

NEWS & NEEDS

INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES

FALL 2017

BUILDING CONFIDENCE, BUILDING BONDS

IOCC is currently working with Apostoli, the humanitarian arm of the Archdiocese of Athens, to implement a program that offers educational and recreational activities to refugee children and Greek children from low-income families around greater Athens. The program includes Greek-language classes, music activities, puzzles, and other games to improve motor skills and encourage teamwork. The children have also taken field trips to cultural and recreational sites, like road-safety parks and climbing walls, and have had the chance to meet animals like miniature horses and falcons.



George* is an eight-year-old boy who fled Syria with his parents. When he first joined this IOCC program, he had low self-esteem due to the trauma created through feeling conflict and wouldn't participate in activities with the other children. His teacher noticed and began offering him positive reinforcement, which increased his participation and slowly built up his confidence. "It was like I gave him worth that no one else saw," his teacher said. Then one day, the teacher gave the students colored chalk to draw on the pavement with. George grabbed a piece and drew a mural that covered nearly half the courtyard. He seemed to come alive through this chance to express himself artistically. This marked a turning point for George, who now has made considerable progress through this program.

Ensuring that children like George continue their education is vital to their future, as is minimizing the psychological impact of fleeing from home. Fostering acceptance, compassion, and *philoxenia* (hospitality) in Greek children whose communities are hosting refugees has also proved tremendously valuable. Through interactive learning and teambuilding activities, refugee children can renew their self-confidence and minimize the impact of the turmoil and trauma they have experienced. Additionally, all the children involved gain important social skills and build new friendships.

*Pseudonym used to protect his privacy.

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

I have no doubt that you, like me, have watched with concern for family and friends as hurricanes move across the Caribbean toward homes in Texas, Louisiana, and Florida. Times like these, when disaster strikes close to home, are a reminder of our complete reliance on God—and of how much we need one another, too.

Before Harvey hit, the American Red Cross asked IOCC to deploy Frontliners to the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston, where they were among the first to provide spiritual and emotional care after the storm. Our Frontliners attended Divine Liturgies throughout the city to be a resource for Orthodox clergy and faithful. They remained on call as Irma pushed up Florida's west coast. IOCC remains on the ground in the region—staff, volunteers, Orthodox Action Teams—serving those affected as they begin the long process of picking up the pieces.

I thank each and every one of you who has answered the call to help neighbors in need, each of you who called IOCC headquarters to ask how you could help, each of you who gave clean-up buckets or hygiene kits or shared our hurricane response with friends. Every one of you is a crucial part of this work, and it would not continue without you.

In closing I share the words of His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch and All the East: "In Grace we grow, in Service we transcend, and with Love the structure is strengthened."

In Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou
Executive Director & CEO

SELENAT'S NEW SHOES LEARNING ABOUT PODO PREVENTION

"I never had shoes before, but now I know it feels very comfortable to wear [them]," said Selenat, who was seven years old when she received her very first pair through an IOCC collaboration with TOMS. "I could not believe it," she continued. "I am very happy ... [At first,] I was looking at my feet ... every minute of the whole day."

Selenat and her classmates in northwest Ethiopia's rural Dembecha district received new shoes and lessons on foot care as part of IOCC's comprehensive podoconiosis programing. Podoconiosis, a painful and debilitating condition affecting the feet and legs, is caused by walking barefoot on silica-rich soil.

In Dembecha, most families make their living subsistence farming; transportation is difficult, and students walk to school. Podo is prevalent. Selenat's homeroom teacher reported that the talented, friendly girl walks a half-hour to and from school. The shoes both protect against podo and make her trek to school more comfortable, so it's easier for her to attend—an advantage in an area where the dropout rate is high.

A fast learner, Selenat has begun explaining to friends the health benefits of wearing shoes. She shares her knowledge with schoolmates and family in a community where wearing shoes is not customary for either adults or children, though it is critical to preventing podoconiosis.

"We learned in school about the importance of shoes to protect the foot," Selenat said. The enthusiasm of Selenat and others like her will help fight this disease and contribute to a culture of wearing shoes. Improving the quality of life for Selenat's community by helping them remain healthy and productive, allowing young people to complete their education. She says, "Now, I know that I will not get [podo] because I will wear my shoes every day."



International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc. (IOCC), is the official humanitarian relief agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America and a member of the ACT Alliance, a global coalition of churches and agencies engaged in development, humanitarian assistance, and advocacy.

IOCC, in the spirit of Christ's love, offers emergency relief and development programs to those in need worldwide, without discrimination, and strengthens the capacity of the Orthodox Church to so respond.

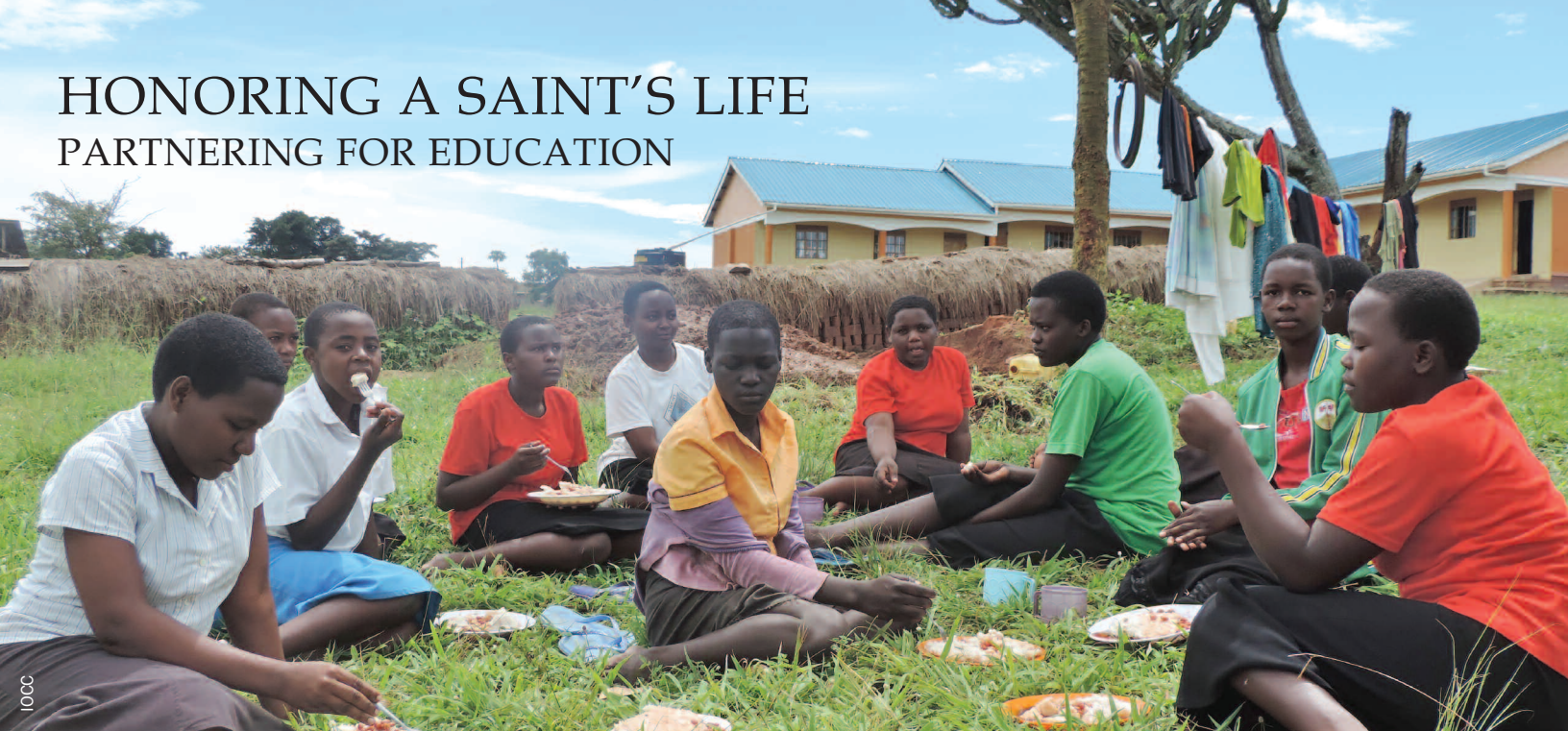


ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL
ORTHODOX BISHOPS
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HONORING A SAINT'S LIFE

PARTNERING FOR EDUCATION



Above: Young women students take a break outside the Lwemiyaga School, which has a rainwater-harvesting system through IOCC's work with the St. Nektarios Education Fund.

Left: November 9 marks the feast St. Nektarios of Aegina, a great Orthodox Christian educator, and patron of the St. Nektarios Education Fund.



Since 2009, IOCC has partnered with the St. Nektarios Education Fund, created by Father Evan Armatas in his seminary dorm room in 2002, long before he became parish priest at St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church in Loveland, Colorado. The theological student chose to honor the saint by providing the gift of education to students who might not otherwise have access to learning.

St. Nektarios was born Anastasios Kephelas in 1846 to parents of meager means who instilled in him the importance of education. After completing the highest level of schooling available in his hometown, Anastasios still hungered for learning. He wanted to become a theologian, so he left home to earn enough to help his parents and continue his studies. Anastasios worked hard, studied at night, and eventually became a teacher. While teaching on the island of Chios, Anastasios also became a monastic, loved and revered in the community; when he was tonsured as a deacon, he took the name Nektarios.

It was through the generosity of others that St. Nektarios was able to continue his education, complete a degree in theology, and enter the priesthood. He eventually became a bishop but always lived a humble life, and his desire for learning allowed him to serve others and share Christ's love in an exceptional way.

The St. Nektarios Education Fund carries that legacy into new places, opening the world to students — especially girls — in remote areas, like Lwemiyaga in rural Uganda. Uganda was one of the first sub-Saharan African countries to embrace Orthodox Christianity. Today, with the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Joseph of the Uganda Orthodox Church and through our donors' generosity, IOCC and the St. Nektarios Education Fund are able to honor the legacy of St. Nektarios. With your gifts, we have built three schools in rural Uganda, where the remnants of war are still visible, that will offer education to over 700 students.

This July, IOCC and the Fund partnered again to upgrade one of our schools in Uganda's Lwemiyaga region. These upgrades will improve students' day-to-day experience and offer a safe boarding facility for female students, who would otherwise travel on dangerous roads to attend school. The renovated facilities will also include rainwater-harvesting systems for laundry and washing, complementing an earlier IOCC project with the Fund that drilled a well on school premises to ensure access to safe drinking water for students and surrounding villagers.

You can learn more about our work with the St. Nektarios Education Fund by watching Father Evan's reflection video in honor of IOCC's 25th anniversary. To watch, visit iocc.org/history.



Throughout its history,
IOCC has given countless children
access to learning opportunities.



UNITED STATES: Provided approximately **one million new textbooks** to under-served communities in **20 states** since 2005



HAITI: Working with both the Greek Orthodox Church of Haiti and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia to rebuild schools that were severely damaged by recent earthquakes, including Foyer D'Amour, **one of six schools across the country** for children who are disabled



BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: Provided over **340 college loans in 2016 alone** to low-income students



GREECE: Sponsoring Greek-language classes for Syrian refugees and offering recreational activities to **120 Greek and Syrian children** through Apostoli (the humanitarian arm of the Holy Archdiocese of Athens)



SYRIA: Distributed **13,000 school kits** to date to Syrians and Iraqi refugee children with the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of All the East, Department of Ecumenical Relations and Development



LEBANON: Provided **over one million healthy snacks** to low-income Lebanese and Syrian refugee students from 2016-2017



GEORGIA: Provided **5,000 English-language books and 6,500 school kits** to low-income children in 2017 via the Georgian Orthodox Church



ETHIOPIA: Built a school for **500 Somali refugees** in 2012 that also provided clean water and shelter, in partnership with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church



UGANDA: Building **three schools** in rural Uganda that will have the capacity to educate over **700 children** when completed, in partnership with the St. Nektarios Education Fund



TANZANIA: Completing water projects to provide **30,000 students, teachers, and parents** with access to clean water in a safe space through the Katherine Valone "St. Photini" Water Fund

DIY FUNDRAISING – THE DIFFERENCE IS YOU!

DIY (Do-It-Yourself) for IOCC is a new way to help those in need in creative ways.

We need your help to reach our goal of raising \$25,000 to celebrate our 25th Anniversary. Dedicate a birthday, local race, or choose your own creative way to help those in need in places like Houston, Syria, and Greece.

Create and customize a page at support.iocc.org/DIY and share with friends. Thank you for being part of IOCC's mission!

