



**a**ction by

**C**hristians

**a**gainst

**t**orture

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## CHAIRMAN'S LETTER.

Dear Members,

"I don't write any more appeals" said the elderly member. "I just can't believe that people can behave so inhumanely towards others".

The lady lives in my village and has a strong faith, but just can't bring herself to read the horrors that exist in the world and to respond by writing appeals.

I can understand that, although I am sorry she is so affected by the brutal facts we have to report. I have continued to write appeals that we publish in the Newsletter, but having just read an article about torture of Iraqi prisoners, I am tempted to give up. How CAN human beings behave so incredibly wickedly towards their own citizens? Are my puny efforts at trying to stop their vicious acts really doing any good? Is the whole torture scene world-wide so big and endemic that even governments cannot stop it?

In Iraq, for instance, since the Americans left, torture by the security forces has multiplied greatly. Underpinned and encouraged by a complicated and evil system of corruption and bribery that is baffling to belief it is almost unstoppable. In a state where EVERYTHING seems to be 'up for grabs', including the top posts in security and government, every job has its price.

And where does the 'purchase money' come from? Ultimately from the people at the bottom of the pack, namely the prisoners who are tortured. And where do they get it from? Friends, relatives, parents, who will pay almost anything to stop their loved ones being violently tortured. The newspaper headline ran

'Your son is being tortured' they said. 'He'll die if you don't pay.'

That is just one country, Iraq. Doubtless similar corruption and torture goes on in Syria and other states, including the torture of children.

### GIVE UP?

So is the problem too great? Shall we, as a small Christian charity, give up and spend our time raising funds to feed the hungry or save the whales?

The answer is not only 'Definitely not', but also 'we must increase our membership'. If we can do that, and everyone sends their letters of appeal, we shall become a greater force for the abolition of torture. Also, we must never forget ACAT UK is part of the world-wide organisation FIACAT, which has a big influence in the corridors of power. Through that powerful union we can change attitudes and the behaviour of whole states, including corruption-ridden countries like Iraq.

As a first step, therefore, I invite and encourage each member of ACAT UK to do his or her best to enlist one other person as a member. We have attractive and cogent literature for members to use, we have a vast potential membership in the churches we attend and our mission is formulated on the central core of the Christian faith: the torture and death of Jesus, (yes), but also on his resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

So, the message at the start of 2012 is one of optimism and not defeat. The powers of corruption and evil are strong, but the power of Christ is greater.

With every Blessing to you all

*Richard Dent.*

## TORTURE IN SYRIA

*“And we do not know where they have laid him”*

### INFORMATION TAKEN FROM AVAAZ REPORT - 9<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2012

I have thought every carefully about including the following article in the Newsletter but have decided it should feature - similar detail appears in our newspapers, for instance. Our aim is to inform our members about torture and it is important that we have some idea to what is happening in some countries, such as Syria, so that we can, for instance, pray more effectively.  
Eleanor Newland

Avaaz identified and verified the location of 416 detention centres being used by the regime to imprison and torture opponents. More than 617 have been confirmed as having died under torture since the crackdown in March 2011. 6,874 have been killed in the uprising and more than 69,000 detained in the last 9 months. Of the 69,000 detained, over 37,000 remain in detention and some 32,000 have been released; many of these bear the scars of torture.

Detention centres are managed by various government security bodies, including Political Security, Military Security, State Security and Airforce Intelligence. Torture takes place in almost all detention centres. The worst torture is carried out in the military, security and airforce intelligence branches where those arrested are interrogated before being on occasion transferred to prisons. Most former detainees have reported that conditions in prisons are less terrible than those in state branches - some food is handed out. Almost all the former detainees interviewed by Avaaz monitors spoke of severe overcrowding.

In addition to the listed prisons and detention centres already mentioned, there are many illegal, make-shift detention centres, including schools, soccer fields, movie theatres, hospitals, factories, sports stadiums, warehouses, abandoned building and underground storage areas. There are individual military detention centres on every military base.

#### TORTURE METHODS

The usual forms of torture are used:- removal of fingernails and toenails, suspension by the hands from the ceiling, being made to stand for days; severe beatings on the head and body, sometimes with copper piping or smashing a detainees' head against radiators or walls; extinguishing cigarettes on the body, sleep deprivation, electrocution applied to genitals or other body parts and male rape using sticks. Hanging upside down is also used, sometimes detainees are held like that for days. Tying a detainee's hands to metal pipes and then leaving them for days is common - one released victim reported having stood for 7 days. Another was kept for three days, naked in the open air, tied up and with no food and no toilet; water was poured on him and he was continually beaten.

Bones are broken deliberately, eyes gouged out with drills, irons used to burn flesh. The German chair - a metal chair with movable parts - is a particularly terrible instrument of torture - a detainee is tied to the chair which is then folded backwards so that it places extreme pressure on the spine and leads to partial asphyxiation, with fractured vertebrae, paralysis of the arms for months, chronic headaches etc. Another horrendous device is the wheel - a detainee is put inside one or two large tyres, with feet and legs inserted first, then he is folded over, with hands tied behind the back and the head inserted so that he is in a "U" shape. He is then beaten on the face and feet until the wounds bleed. In some centres there is no water, no food, no toilet and no place to sleep until confessions are made.

## **PRISON CONDITIONS**

A number of prisoners have been executed - Avaaz confirmed that in Adra Prison, 14 prisoners had been executed, and their bodies buried in the prison yard. At this prison there are many solitary confinement cells - 2 metres high, 65 cm in width and 2.5 metres deep, with a toilet. Sometimes 3 people are held in these tiny, dark tunnels. In Homs Military Hospital a detainee, later released, saw a room holding 20 people which was not opened for 15 days nor were the detainees fed in that time. A number of them died. There is no medical care in detention centres, unless a detainee is close to death when a doctor is called to ensure he is kept alive - the same detainee mentioned above, saw an injured man with a severely damaged leg, which was crawling with maggots. The official capacity of each cell is 56 prisoners in this particular prison, but around 300 are held at any one time. Food is however still only provided for 56 - it has to be divided and is just enough to keep the prisoners alive. There is no water and no sanitation with the prisoners having to live among the garbage and filth. Rashes and boils are common, lice flourish and food poisoning has been reported.

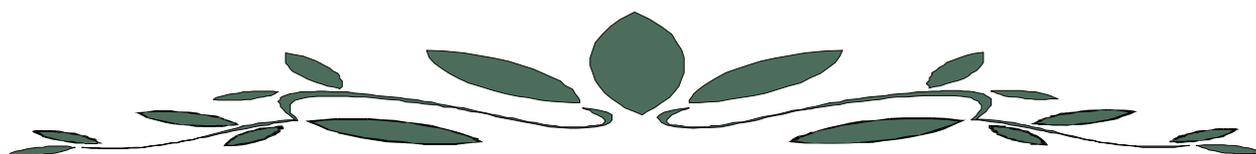
Almost all those arrested are tortured, some more than others. Some are held for only a few days, others for weeks or months. It seems that those who are activists or educated are particularly hated and targeted by the authorities. They are subjected to the most prolonged and severe torture.

Avaaz - means "voice" - an internet campaign, launched in 2007 with the aim of "organising citizens of all nations to close the gap between the world we have and the world most people everywhere want".

## **KENYA - MINISTERS TO STAND TRIAL- AN END TO IMPUNITY?**

The Deputy Prime Minister, Uhuru Kenyatta, the former education minister, William Ruto, and the head of the civil service and cabinet secretary, together with a radio presenter have been accused of orchestrating the violence that left more than 1,200 people dead after the elections in 2007. The International Criminal Court has ruled they are to face trial on charges of crimes against humanity, murder and forcible eviction of about 600,000 people . Charges against the former police chief and the former minister for industrialisation have been dropped for lack of evidence. The violence began when clashes between two rival presidential candidates - Raila Odinga and Mwai Kibaki -escalated into communal conflict. Uhuru Kenyatta is the son of Kenya's first President and its richest citizen. A supporter of Kibaki, he is accused of organising the campaign of violence, including the murder and rape of Odinga supporters.

(An article and an appeal featured in the Newsletter at the time of the violence)



## **PRAYER MATERIAL - HOLY WEEK**

A service for Holy Week is available free from the office; this is suitable for small groups - either at home or in church

## TO REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

**JAVID HOUTAN KIAN, IRAN**, lawyer for Sakineh Ashtiani; she was sentenced to death by stoning; he was arrested 2010 together with 2 German journalists and Sakineh's son; sentenced to 11 years in prison and barred from practising law for 5 years; held in Tabriz Prison and very severely tortured; Sakineh's son, who was tortured and the journalists were later released.

**PASTOR ILMURAD NURLIEV, 46, TURKMENISTAN**, arrested in August 2010, accused of extracting money from 3 people, a charge strongly denied by church members; he was sentenced to 4 years in prison, ordered to pay compensation and to undergo forcible medical treatment; he is held in Seyi Labour Camp known for its use of psychotropic drugs on prisoners; he is fortunate in being able to work as a barber.

**MOHAMED HASSAN ALIM, 29, SUDAN**, engineer, member of opposition Ba'ath Party, took part in meeting where there was criticism of political leaders, arrested 26 December, beaten and held incommunicado; he had previously been arrested in March 2011 when he was ill treated and tortured.

**PHILIPPE KOSTENKO, Russian Federation**, human rights defender for Memorial in St Petersburg, harassed and sentenced to periods of 15 days in prison in December; pray for him and all human rights defenders in the Russian Federation and its centres in Moscow, Ingushetia and Chechnya, suffering harassment and imprisonment, remembering that a number have been assassinated.

**NARAYAN REDDY, INDIA**, a leader of the Communist Party in Orissa State, arrested December and charged with murder following a clash between those opposed to the construction of a huge steel plant and local protestors, which left 1 dead and several injured; according to eye witnesses he was not directly involved in the clash; torture is a commonplace occurrence upon arrest in many parts of India.

**POLITICAL PRISONERS AND PROTESTORS IN IRAQ, SYRIA, EGYPT, BAHRAIN**, often held incommunicado under appalling conditions, tortured, ill-treated, dying as a result of torture; for their families in their fear and despair.

## PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, You endured ill treatment and torture.*

*Comfort those who cry in pain at the hands of their torturers*

*May they know that they are not alone in their suffering,*

*their loneliness and in their despair.*

*Give them renewed strength and hope.*

*May their sufferings cease and may they enjoy freedom.*

*In your goodness, do not turn away from them.*

*May they dwell in you, and find in your presence a refuge, a rock.*

*For those for whom there is no happy release, be with them in the hour of their death*

*and take them to be with you in your kingdom.*

*We ask this for your Name's sake. Amen*

Adapted (Hope in the darkest night)

## **SOS TORTURE CAMPAIGN**

Your co-ordinator spent three weeks of December in Cape Town with his family over Christmas - and had a wonderful time. Arrangements were made to ensure that there was as little disruption as possible to Urgent Appeals, and those using e mail continued - but those using Royal Mail were interrupted. Now we're back to normal - and we continue to provide what support we can in this way to those worldwide who endure "disappearance", summary arrest, unfair trial, torture, imprisonment in the cause of human rights activism - and their anxious families and loved ones.

*Anselm SSF*

## **PRISONER SUPPORT SCHEME**

Only a very small number of members and groups have adopted a prisoner since I wrote in the Newsletter that ACAT had revamped the Scheme. Have you or your group thought about taking up the case of a prisoner? - sending cards or simple letters of encouragement on a regular basis or if you belong to a group also sending appeals to government officials. These actions can make all the difference to prisoners - give them new hope and lift them from despair even if they are unable to reply. Appeals to Governments can result in cases being reviewed, new trials held, in releases, in improvements to prison conditions. Even if you get no response, the authorities know that prisoners are not forgotten; positive action can result.

Do get in touch with me if you or your group are interested and would like to know more.

*Ken Watson Co-ordinator*

## **GOOD NEWS!**

**JABBAR SAVALAN, 20, AZERBAIJAN**, (Christmas Greetings List 2011), youth activist, arrested in February 2011, sentenced to two and a half years in prison on fabricated drug charges, has recently been released.

**URUNBOY USMANOV, TAJIKISTAN, 59**, journalist with the BBC Central Asia Network, (Aug/Sept Newsletter), arrested June 2011, tortured, sentenced to 3 years in jail; he was released following the personal intervention of the President - there had been a huge international campaign. He and his lawyer sought a full acquittal of his conviction in the Supreme Court but it upheld his conviction; this was condemned by Reporters Without Borders.

## **INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO THE POSSIBLE USE OF RENDITION AND TORTURE - UK**

It was announced by the Minister for Justice, Kenneth Clarke on 18 January that the inquiry led by Sir Peter Gibson has been abandoned. The preparatory research will be produced as a report before the inquiry is dissolved. As reported in the Dec/Jan Newsletter, many submissions were to be held in secret, important witnesses were not to be called to give evidence and important human rights organisations, such as Amnesty, decided to boycott the proceedings.

The Government is still stressing that it is committed to holding an independent inquiry. The Crown Prosecutions Service and the Metropolitan police have established a joint panel to look at evidence that the intelligence agencies were involved in the rendition of two Libyans, Abdel Khakim Belhadi and Sami al-Saadi, in 2004.

## CHRISTMAS CARDS

My church was able to send approximately 60 cards to various recipients on the card list. All age groups send cards with our very youngest church members being particularly keen.

This is an excellent way of bringing to people's attention the evils of torture and as people have a name or a group to identify with it seems to make the act of sending a card more personal. To assist this further I suggest that they take the slip of paper with the details of the card recipient home with them, pop it on their fridge door or similar and pray for them over the Christmas period.

We have had formal organised card signings for several years now and the awareness of torture has grown, people are very supportive of ACAT.

I have been invited to speak to members of our local Deanery telling them more of the work of ACAT, I hope and pray that as a result more people can join us in the work against the evils of torture.

This action was at my own church, I was also asked to go to another church, The Church of the Nazarene in Knowle, Bristol to run a card signing session. This came about in a very strange way. I was walking my dog in our local park when I met the Pastor of the Church who was on a membership hunt. He invited me to come to a service, as it happened I was running the card signing at my own church and told him this. He then invited me to do the same at that church. I went the week after.

I stood up during the service to say a little about the card signing and finished the little talk by saying we followed a man who was subjected to an unfair trial, was tortured and ultimately put to death. This seemed to 'hit home' and again another 60 or so cards were signed after the service with other people taking the card list away. Again, I have been invited back to speak to various groups within the church, so it is a matter of 'watch this space'

### **How do I organise a card signing?**

I have found that people will sign a card if you make it easy for them to do so. I provide cards; the local 99p shop has a good range of cheap cards just before Christmas and I collect non religious cards during the year. I photocopy the card lists and cut them up so that there is one prisoner or group on a slip.

I then work out how much it would cost to send a card to various countries and work out an average including the cost of photocopying and the card purchase. This amount which this year was £1.20 is then the suggested donation.

I have 2 tables set up. One for non religious and the other for religious, I provide pens and any support necessary. When completed the cards are addressed and placed in a box together with the donation and I take them to the Post Office the morning afterwards. The Clerks at my Post Office know me well and their hearts must sink when I arrive with so many overseas cards!!

Beforehand I try to arrange with the Minister a short time to talk about the signing and why it is being held and if possible arrange to be able to address the congregation as well.

It is hard work and time consuming but my viewpoint is that I put myself out a little at that time of year, it is nothing compared with the experiences of the people we are trying to support, so I will carry on doing the signings, as many as possible until I have to stop.

***Margaret Russell***

## CHRISTMAS GREETINGS CAMPAIGN - OTHER REPORTS

A number of members, churches and J and P Groups organised card signing events or handed out names and details of prisoners etc. The Campaign was well supported this year, which was very pleasing. Donations were very gratefully received from a number of churches - excess left over from the cost of cards and postage. A small number of requests for the List came after Christmas - we suggested that cards and messages could be sent until the end of January; after that date those still wanting to take part would need to contact the office for information regarding particular prisoners.

St Teresa's Church, Ashford and St Simon's Church, S. Ashford sent more than 85 cards, St Mary and St Marks, Swinton, Manchester sent 83. Sheila Wakefield organised card signing in Clevedon when at least 63 were sent and David Ellis did the same in Mansfield Woodhouse when 48 cards were signed and sent. Joe Hartley in Liverpool arranged for cards to be handed out at the end of three masses but ran out of cards after the second mass; he has plans to increase the number available next year! Schoolchildren in Bewdley sent 84 cards - the cards were paid for with donations from parishioners. Once again parishioners at St Joseph the Worker Catholic Church in Hutton, Essex, took part in the campaign and sent a magnificent total of 138 cards.

May I take this opportunity to thank all who took part this Christmas. Do continue to send in your reports. If I have not mentioned what your church did, do write in again.

## CHRISTIAN RESOURCE EXHIBITION

You may recall in our last mailing Mike Sheridan indicated that we would be more visible in our activities and asked if members would be willing to have their details put on a list of people happy to assist us at exhibitions and talks. To that effect after much discussion the Committee agreed to have a stand at the Exhibition in Exeter on January 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. Three Committee members and 5 supporters are to man it over the 2 days; I did put an email request out to our members asking for assistance and was delighted by the response. In view of the shortage of time I did not send a request out to all our members, but will do so in the future.

This stand is very much an experiment as ACAT has not been represented at such an event for a large number of years. We do not really know what to expect, our viewpoint is however, that if we are trying to build up a bigger profile and to attract more members, we need to be visible. This exhibition looks to be a very good way of coming to the attention of a wide range of Church based people.

It will be hard work I am certain, it may not be as effective as we hope but the only way we will find out is if we try it.

By the time you receive this mailing we would have attended and packed up so I would ask for your prayers that our efforts have and will be rewarded.

This exhibition is one of several events we will be attending during the year so, if you see us come and introduce yourselves to us. If you know of an event taking place where you think a presence could be effective then don't hesitate to contact us, we can always send you literature or maybe come along with our display boards and literature to assist.

With every thanks for your continued support

*Margaret Russell*

## **REPLIES**

### **Convention on Enforced Disappearance (Oct/Nov Newsletter)**

One or two members have received replies to letters they had sent to their M.P's. (Betty Holinrake received a reply from The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice sent via her M.P.) - the situation does not appear to have altered - the Government is still looking at changes in the legal system which will need to be made before it can even consider signing and then ratifying the Convention, the likely amount of time to be allocated for this in the Commons, the cost of the changes etc.

### **Case of Rodiemer Della Cruz Morada, Philippines (Dec/Jan Newsletter)**

Replies have been received from the Embassy of the Philippines regarding this case. Rodiemer Dela Cruz Morada, a member of an indigenous community was abducted by members of the army in August last year.

## **SPAIN REQUESTS EXTRADITION OF SALVADORAN MILITARY OFFICERS**

In December the Spanish Council of Ministers agreed to request the extradition from El Salvador and the United States of 15 military personnel accused of taking part in the brutal assassination of six leading Jesuits - lecturers and theologians - from the University of Central America - on 16 November 1989. Killed with the six Jesuits, 5 of whom were Spanish, were their housekeeper and her daughter. These were particularly brutal murders and resulted in a wave of revulsion round the world. Over 150 Jesuits volunteered to take their place but there was no justice for those murdered. A total of 75,000 people were killed during the civil war.

The Spanish Government has now sent 13 requests for extradition from El Salvador and 2 from the United States. The request has been made by the Supreme Court, which prosecutes military personnel for crimes of assassination, terrorism and crimes against humanity. There had previously been a number of requests for collaboration into a large massacre during the civil war; these have not been successful.

El Salvador's Supreme Court refused the requests for extradition twice in 2011 and is unlikely to grant the requests on this occasion.

Those indicted include the military leadership at the time of the massacre and the ex-director of the Military School, the ex-chief of the General Military Staff, the ex-vice minister of National Defence, and the Ex-director of Military Intelligence.

In July 2010 the Spanish judge asked Interpol to capture the 10 accused military personnel. When the order was received in El Salvador, the accused men were allowed to seek refuge in the Special Military Brigade and the Minister of Defence agreed to give them refuge

## **PROSECUTIONS - BALTASAR GARCON, SPAIN**

Baltasar Garcon, a prominent judge and human rights campaigner, was brought before the Spanish Supreme Court on January 16<sup>th</sup> and charged with offences which could see him struck off for up to 17 years. The charge laid against him - one of three private prosecutions - concern alleged abuse of the magistrates' powers. State attorneys have refused to back the prosecutions. No Spanish judge has ever faced 3 simultaneous supreme court cases and individual private prosecutions are rare. Such prosecutions require the prosecutors to prove a judge deliberately acted in bad faith.

Baltasar Garçon is charged with deliberately breaking rules by approving police taps on conversations between defence lawyers and remand prisoners in a corruption investigation involving the prime minister's People's Party.

A second, even more controversial trial starts shortly, when he will be accused of twisting the law by trying to open a court investigation into what happened to 110,000 people allegedly killed or "disappeared" under the Franco regime.

Chanting protestors, mainly relatives of Franco's victims, gathered outside the court in support of Baltasar Garçon. Human Rights Watch said he trials threatened both judicial independence and the idea of accountability, not just in Spain but in other parts of the world where impunity is the order of the day. It said "Thirty six years after Franco's death Spain is finally prosecuting someone in connection with the crimes of his dictatorship - the judge who sought to investigate those crimes." He has used international human rights laws to bring groundbreaking cases against members of the Argentinian junta, which led to the Argentinian courts being forced to put them on trial, and Chile's President Pinochet

## **JOINT STATEMENT ON UN HUMAN RIGHTS DAY - 10 DECEMBER**

Seizing a historic opportunity to end torture in the Middle East and North Africa - ten steps against torture the World Organisation and 14 partner organisations from 8 countries in the Middle East and North Africa jointly call on all governments of the region to make the absolute prohibition of torture and ill-treatment a reality.

Those signing included.

Morocco (4), Tunisia (3), Algeria, Bahrain, Libya, Egypt (2), Lebanon, Syria

### **Ten Steps Against Torture**

**Committing to an end to torture and ill-treatment**

**And publicly expressing a commitment to fundamental reforms**

**Investigating torture, bringing the perpetrators to justice**

**Including investigations into past abuses.**

**Ensuring the right of victims to remedy and reparation**

**Dismantling the apparatus of repression, and ensuring that law enforcement agencies operate within the law**

**Demilitarizing the justice system and building a protection system**

**Preventing torture and sending incommunicado detention**

**Establishing independent monitoring, control and oversight**

**Providing an enabling framework for human rights defenders and civil society**

**Making international law against torture the key benchmark**

**Strengthening the resolve of the international community to address torture and impunity and to ensure legal accountability**

## FOR PRAYER AND REFLECTION

Lord, help me sometimes to stand on the other side of the empty tomb, that understanding Calvary more deeply, I may live in the Resurrection more fully:

There was defeat, Lord, not apparent, short-lived defeat, but defeat that seemed final. . .

There was loneliness, Lord; it should not have been; there were eleven who could have watched....

There was pain and no telling how long it would last; and there was death, to be endured in the faith that resurrection would come.....

Lord, help me to stand on the other side of the empty tomb, for that is where some people have to stand; those whose cause is defeated, for whom justice comes too late to right the unequal balance, those who see violence have its way and love kicked aside, those who suffer torture and indescribable pain; for those for whom death is not a consummation, but a tragic interruption, an untimely end, a bearer of grief

Lord, these know in their bones a Calvary I can only know in my imagination and in fellowship with them

Lord, help me to stand on the other side of the empty tomb, for you stand there now - their cause is yours, their darkness you have shared, their suffering you bear, their death you have died, and in you, at the last, they shall live.

## For hope in adversity

You are the Lord of fire  
Present in the heat of life,  
Present in situations of horror and despair,  
Present in the prisons that incarnate men and women for their beliefs.  
Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were lucky ones, Lord.

They came out unscathed.

Not all are so lucky,

Not all understand the tyrannies of life and remain unharmed.

You are with men and women in their suffering,, in their loneliness and ignominy and death.

Be with them.

Be with them through us who are your limbs.

Give us a glimmering of hope in hopeless situations;

For where there is no hope there is nothing.

## Rex Chapman The Shade of His Hand

Lord Jesus

As you behold your solidarity with the victims of injustice, the degraded, the despised, the suffering, the tortured, the dying, may we discover hope in knowing your presence with us in our own darkness and strength to follow you in sharing and bearing the darkness of others.

## From At The Cross Richard Bauckham and Trevor Hart

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Psalm 27

First prayer - Michael Walker Shade of His Hand

“Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?..... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God, in Christ Jesus, our Lord.”

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We hope you will find this mailing a stimulating and challenging read. We welcome contributions from readers and members, from your own individual experience or with ACAT.

Contributions - written, typed or email to:-

Margaret Russell

c/o ACAT Office

To arrive by 17<sup>th</sup> March 2012

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