



# Prayer for the Persecuted Church for March 29, 2024

## Prayer for the Persecuted Church: Our Best Practices

*Our focus in this hour is on prayer for the global church, not ourselves or our local issues. We can talk and even pray for those other things after prayer meeting is over at 1:00 p.m.*

*We strive to start our prayers by 12:10.*

*We are blessed to have a growing number of praying people join us. Let's all offer short prayers throughout our prayer time, allowing time for everyone to pray out loud if they wish. We are blessed by prayers when we can hear them, but silent prayers from our people are as valued as spoken ones.*

*Thank you for praying for the persecuted church. Encourage friends to pray, too!*

## Pray for imprisoned or kidnapped Christians

**CHRISTIANS IN PRISON:** This list is only a sample: CAMBODIA: Theary Seng; CHINA: Li Jie, Hang Xiaodong, Wang Qiang; John Cao, Yan Hwa, Goa Zhisheng, Wang Yi; Hao Zhiwei, Zhang Shaojie, Li Juncai, Lian Xu Liang; ERITREA: Meron Gebreselasie, Mussia Ezas, Dr. Kifly Gebremeskel, Kidane Weldou, Haile Nayzgi; INDIA: Pastor Sawan; KAZAKHSTAN: Pastor Maximov; NORTH KOREA: Zhang Wen Shi PAKISTAN: Zafar Bhatti; VIETNAM: Nguyen Nang Tinh, Nguyen Trung Ton

**KIDNAPPED VICTIMS:** Raymond Koh, Gilbert Biswas, Leah Sharibu, Sarah Atef, Joshua Hilmya & wife Ruth Sitepu, Hormoz Diril.

## Nicaraguan Regime Launches Easter Crackdown

**03/25/2024 Nicaragua (ICC)**

As Holy Week approached, Nicaragua's draconian Ortega regime had already started cracking down on plans to celebrate Easter week. According to attorney Martha Patricia Molina, the government has nixed 4,800 processions planned for the Easter season. The Catholic church has been heavily targeted in recent years due to its outspoken criticism of the regime's human rights record.

- *HOW TO PRAY: Pray for the ability to celebrate Easter freely in Nicaragua.*
- *Pray for protection for Easter services around the world.*
- *Pray for better human rights for Christians across Nicaragua.*

## 18 Christians Arrested After House Church Raided Again

**03/25/2024 China (ICC)**

Local police raided Fuyang Maizhong Reformed Church in Anhui Province on March 10. This is the second time the church has been raided in eight weeks. One of the church's elders, Elder Chang Shun, was one of the 18 people arrested during the raid. This is the third time Elder Chang Shun has been arrested in the last six months.

- *HOW TO PRAY: Pray for the immediate release of all 18 church members.*
- *Praise God that they were not issued longer sentences.*
- *Pray for protection for independent churches across China.*

## Pastor Dead in Vietnam After Forced Denunciation of Faith

03/25/2024 Vietnam (ICC)

Pastor Y Bum Bya was found dead under mysterious circumstances on March 8. Publicly declared a suicide by local authorities, the pastor's death is under scrutiny from Christians around the world. While the Vietnamese government promotes the façade of religious freedom, instances such as the abuse and denunciation forced upon Pastor Y Bum Bya demonstrate the true reality.

- *HOW TO PRAY: Pray for peace and safety for this pastor's family.*
- *Pray for the truth surrounding his death to come out.*
- *Pray for protection for Christian leaders across Vietnam.*

## House Church Forced to Cease Worship in Indonesia

03/22/2024 Indonesia (ICC)

A video of the disbandment of a Sunday worship service at a resident's house in Balaraja, Tangerang Regency, on the island of Java, Indonesia, recently went viral on social media. Neighbors broke up the Christian worship service, which, according to Balaraja Police Chief AKP Badri Hasan, occurred on Sunday morning, March 17.

- *HOW TO PRAY: Pray for equal rights for house churches in Indonesia.*
- *Pray for protection for this group of believers.*
- *Pray for them to shine the light of Christ among their neighbors.*

*From Voice of the Martyrs*

## Global Prayer Guide

### YEMEN

#### RESTRICTED

#### OVERVIEW:

For many years, the people of Yemen have suffered from civil wars and violence from Islamic extremists, including al-Qaida. Although the situation has further deteriorated since the start of the most recent civil war, the gospel has flourished and many Yemeni Muslims have come to know Christ. Yemeni Christians have become bolder in their outreach efforts, though it is still extremely dangerous to even be identified as a Christian. They must reach out in creative ways that are both bold and wise. Small but steady numbers of Yemenis are continually being added to the body of Christ, and more are gaining interest as the influence of Christian media grows. Most regions of the country include at least one follower of Christ.

#### MAJOR RELIGION:

Nearly all Yemenis are Muslim, about one-third Shiite and two-thirds Sunnis, both of which are represented by warring factions that divide the country. Christians in Yemen account for only a small fraction of 1 percent of the population.

#### PERSECUTOR:

Persecutors include the government, Islamic extremist groups, communities, tribes and families of Christian converts.

#### WHAT IT MEANS TO FOLLOW CHRIST IN YEMEN:

Converting to Christianity from Islam is a crime punishable by death, and families consider it extremely shameful for a family member to become a Christian. Christian converts face harassment, the possibility of losing jobs and family relationships, and potentially death. Christians worship secretly in homes or in small groups outdoors.

### **ACCESS TO BIBLES:**

Bibles can be found in Yemen, but they are difficult to obtain and dangerous for converts to own. For these reasons, many Yemeni believers access the Bible online.

### **VOM WORK:**

VOM helps Christians who are persecuted for their faith and supports Yemeni believers who reach out in their community. We also support various forms of media that make God's Word more accessible inside Yemen and help Yemeni believers who had to flee and now live in nearby countries.

### **PRAYER REQUESTS:**

- *Pray for local fellowships meeting in secret throughout the country.*
- *Pray for Ahmed and his family as they seek asylum in a foreign country because of persecution.*
- *Pray that imprisoned believers will continue to find strength and encouragement in Christ.*
- *Pray for displaced believers who are leaving the country as refugees.*
- *Pray that the faith of persecuted Christians who leave the country will not be shaken.*
- *Pray for the boldness, wisdom and protection of underground churches.*
- *Pray for Sarah, who was recently released from prison.*
- *Pray that a persecuted woman and her children will continue to find peace in Christ.*

*From Voice of the Martyrs  
icommittoprayer.com*

*Mar. 28, 2024 | Mali*

## **Bibles in Minority Languages Bring Joy**

In Mali, Bibles are scarce and difficult to obtain outside of the capital, especially in minority languages. Front-line workers have

been partnering with VOM for several years to get Bibles of various languages and types, including children's illustrated Bibles and audio Bibles, into the hands of Christians scattered across the vast nation. During one recent distribution, 50 full Bambara-language Bibles and 50 Boomu Bibles were distributed along with 250 New Testaments. A brother named Matthew received his with joy, saying, "I am glad to have the Bible in my mother tongue. It will do good for my family." One pastor gave a Bible to a local judge. While doing so, the pastor read Deuteronomy 16:18-20, which says that judges should judge the people fairly without taking bribes or showing partiality. The judge responded by saying, "Pastor, you have given me the greatest gift, and this Bible teaches me."

**Mar. 28, 2024 | Middle East**

## **Parents of Convert Shoot Relative in Leg**

- *"Please pray that my parents will calm down and surrender to the Lord," requested Amir, an Iraqi convert to Christianity.*

He recently learned that his enraged parents had shot his brother-in-law in the leg in retaliation for Amir and his family converting to Christianity and fleeing the country. Other members of Amir's family have had to flee for their lives after converting from Islam. Despite the pressure and danger, Amir prays that more family and friends will come to know Christ as their savior. He also hopes that someday churches will be allowed to exist openly in every part of Iraq, including in Karbala, a city considered sacred in Shia Islam. "I hope someday we can go back and worship the Lord freely there," he said.

**Mar. 28, 2024 | India**

## **Pastor, Son Brutally Beaten for Christian Worship**

While 80 Christians gathered on Feb. 19, 2023, to worship, a mob of Hindu extremists broke into the church and demanded proof

that they had permission to be there. When the mob began to attack Pastor Zahir, his son, Ashok, defended him and also became a target. The two men were kicked, punched and beaten with a microphone stand until they were both bleeding and unconscious. Other members of the congregation were also injured as the mob ransacked the church while shouting Hindu slogans. When the police arrived, they took Zahir into custody and questioned him but refused to accept his criminal complaint against the attackers. Both Zahir and Ashok have recovered physically, though Ashok continues to experience pain.

- *Pray for the wellbeing of this family and church amid persecution. "Please pray for the vandals," Ashok said. "Pray that they bend their knees in front of Jesus."*

## Prayer Calendar from Open Doors Canada

### Monday 1 | Central Asia

Pray for Tilana\*. When her Muslim husband found her Bible, he beat her with sticks and shouted at her for four hours, humiliating her with his words.

- *Pray for her physical and emotional healing.*

### Tuesday 2 | Laos

Pray with the sons of a pastor who were detained by police for leading a Bible study. Ask God to embolden them to continue to visit believers.

- *Pray that God would watch over the believers who opened their home for the Bible study. They could face oppression from villagers.*

### Wednesday 3 | Malaysia

Every ethnic Malay is assumed to be Muslim, as defined by the Malaysian constitution.

- *Pray that God's Spirit would reveal Jesus to ethnic Malays through His Word, visions and the witness of Christians.*

### Thursday 4 | Niger

Last year's military coup has added to the growing hostility felt by many Christians across Niger.

- *Pray for stability and that the influence of extremist groups would not grow.*

## From Barnabas Aid Prayer Diary

### FRIDAY 29

- *Father God, we are overwhelmed by the amazing grace You showed us at the Cross. You gave Your only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who willingly offered Himself as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Help us never to forget that Jesus paid the ultimate price for us because He loved us. Help us also to remember that there are tens of thousands of faithful believers who have paid that price for their faithfulness to Him in our world today. We pray that, just as Jesus' death made a way back to You, the deaths of Christian martyrs will be an encouragement to us and to people who don't yet know You. We ask this in Christ's name.*

### SATURDAY 30

- *Please pray for a "Bible team" of six Christians who minister among the persecuted Hmong Christians in isolated mountain areas of Vietnam. They visit about 60 communities of poor farming families. In the rainy*



*season (June to November), travel is hard and dangerous because of frequent mudslides. The team teach the Bible, pray with families, visit the sick, disciple local church leaders and encourage the believers to stand firm in the faith despite the pressures they face. Barnabas Aid helps to support them. Baptism in a remote mountain community in Vietnam*

## **SUNDAY 31**

- *Lord Jesus, we thank You that You are the way, the truth and the life and that we can come to the Father through You and You alone. We have eternal life because of what You did for us when You died and rose again. You were victorious over sin and death, and we praise you for sharing that glorious resurrection power with us. Thank you for Your promise that in heaven every Christian will have every tear wiped from their eyes. May this reality for today and wonderful hope for the future strengthen us and especially our Christian brothers and sisters living now with poverty and persecution, conflict and disasters, grief and displacement. Thank You that, even through suffering, we can rejoice in our risen Saviour. (John 14:6; Revelation 21:4)*

## **April**

### **MONDAY 1**

African Christians were mobilised for urgent prayer after at least 15 believers in Mauritania were arrested in late November 2023, a country which has a death sentence for leaving Islam. A video of a baptism ceremony had become public. Praise God that by 18 December all the Mauritanian

Christians (converts from Islam) had been released without charge. Praying Christians in other countries rejoiced at this answer to their intercessions and some asked for prayer to continue that the Mauritanian laws and structures which “criminalise being a Christian” will be repealed. Join them in praying for the day to come when Mauritians can openly worship the Lord Jesus and talk publicly about their faith without fear of punishment.

### **TUESDAY 2**

Please pray today for Christians in Morocco, who are mostly converts from Islam and their children or grandchildren. The Muslim fasting month of Ramadan is in progress, during which it is illegal for Moroccan citizens or inhabitants to eat or drink in public during the daytime. A typical Ramadan day begins with drummers or the town crier blowing a horn to wake families for the pre-dawn meal. A cannon is fired to mark the beginning of the day's fast and an air raid siren in the evening marks its end. People go to the mosque more often than normal during Ramadan. In this situation, Moroccan Christians must be even more discreet than usual.

- *Pray especially for those who follow Christ in secret without their families knowing, at this time when Muslims are expected to be extra devout in their religious observances.*

### **WEDNESDAY 3**

An Algerian church leader, Pastor Youssef Ourahmane, has partially won an appeal against a two-year prison sentence, which has now been reduced to one year. He had been charged with holding an unauthorised religious meeting in a building not permitted to be used for religious worship. The allegation arose because of some Christian families staying in a church compound with a chapel that had been sealed by the Algerian authorities. (At the latest count, 49 church buildings in Algeria have been forced to close by the March/April 2024 10 authorities, leaving only about seven open.) Youssef is appealing to a higher court hoping for an even

more favourable decision so that he will not have to go to prison at all.

- *Pray for him, for Algerian Christians who are currently in prison, and for all the Lord's people in Algeria, that the difficulties they face will continue to draw them closer to each other and to God.*

#### **THURSDAY 4**

At the time of writing, armed conflict in the Holy Land continues. As you pray about the situation, remember all who are suffering so terribly there, including the Christians of Gaza, who number fewer than a thousand. By midDecember, 20 of them had been killed and most of the rest were sheltering in two church buildings in the Old City area of Gaza. At that time, they still had some food stocks but needed medicines.

- *Pray that they will know the Lord's presence with them and hear His words in their hearts: "Do not be afraid, little flock" (Luke 12:32).*

## **Mission Eurasia Prayer Initiative**

### **Belarus: Faith in the Face of the Oppressor**

Belarus is the birthplace of Mission Eurasia's founders, the Deyneka family. A former Soviet state, Belarus has remained largely dictatorial. Its only president—Aleksandr Lukashenko—is a Soviet holdover who continues consolidating his power. His 2020 re-election was disputed, but protests were violently suppressed. Belarus has been instrumental in Russia's invasion of Ukraine, allowing the use of Belarusian territory for transit.

Economically, Belarus struggles to establish an identity and footing due to state control, corruption, and dependence on Russia. In tandem with government-imposed price controls on food and medicine, public debt and inflation are projected to explode with the end of Russian energy subsidies in 2024.

Orphaned children number in the tens of thousands with roughly 25,000 orphaned due to the 2008 economic crisis alone. Many were separated from their parents by the state. Orphanages cannot provide necessary care—even less so for children with disabilities. Some disabilities still stem from lingering effects of the Chernobyl disaster.

Religiously, Belarus is 60–70 percent Christian (primarily Belarusian Orthodox), with the remainder of the population being mostly non-religious. Only one to two percent are evangelical Christian. A 2002 religious law intensified government regulation of religious groups and activity. Required registration remains difficult to obtain and still does not offer protection from property and tax disputes or raids that result in evictions and closures. Harassment disproportionately affects non-Orthodox groups. All activity by unregistered groups and foreign missionaries is banned and met with fines and imprisonment for non-compliance.

By God's grace, through the Deyneka family, Mission Eurasia was grandfathered in as a recognized religious entity due to official registration before the 2002 law took effect. Amid the strict religious landscape, our SWW program remains one of the most strategic and effective means of preserving and growing the church. In 2023, you supported our SWW ministry training for 93 future leaders enrolled in the program.

## **From Help the Persecuted**

### **PRAYER REQUESTS**

#### **ABIR, LEBANON**

When Abir discovered the love of Jesus Christ, she gave her life to Him. When she shared the gospel with her husband, he refused to acknowledge her faith and abused her. He is unrelenting.

- *Dear Lord, we ask that You would please help Abir. Please give her strength and courage as she endures persecution. Please soften her husband's heart, bringing him to saving faith in You!*

where to go.

### **TALAL, SYRIA**

Last week, Talal, who faces constant persecution for his faith, had a heart attack and was sent to the hospital. He is especially vulnerable now as he heals physically.

- *Dear Lord, please help Talal get the rest that he needs to heal from the heart attack and protect him from those who continue to persecute him. When he is released from the hospital, please give him wisdom about where to go and if he should leave the area because of persecution or stay.*

### **OMAIR, IRAQ**

Omair attended a Help The Persecuted Spiritual Retreat recently and gave his life to Jesus! Now, his family is pressuring him to participate in Ramadan, and he is afraid of their reaction. He has decided to fast and pray for them to come to Jesus!

- *Dear Lord, we praise You for Omair's salvation! Please continue to give him courage as he refuses to participate in Ramadan, helping him hold fast to You even as he faces persecution. Please bring his entire family to saving faith in Jesus!*

### **SAMIR, ALGERIA**

When Samir shared the gospel with his neighbors, they reported him. Soon, he was accosted and attacked by the police. He is afraid of what might happen if he remains in the same town.

- *Dear Lord, thank you for giving Samir a compassionate heart and a desire for his neighbors to come to know You! We ask that the seeds Samir planted would grow and that they would come to faith in You. Please save Samir from further attacks and give him wisdom about*

### **HAMZAH & ABBAD, MOROCCO**

Hamzah and Abbad had to flee from Morocco to Turkey because they were threatened because of their faith. Now, they have to return to Morocco to get some legal paperwork done, which is frightening because they will be in close proximity to their persecutors.

- *Dear Lord, please protect Hamzah and Abbad as they make this necessary journey back to Morocco. Please provide safe refuge for them, help the paperwork matters get completed swiftly, and help them leave the country again undetected by their persecutors. Please give them overwhelming peace!*

### **SAFANA, SUDAN**

Safana was heavily persecuted in Sudan because of her Christian faith, and she fled to Egypt when the war intensified. She longs for her family to join her in Egypt, as they are vulnerable to attacks from radical Islamic militias in Sudan.

- *Dear Lord, please cover Safana and her family with Your protection. Please provide a way of escape for her family so that they can reunite and begin to rebuild their lives in Egypt. Please bring salvation to the radical Islamists that threaten them!*

### **ZENITH, YEMEN**

Zenith declared his faith in Christ, but he is afraid of sharing his faith, knowing that persecution will likely come. He wants to evangelize but is afraid of being known as a Christian.

- *Dear Lord, we praise You for calling Zenith to Yourself! Please give him opportunities to share his faith and give*

*him the strength and courage to care for other people by sharing with them the Good News they so desperately need.*

### **TAHA, ALGERIA**

The police found out that Taha was hosting Bible study groups in his home. They took him in and interrogated him for two hours. Now, he is under surveillance and afraid.

- *Dear Lord, we praise You for Taha's courage to host Bible studies in his home! We ask that everyone who attended would continue to grow and mature in their faith. Please help Taha as he struggles with fear and give him wisdom about how to best continue to spread the Good News in Algeria.*

### **MAHIR, IRAQ**

When Mahir's wife found out about his faith, she initiated a divorce, took the children, and told their families that he had become an apostate. His brother has threatened to murder him, and Mahir has fled from country to country for his life.

- *Dear Lord, we praise You for Mahir's salvation! Please help him cling to You as he loses everything for the sake of Your Name. Please bring his wife to saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, and please comfort Mahir as he discerns his next steps.*

### **DURRYIA, SUDAN**

When Durryia's husband found out that she had become a Christian, he beat her and divorced her on the spot. She lost everything, and the war in Sudan ultimately forced her out of the country to Egypt, where she is trying to rebuild her life.

- *Dear Lord, thank You for being at work in Durryia's life and calling her to Yourself. Please help her as she rebuilds*

*her life after losing her marriage, her home, and her entire life in Sudan, bringing comfort to her heart and hope for her future.*

### **ANSWERED PRAYERS**

#### **ALEA, SYRIA**

"I will live for Christ despite any circumstance. And with you by my side, I am okay!"

Alea was horrifically abused as a child and well into her 20s, and she blamed God for all of her suffering. One night, she had a dream she couldn't explain of a man wiping tears from her eyes, saying that he was Jesus Christ. This began a decade-long journey of researching Christianity, and she ultimately put her faith in Jesus!

When her family discovered her conversion, they beat her, and her brother threatened to murder her. She fled to another city, and her parents spy on her. We were delighted to help her as she begins to rebuild her life, providing several months of living expenses.

- *Dear Lord, thank You for providing for Alea! We are so grateful that You know all of her needs and gave our Field Ministers the opportunity to minister to her. Please continue to help her as she rebuilds her life!*

#### **JALAL, LEBANON**

"I have never seen people with the same kind of love that you showed us! Thank you for being a helpful hand in times like these."

Jalal received an Emergency Relief Kit, a package providing food for a family of four for about a week, from one of our Field Ministers, who prayed with him and ministered to him. Our Field Minister said it was moving to see how much the visit brought joy to his heart!

- *Dear Lord, thank You for Jalal and for the opportunity we had to meet his needs in Your name! Please continue to walk alongside him in the difficult path*



*of persecution.*

*From Newsweek*

## As Easter Approaches, Christian Persecution Is on the Rise | Opinion

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**By Anthony D. Andreassi**

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For Catholics the world over, as in other Christian traditions, Lent is a time to reflect on the strength of our faith, repent our transgressions, and prepare ourselves for Easter and the salvation promised by Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection.

For most Christians in the United States and the developed world, Lent tests the sincerity of our devotion with the temporal temptations of modern life. But in much of the global south, one's faith can be subject to far more severe trials. Millions of Catholics risk their lives to worship God, and the simple act of attending Mass can be life threatening.

According to a 2023 report published by Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), a Catholic charity dedicated to sustaining the faith in places where it is oppressed, the persecution of Christians is on the rise globally. "Almost 340 million Christians around the world—or 1 out of every 8," the report declares, "live in a country where they suffer some form of persecution, such as arbitrary arrest, violence, a full range of human rights violations and even murder."

Nowhere is that disturbing reality more in evidence than in Nigeria, a country where the population is approximately half Christian and half Muslim, and where violent attacks on Christians have escalated since 2009, when Boko Haram began its brutal campaign of kidnapping and killing Christians.

If the current situation remains unchanged, before Holy Week ends this Easter, we will in

all likelihood receive new reports of Catholics murdered in Nigeria, as was the case last Christmas when as many as 200 Catholics were slaughtered and hundreds more injured in attacks in more than 20 Nigerian villages.

Twenty Catholic missionaries were murdered in 2023, according to Fides, the news agency of the Pontifical Mission Societies. Of the nine missionaries killed in African countries, Nigeria had the highest total—four more souls added to the thousands of Nigerian Catholics killed last year for practicing their faith. Churches and seminaries are regularly attacked by criminal gangs and Islamic jihadists. Nearly every week last year, a Catholic priest was kidnapped, and many remain missing. In 2022, the ACN had already established that anti-Christian violence "In Nigeria and other countries...clearly passes the threshold of genocide."

What can be done to confront the spread of religious persecution in Nigeria and elsewhere? We can start by raising awareness of the crisis, by acknowledging its existence and confronting its perpetrators. America was founded on the conviction that all people are entitled to religious freedom. It's one of our founding principles, and the government of the United States has a moral and now, more recently, a legal responsibility to support that value wherever it is assailed.

The International Religious Freedom Act, signed into law in 1998, directs the State Department to designate countries where religious persecution is flourishing as "countries of particular concern," and to impose certain sanctions accordingly. Last year, the department neglected to designate Nigeria as "a country of particular concern" despite having identified it as such over the previous four years, and despite the fact that persecution there has worsened, not improved.

The U.S. government should correct that oversight this year. We cannot rally the free world to the cause of the persecuted if the leader of the free world makes exceptions for countries where people are suffering persecution, but where we might have competing interests.

“How many of you pray for Christians who are persecuted,” Pope Francis asked Christians everywhere at the beginning of his pontificate. “Do I pray for that brother and sister who’s in difficulty for confessing their faith?” The Pontifical Mission Societies, which His Holiness heads, and which I have the privilege of serving as national director, exist to translate prayer into action. Pope Francis’ focus, and thus ours, has always been on the Church’s missions.

We are charged to share and spread the faith by providing material and spiritual support wherever the need is great with an emphasis on those too young, poor, or actively persecuted to be self-sustaining, and in any place where God “has been denied, forgotten, persecuted or shunned.”

As I noted above, religious persecution is on the rise worldwide, even in the U.S. Yet the Church is growing in vitality where it faces its greatest threats. Lent, this season of reconciliation and renewal, summons believers to the aid of the oppressed, so they may persevere in growing the Church no matter how dire the difficulties arrayed against them.

All free people should expect their governments to act as apostles of freedom and stand with those who ask nothing more and nothing less than to worship God and to live their faith in their daily lives freely and without fear.

*Rev. Anthony D. Andreassi is interim National Director of The Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States. The views expressed in this article are the writer’s own.*