to sell (set up from 8am), or come along a find a bargain. Cars £5, Vans, etc £10.

St Anne's P.S. Summer Fun Day

Sunday, June 12, 1-4pm - A fun day for everyone! Bouncy obstacle course, tombola, BBQ, toys "Bazaar" and a great raffle with restaurant vouchers, family days out and much more. There will also be face painting and lots of games such as Hook-a-Duck, Beat-the-Goalie, Roll-a-Coin, Hi-Lo cards, Hoop-La and many more. Auction at 2pm, Raffle at 3pm. Free entry. Everyone welcome. Would you be able to help look after a stall, or help serve teas? If you can, please contact the school 9188 3619 or email jhennessy542@c2kni.net.

The Society of St Vincent de Paul offers practical and confidential help to those in need throughout the North Down Area. We know it can be hard to ask for help but please, if you need help call us on **our Helpline: 077 0367 9384**.

To help us to help others you can make direct payments to Conferences Bank Account.
St Comgall's, Allied Irish Bank. Sort Code 93-82-03. A/C No is 25302098.
Most Holy Redeemer Ballyholme, Allied Irish Bank. Sort Code 93-82-03. A/C No. 06885061.

Donations can also be made to SVP Giving Page at www.svp-ni.co.uk. If you are a UK income tax payer please consider Gift Aiding your donation, which will enhance your donation by 25% at no extra cost to you. Gift Aid forms are available on the Parish website, or on request, via SVP Helpline number, as above.

The Society is always on the lookout for new Members, and if you are interested and can spare a few hours per week please speak to a Conference Member, or leave your name and contact number on the Helpline and we will return to you promptly. You will be warmly welcomed and full training will be given.

***We can now accept donations of Good quality furniture –
please call our Helpline or speak to a member of the Society.***

STOREHOUSE NORTH DOWN

Storehouse continues to help **St Vincent De Paul** provide non-perishable food for those in need. **Non perishable foodstuff donations, for Storehouse, have recommenced. Donations can be left in the receptacle in the Bishops Porch at the rear of the Church** or Storehouse welcomes donations of foodstuff at their premises, 12 Balloo Avenue, Bangor on Mondays and Thursdays between 10.00am to 3.00 pm. Cash donations are also very acceptable.

Knock Shrine - Daily Masses continue to be broadcast on the Knock Shrine website and Facebook page at 12 Noon and 7.30pm, with Rosary at 7pm. Sunday Mass is broadcast at 12 noon, Rosary at 2.30pm and Mass at 3pm. For further details, please see www.knockshrine.ie



LOUGH DERG THREE DAY PILGRIMAGE runs Wed 1st June until 15th August (Sat 13th Aug is final day to begin the Pilgrimage). Admission €80 | Booking advised | Concessions available for students, seniors and groups. All booking info, including organised parish groups available at www.loughderg.org, email info@loughderg.org or telephone 0(0353) 71 9861518. *Lough Derg, Pettigo, Co Donegal, F94 N289*

CANA 1,2,3 – Retreat for Couples: Rediscover the meaning and fun in your marriage, your family life, and your commitment to each other. Experience the 7 thematic days of the CANA Week over three weekends through April, May & June. Including Talks, Testimonies and most importantly of all, Time to share with each other as a couple and with other couples. other couples. Contact details: Brian & Lisa Harmon 041 6851563, 086 8386725 or 0879080023 info@canaireland.org www.canaireland.org

Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes 2022: Full board in hotel: 5 nights (13-18 July) from £685. For further information contact the Pilgrimage Office on (028) 9077 0162 email: lourdes@downandconnor.org or visit www.downandconnor.org/Lourdes

**ANNUAL DIOCESAN PILGRIMAGE TO KNOCK.
11TH AND 12TH OF JUNE 2022**

Fully guided pilgrimage with overnight stay in The Knock House Hotel. Bus leaves Saint Patricks Church Donegal Street. Total cost £140. For more information and to book a place please Contact Sally on 02890 247587

Ards CCE

Trad Music Summer Workshops

1st /2nd July St Comgalls Primary School
Bangor for all abilities and beginners welcome,
for ages 6-17 years.
More info Niall Mc Clean
07960072218

The loss of a partner through death, separation or divorce is devastating. **BEGINNING EXPERIENCE** is offering a programme of bereavement support in St Bride's Hall, Derryvolgie Ave., Belfast on two Saturdays (June 25.) Booking essential. To find out more, contact Phil: 02890 207645 or Marie 07896119669.

**"The Morning Star Shines On Us" - Four Reflective Wednesday afternoon sessions with Sr Magdalen Lawler
SND hosted by Drumalis via Zoom in June (8, 15, 22 & 29 June from 2 pm – 3:30 pm)**

Sr Magdalen Lawler invites us to join her via Zoom for four afternoons in June as she reflects on the paintings of Sieger Koder. The suggested offering to attend the series is £40 per person. To register, please email katrina@drumalis.co.uk or phone 028 28272196/28276455 (Mon-Fri, 9 am – 5 pm)

An Irish Pilgrimage Guide to the Holy Land is a new book by Michael Kelly, Editor of *The Irish Catholic* newspaper which explores the places associated with the life of Christ. Michael, who has led many pilgrimages to the Holy Land, says he hopes the book can also act as an 'armchair retreat' for people who cannot travel to the Holy Land bringing the Gospel to life for them. It is available now from all good bookshops, www.columbabooks.com or by calling 00353.1.687.4096 price €16.99/£14.99

Accord is recruiting interested people to assist in the provision of Marriage Preparation Programmes.

Application forms are available by contacting info@accordni.com

Selections will take place in June of this year with training commencing in September.

This year Accord is celebrating 60 years supporting couples and families.

Please contact us for any support you may need www.accordni.com

QUB Chaplaincy Golden Jubilee Ball

The Catholic Chaplaincy at Queen's University will celebrate its Golden Jubilee with a Gala Ball in Belfast City Hall, to take place on Friday 10 June at 7pm. A drinks reception will be followed by a four-course dinner with wine, and dancing to live band MOJO. The evening promises to be the highlight of this year's social calendar, giving Queen's Chaplaincy alumni, across generations, a wonderful opportunity to catch up and share memories with old friends. Tickets are priced at £80 (plus online booking fee) and can be secured by following this link: <https://fixr.co/event/catholic-chaplaincy-qub-golden-gala-tickets-384378624> There is a limited number of tickets available for current students at the subsidised rate of £50 and can be reserved by contacting Chaplaincy directly at catholicchaplaincy@qub.ac.uk Dress Code: Black Tie

The Ascension of the Lord – 29th May 2022



Lord Jesus, you have said, 'Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.' I come to you in faith and trust, in love and hope. Let me know your closeness to me and your care for me and for all who are dear to me.

My intention: Hear my prayer (*mention intention*); grant what I ask, and may I always trust that in all that happens in life, you will be close to me as my friend, guide and saviour. And so, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you.

Penitential Act: I confess to the almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

PRAYERS AT HOLY COMMUNION

Spiritual Holy Communion Prayer

My Jesus, I believe that you are present
in the most Blessed Sacrament.
I love you above all things and
I desire to receive you into my soul.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace you as if you have already come,
and unite myself wholly to you.
Never permit me to be separated from you.
Amen.
composed by Saint Alphonsus Liguori

ANIMA CHRISTI

Prayer to the Most Holy Redeemer

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, embolden me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O good Jesus, hear me.
Within your wounds hide me.
Never permit me to be separated from you.
From the evil enemy defend me.
At the hour of my death call me
and bid me to come to you,
that with your Saints I may praise you
for age upon age. Amen

TRÓCAIRE thank you for your help. You can donate in the following ways:

1. Online at www.trocaire.org.
2. By phone: 0800 912 1200 (NI)
2. By post to Trócaire, 50 King Street, Belfast, BT1 6AD (NI).

Bangor group of Alcoholics Anonymous has restarted our Open Meetings. Open Meetings are, as the name suggests, open to everyone and anyone who wishes to know more about alcoholism, how it effects the individual and how they can recover. Bangor AA Open Meetings, The last Friday of the month, every month. Doors open at 8pm for an 8.30pm start. **Bangor Community HUB**, Hamilton Road, Bangor. BT20 4LF.

South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust Carer Support Service Are you an unpaid carer who cares for a family member or friend?

You are invited to come along to the Carer Support Service Carer Hub in Bangor.

When: 1st Wednesday of every month

Where: North Down Community Wellbeing Hub, Main Street

Time: 10.30 – 1pm

No need to book, just call in at any time during the morning for carer information advice and guidance. Join us for tea/coffee and scones, we would love to meet you.



GREETINGS FROM DROMANTINE RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTRE NEW WORKSHOPS 2022 - BOOKINGS NOW OPEN - Please contact Jacinta or Louisa to reserve your place: TEL: 028 (048 from ROI) 3082 1964 EMAIL: admin@dromantineconference.com

ALONE TOGETHER

Finding our way back to connection

Saturday, 18 June (9.30am - 4.30pm)

THE LONG GOODBYE

Practical advice for caregivers of people living with dementia

Friday, 19 August (5pm) - Sunday, 21 August (2pm)

WHEN IT IS DARKEST

Understanding suicide

Saturday, 24 September (9.30am - 4.30pm)

CHURCH ABUSE: A UNIQUE BETRAYAL

A call to listen, a call to action, a call to change

Friday, 4 November (5pm) - Sunday, 6 November (2pm)

The Pray for Life Novena is an invitation to join thousands of people across Ireland to pray for the protection of human life, from **Monday 23 May to the Feast of the Visitation on 31 May 2022**. Each day's intention is accompanied by a short reflection and suggested actions to help build a culture of life in Ireland. Visit www.prayforlife.ie for the daily novena prayers. This is an initiative of the Council for Life of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference. *The Pray for Life website will be live this coming weekend.

A Prayer by Telephone

The Sisters of Mercy "Bethany" 34 Point Road, Dundalk Welcome any person who may wish to request prayer, especially during these difficult times. All requests are confidential. **Tel:00353429331602 9am – 9pm Daily - One of the sisters will be happy to Listen and Pray with you**

KNOCK ANNUAL PILGRIMAGE 2022 Apostolate of Eucharistic Adoration

Calling ALL ADORERS of the Blessed Sacrament in DOWN & CONNOR

National Eucharistic Adoration Pilgrimage to Knock on Saturday 18th June (Corpus Christi weekend) leaving Belfast City Centre: Jury's Hotel at 6.15 am.

Cost £22, bring a packed lunch.

Contact Harriet 07812098991 or Maureen 07745093530 to inquire or book a seat. For more information click on the link below.

www.eucharisticadoration.ie

Copy of the poster on the Parish Website under 'News'

Do you or somebody you know suffer from addiction?

Addiction to Alcohol, Drugs, Gambling, Pornography, Food, Internet etc. steals life from so many people. Please come to the shrine of Matt Talbot in Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Sean Mc Dermot street, Dublin, on Sunday 12th June at 2pm, and join our annual national pilgrimage to pray for the miracle of freedom from all these addictions. For more information, visit www.matttalbotprayersociety.com or contact vita@matttalbotprayersociety.com (028) 71262894

The Safeguarding Office have been in contact with your Parish and Safeguarding Committee in relation to identifying training needs within your Parish. If you are a leader or volunteer involved any activity involving children, please make contact with your Parish Safeguarding Committee to agree any training requirements. Philip O'Hara Interim Director Safeguarding.

On Fire! A two day Conference for Catholic adults to regenerate the spirit of evangelisation in the UK 9-11 September 2022

SPEAKERS FROM: The Benedictines / The Dominicans / Aid to the Church in Need / CAFOD / Society of St Vincent de Paul / Catholic Voices. **TRAINING WORKSHOPS BY CATHOLIC VOICES**

CONFERENCE COST - £110 PER PERSON, INCLUDES: Talks and workshops / Lunch on Saturday and Sunday / Buffet dinner on Saturday / Teas and coffees **ACCOMMODATION AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGES B&B from £33 per person, per night Hurry! Bookings for rooms close end of May Open to all Catholics aged 18+ Venue:** Durham University Teaching and Learning Centre, DH1 3LS **Details:** <https://youngcatholicadultnetwork.uk/event/on-fire-conference>
Email: rina@youngcatholicadultnetwork.uk

Dear Friend,

May 24 is a special date for us at Saint Elisabeth Convent. It is the birthday of Elder Nikolai Guryanov. Father Nikolai played an important role in the construction of our Convent as well as in our inner spiritual formation.



Three years before the founding of the Convent, its future spiritual father, Priest Andrey Lemeshonok, and some of the sisters visited the Elder Nikolai seeking his advice. **They had no funds but a strong desire to build a church.**

When they asked Father Nikolai what to do, **he gave them a bill of five Russian rubles with an image of a church**, saying, *"I will help you, and people will add the rest."*

Fast forward today, and we know what happened!

The life of the elder and his spiritual image is a guide for our Convent. We have asked Father Andrey to share with us who Elder Nikolai was. **We invite you to read Father Andrey's recollections on a humble man of God.**



With love and gratitude for our friendship in Christ, Sr Anastasia and the Sisters of St Elisabeth Convent.

AID TO THE CHURCH

<https://www.acnireland.org/n-donate>

SUBSCRIBE TO THE MIRROR

Pope's Congo visit will bring reconciliation

POPE FRANCIS WILL BE IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO THIS YEAR, BETWEEN 2 AND 5 JULY. DURING A VISIT TO THE INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS OF THE AID TO THE CHURCH IN NEED FOUNDATION (ACN), IN GERMANY, BISHOP TIMOTHÉE BODIKA MANYISAI, OF KIKWIT, IN MIDWESTERN DR CONGO, SPOKE ABOUT HOW CATHOLICS ARE PREPARING FOR THE POPE'S VISIT.

By Carlos Rosas-Jiménez

Congolese seminarians supported by ACN (Credit: Aid to the Church in Need_

During his last *Ad Limina* visit to Rome, in 2014, when Bishop Bodika was still an auxiliary in Kinshasa, DR Congo's episcopate invited Pope Francis to visit their country. **"The Holy Father replied: 'Yes, one day I will go'. Finally, that moment has come"**, he says.

Orphans looked after by religious sisters. (Credit: Aid to the Church in Need)

The previous papal visits were by John Paul II in 1980 and in 1985. **Thirty-seven years later, a successor of Peter will once again set foot in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).** "When news of the Pope's visit was made public, we were thrilled. **This is Saint Peter coming to us. He comes as a shepherd, to**

confirm us in the faith, and we feel very blessed by his visit", says Bishop Bodika.

For Catholics, this is a moment of great joy, and there is much curiosity, especially for those who do not know the Pope. In the run-up to the visit, the bishops are highlighting the spiritual dimension and want the population to understand that the Holy Father is the successor of Peter, who has come to confirm his people in the faith. "With this in mind, **we have been reciting the prayer of preparation for the Holy Father's visit at the end of each**

Mass", explains Bishop Bodika, who has been in charge of the Diocese of Kikwit since 2016.

Due to the many and complex conflicts and difficulties that have afflicted the second largest country in Africa, both at a political and social level, **Pope Francis' main message is expected to be one of reconciliation.** "The Pope is coming to tell us: 'People of Congo, be reconciled!'. **The DCR is an enormous and very rich country, but there is widespread suffering in society.** The Pope is coming to us during a very troubled time in the life of our country. For example, **he will be in Goma, where there is much tension, there are armed groups that spread terror for selfish reasons,** even though it is the richest part of the country", the bishop says. However, despite all the problems in the country, the Congolese also have something to offer the Universal Church, says Bishop Bodika. "In the Democratic Republic of Congo, we have been working very hard to give more prominence to the laity in the Church, according to the Second Vatican Council. I would tell the Pope: "Holy Father, I am the chairman of the Bishops' Commission for the Laity. **See, there are the laypeople. See the youth"**, adds the bishop enthusiastically.

Since 2017, ACN has funded the formation of young seminarians, as well as the permanent formation of their teachers, in the Diocese of Kikwit, with over 38 thousand euros.

