

CHRISTIANS AT GREAT RISK IN PAKISTAN



Pakistan remains in the top ten on the watch list of countries where Christians suffer the greatest persecution. “Open Doors” defines persecution as “any hostility experienced because of one’s identification with Christ.” The hostilities are not just limited to physical violence against Christians and their leaders. Forced conversion of Christians to Islam through marriage, severe pressure to give or sell Christian property to the majority population, and the enforcement of blasphemy laws while police and the courts refuse to intercede are all a part of everyday life in Pakistan.



Children enjoying lessons



Of the over 200 million Pakistanis, approximately four million are Christian. The population is divided into two categories, “Muslim,” and “Non-Muslim.” Pakistan ranks number 4 where churches have been attacked or closed and is second only to Nigeria in the number of rape and sexual harassment cases.

Young girls are the most at risk. According to human rights organizations the abduction of Christian girls is common. Many of them are forced to convert to Islam, because it is widely believed in Pakistan that marriages under the age of 16 are acceptable under Sharia law if both of those marrying are Muslim.

In an effort to protect and educate Pakistan Christian children, Imran Mustaq founded the **Little Hearts of Faith School** with the help of some parishioners from St. Benedict Church, the diaconate community of the diocese and other generous donors from around the country.



Imran Mustaq



As the world economy struggles, countries like Pakistan are especially hard hit. Summer temperatures are unusually hot this year (approaching 100 daily). Food shortages and other supplies are creating dire situations. However, the children at the **Little Hearts of Faith School** remain upbeat as they continue their studies and are lovingly cared for by Imran and his family. These most recent pictures show their progress in their studies. We ask

that you continue to support this important mission of our church so that we can continue to provide funds for food and school supplies.