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EUROPE/ITALY - "Forty hours of prayer for the Church in Need": from 24 June marathon of prayer and information for the Church all over the world

Rome (Fides Service) - "Forty Hours of Prayer for the Suffering Church" is the title of an Marathon of prayer and information organised by the Italian branch of Aid to the Church in Need. The 40 hours of prayer will be at the Basilica of St. Anastasia on the Palatine Hill in Rome from June 24 6pm to June 26 10 am. Aid to the Church in Need an aid agency of pontifical right was started by Belgian priest, the late Father Werenfried van Straaten.

The "Forty Hours" will open with a Celebration of the Eucharist in the Greek Catholic Rite and close with a Celebration of the Eucharist in the Copt-Catholic Rite. In between, for forty consecutive hours there will be adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, readings from Holy Scripture and meditation. Priests, religious and faithful from many different parts of the world are expected to gather for the prayers which in three-hour cycles will be dedicated to the Church on the different continents with meditations taken from Pope John Paul II's relative post-synodal exhortations commented by ACN benefactors and collaborators.

Other towns in Italy will also organise special prayers in communion with the event at local ACN centres: in Milan, Siracusa, Florence, Mestre and Portogruaro. "Aid to the Church in Need" was founded in 1947 to provide material assistance to the Church where it was persecuted. ACN has since spread to 16 different countries in Europe, North and South America and also in Australia and every year it supports about 6,000 programmes to help local Churches in 130 different countries. On the occasion of the "Forty Hours for the Church in Need" - on Friday 25 June at the Association of Foreign Press in Rome there will be the presentation of ACN's "2004 Report on Religious Freedom in the World", the 6th such report. (S.L.) (Agenzia Fides 22/6/2004 - Righe 19, Parole 298)

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