



CLEARING A PATH TO OPPORTUNITY FOR ETHIOPIA'S DISABLED

Dreams about being a helicopter pilot help Belete, 9, briefly forget the harsh reality of being born without legs. Going to school also seemed an out of reach dream. For all of his young life, Belete's immobility forced him to live in virtual isolation from other children his age. His father, a day laborer, and his mother, a home-based baker, barely make ends meet and couldn't afford to take time off from their jobs to carry him to and from school each day. Instead, Belete spent most days in the yard of his family's modest home in Ambo, Ethiopia, placed in a secluded spot away from staring passersby where he would quietly pass the hours fashioning crude toys out of sticks and twine.

Through your support, Belete is no longer limited by his disability. A new wheelchair donated by IOCC has given him freedom of movement to attend school with his siblings, where he is rapidly flourishing both in



Hari M. Desta / IOCC

Inside News & Needs

Protecting Syria's Youngest Refugees From Malnutrition pg. 2

Fresh Hope For Greece's Vulnerable Children pg. 3

Kosovo Farmers Reap The Benefits Of IOCC Greenhouse Project pg. 3

Spiritual Reflection pg. 4

class and at play with his new classmates. IOCC, in cooperation with local partners, the Ethiopia Center for Disability Development and Cheshire Services Ethiopia, has provided wheelchairs to more than 1,800 disabled children and adults in Ethiopia. This newfound mobility is providing children like Belete with better access to education. Many disabled

adults are receiving access to training that provides marketable skills and startup capital for small businesses to help them become a part of mainstream society. For young Belete and most of the other wheelchair recipients, it is the first time that they will have mobility – and an opportunity to move forward towards a world of possibilities.

From The Executive Director



As I reflect on my more than two decades of service with IOCC, I fondly remember the job opportunities I had growing up that shaped who I am today. Whether it was in Texas pulling concrete with Spiro and mowing yards and painting houses with Andy, or building churches and clinics in Kenya with Father Athanasios, I was entrusted to complete a task and learned the meaning of team work and commitment. Lessons that helped me pursue my dreams to serve the Orthodox Church as my parents do. Lessons that have served me well as Executive Director of IOCC for the past 17 years.

At IOCC, we offer opportunity around the world to those who want to help themselves and their families. From working together with impoverished farmers in Kosovo to make their land more productive and profitable, to providing disabled children in Ethiopia with wheelchairs so that they can go to school and further their education, opportunity gives wings to their dreams as it did to mine. I hope that as you read their stories, you will reflect on your own experiences and opportunities that you were given and be inspired to support our efforts to help others realize their dreams.

In Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou
Executive Director & CEO

PROTECTING SYRIA'S YOUNGEST REFUGEES FROM MALNUTRITION

Melhem, 4, was withering away from a poor diet and loss of appetite when IOCC health workers encountered him last summer. Melhem's parents, who fled with him from Syria to safety in Lebanon, arrived with little money to buy their son nourishing food and worried daily about his well-being. Melhem was diagnosed with acute malnutrition during an IOCC health screening of Syrian refugee children living near Mount Lebanon. Left unchecked, the little boy faced a slow, painful death.

Malnutrition carries serious health consequences for a young child, particularly those under five. Being

deprived of important nutrients can hinder physical growth, impair vision and stunt brain development. Malnutrition is also linked to nearly half of all childhood deaths. Thousands of Syria's refugee children in Lebanon face this deadly threat every day. In cooperation with UNICEF, IOCC is working to prevent, screen, and treat malnutrition in Syria's refugee children as well as improve infant and young child feeding practices among Syrian refugee women in Lebanon. In addition to assisting children, the IOCC nutrition surveillance program is also providing nutrition training to staff in Lebanon's healthcare centers, and an awareness campaign that has educated more than 13,000 new and expectant mothers about emergency nutrition and breastfeeding.

Three months after an IOCC regimen of eating specially formulated high-protein, high-calorie foods and milk to boost rapid weight gain, Melhem's cheeks are round again and his once bony limbs have filled out from the added pounds. IOCC health workers will continue to monitor Melhem in the near future to make sure he keeps the weight on. More than 32,370 refugee kids have been screened for malnutrition and 770 undernourished children like Melhem have been successfully treated by IOCC since 2013.



photos by Tiziana Cauli/IOCC



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.



Published four times a year by IOCC, News & Needs is edited by Mark Hodde and Rada Tierney.



ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL
ORTHODOX BISHOPS
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

IOCC is a member of

actalliance

FRESH HOPE FOR GREECE'S VULNERABLE CHILDREN



Eleni, 10, is determined to be a ballerina someday, but her mother, Argyro, 43, worries that her daughter won't have enough food to eat to stay healthy and grow strong. "Just a few years ago we had everything, jobs that allowed us to live in dignity and to be able

to help friends and family in need," said Argyro. "Now, every day I live with anxiety over how to pay the bills and prepare our daily meals." Eleni's parents are among thousands of vulnerable people in Greece stripped of their jobs, their savings, and their plans for the future by the country's failing economy. As a result, more than half of children in Greece now live in families that cannot afford to provide a healthy diet, according to UNICEF.

IOCC, in partnership with Apostoli, the social service agency of the country's Greek Orthodox Church, is working with a grocery store chain in Greece to provide more than 1,000 vulnerable families with prepaid grocery store cards that allow them to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables and milk on a weekly basis.

Participants such as Eleni and her mother are able to shop alongside their neighbors rather than collect aid at distribution centers. The products are all sourced in Greece to support local farmers and milk producers. "For the first time in such a long time, I can choose the kind of food my family needs," said a grateful Argyro. "It feels like I am in charge and not the recipient of charity but of a gift." The program is made possible with the support of The Jaharis Family Foundation, Inc. and the generosity of donors like you.

Since 2012, more than \$13 million in food, medical assistance and heating fuel have been provided to Greece with the support of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, The Jaharis Family Foundation, Inc., Hellenic organizations and private donors.

KOSOVO FARMERS REAP THE BENEFITS OF IOCC GREENHOUSE PROJECT

Winter came early to Kosovo, with snow capping mountains above the villages of Brestovik and Siga by mid-October. That hasn't stopped Miodrag from being able to provide his family of six a bounty of fresh, organically grown produce using the greenhouse that he built last year with assistance from IOCC. Kosovo is mainly rural with about half of the population small-scale farmers eking out a living in remote villages. During the armed conflict in 1999, all 1,000 residents from Brestovik and Siga fled their homes to seek refuge in Serbia and Montenegro. Only 58 families, approximately 135 people, have returned to their homes in the two villages and now live in

isolation and uncertainty.

Working with the Serbian Orthodox Church Diocese of Raška and Prizren, and through Visoki Dečani Monastery, IOCC is helping vulnerable families in the region extend their growing season with support for the production of new greenhouses. Equipped with his newly gained skills and semi-automatic pipe-bending and CO₂ welding machines provided by IOCC, Miodrag and his fellow villagers have produced greenhouse frames for himself as well as nearly 30 more neighboring families who are also reaping the benefits of greenhouse farming. This is part of a broader IOCC initiative to help create sustainable communities in Kosovo.



The Beauty of the Church: It's Place and Purpose

When you display your wedding photo in your home, you put that picture in the most expensive and elaborate frame you can afford. You do not think of the cost so much as the event preserved and the feelings experienced. In this way, and with all family pictures, something more than paper and ink and color prints are present for us. It is the sacrament of the moment that counts. Material things become the conveyor or vehicle for an invisible and spiritual reality which is far more precious to us than the expense demanded to express it. Yet, if these special times in our lives are not adorned with the beauty and expense of frames and colors we would cheapen them, turn something that for us was wonderful into a common, forgotten and ordinary thing. The beauty of the material package attracts us to the lasting value of the experience which that package holds.

The icons we see in the Church are material things: wood, paint, lamination, etc. But in them is the presence of the wonder-working saint. Material things deliver the presence of the person. Our material bodies, following our baptism and chrismation, carry our immortal and beautiful souls, which are invisible to the naked eye. St. Paul has written of this: *"Do you not realize that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit that is in you?"* (1 Cor. 6:19-20)

Do we not ask the Holy Spirit to come down upon the bread and wine and make it the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Church? Do we not need the material church in order for the priest to say those words? Is not the Church the Body of Christ? Should we not clothe the Body of Christ in beauty? Is not the vested priest the presence sacramentally of the glorified Christ when the Divine Liturgy is served?



Nenad Prelevic/IOCC

Children receive Holy Communion from His Grace Bishop Teodosije at Gracanica Serbian Orthodox Monastery in Kosovo.

Can we ever tolerate seeing Christ in street clothes?

If we are receiving the most important person we know, the person we love and need the most for dinner, wouldn't we put out our best china and utensils and table cloths and seat them on the polished dining room table? Don't we want to give Jesus our Savior who comes to visit us in His Church and to give us His Holy Body and Blood the best we have, our very best? It cost Him everything He is to save us, shouldn't it cost us something. — much less than He gave for us — to receive Him? Doesn't love demand that?

Bishop Anthony

*Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America
Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest*

LIVE YOUR FAITH
in an Extraordinary Way

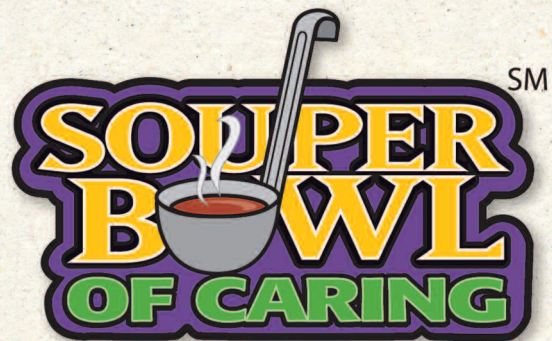
Join IOCC's monthly giving program
"Partners in Compassion"



Call IOCC at
1-877-803-IOCC
(1-877-803-4622)



Make your
donation online at
iocc.org/monthly



iocc.org/souperbowl
Sunday, Feb. 1, 2015