

MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release:

He heard the call as he watched his church burn

Catholic Mission's appeal to raise funds for seminarians has hit homes this week, featuring a young man from Pakistan who was inspired to join the priesthood after a religiously motivated arson attack.

The annual Seminarian Appeal this year tells the story of two future church leaders from Hyderabad who have earned scholarships to study in Rome through the support of Catholic Mission.

One of them, Amoon Nathaniel, was just 15 years old when he stood on the roof of his parish presbytery, watching helplessly after his church had been set ablaze, a story he relayed to Catholic Mission National Director Father Brian Lucas during a chance meeting in Rome last year.

'I was invited to visit Pakistan by my counterpart Father Waseem Walter, where I met the rector of the major seminary in Lahore, home to 83 young men studying for the priesthood,' says Father Lucas.

'The rector, Father Asif John, could clearly recount the stories of Amoon and Adil [Albert], two very bright students who had been offered scholarships, funded by the Pontifical Mission Societies, to the Collegio Urbano in Rome.'

Later, while in the Vatican for meetings, Father Lucas met with the two students, who shared their inspiration for becoming priests. The seminarians' stories became the basis for this year's appeal.

'In Amoon's case, he was acutely aware of the level of religious tension in the country, especially having witnessed as a teenager his church being attacked,' Father Lucas says.

'He shared with me that each day in Pakistan is a struggle for Christians, and priests are needed to guide and keep unity in faith. His fear is that without priests there would no longer be Christians in Pakistan.'

Meanwhile, Adil is motivated by the need for equal educational opportunities for people of all faiths in Pakistan. 'Adil told me his dream is to see every child in Pakistan accessing quality education, where they can learn and grow in a safe environment,' Father Lucas recalls.

Both men plan to return to their local communities and drive education programs through their ministry as priests. Their seminary formation includes time in the community offering pastoral care to the sick and elderly.

Before they joined a very select group of scholarship recipients, Amoon and Adil struggled, like dozens of their classmates, to afford the costs of their formation at the seminary. Catholic Mission supports young men like them, all around the world, through the Seminarian Appeal each year.

'The Seminarian Appeal raises vital funds for the Society of St Peter Apostle, which improves opportunities for young men and women training for religious life by providing the necessities for their education and livelihood,' says Father Lucas.

You can learn more about the appeal, or support seminarians in Pakistan and around the world, by visiting www.catholicmission.org.au/Pakistan or calling the toll-free number 1800 257 296 today.

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