



# INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES NEWS & NEEDS

VOLUME 3, NO. 2 SUMMER 2000

## In Service to Our Neighbor

By Tatiana Vinogradova

Fr. Vladimir Peredernin, a project distribution monitor, and Michael Sullivan, IOCC Project Manager for the USDA-supported food aid project in Russia, play with children at an orphanage in the Vladimir Region during a visit to assess the need for food. The food delivered by IOCC eases the tremendous burden that state-funded institutions, like the orphanage, face. Many of the orphanages struggle to provide care on resources that equal less than \$1 a day per child.



Photo: Michael Sullivan, IOCC-Moscow

**Moscow (IOCC)** — “I dare believe that in my life I will be able to serve my neighbors,” ventured Father Gennady Antonov, IOCC’s distribution agent in Tula, Russia. Antonov’s efficiency in distributing aid to Russians struggling to make ends meet in this provincial capital southwest of Moscow is matched by his compassion and dedication to the people he serves through an IOCC program that provides food staples to

vulnerable Russians trying to cope with a failing economy.

Like his father and grandfather before him, Antonov is a Russian Orthodox priest. He joins the hundreds of Russian Orthodox clergy and lay people who have worked side-by-side with IOCC staff to distribute more than 37 million pounds of wheat flour, beans, rice, vegetable oil and milk powder throughout Central Russia this past year. The food comes from a grant awarded to IOCC by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that was first initiated in March 1999 and recently extended into 2001.

For more than a quarter of the Russian Federation’s people, life is an economic balancing act where clothing, housing, health care, utilities and food—everything that one needs—must be scraped together on less than a dollar a day.

The cooperation between IOCC and the Department of Church Charity and Social Services of the Russian Orthodox Church provides an extensive network through which

people in need can receive assistance from priests and other familiar faces in their communities who know them personally.

“I feel happy when I think of all the good people whom I have met in my life and whom I call my friends,” reflected Antonov. “We are united not only by the years that we spent together or by common interests, but mainly by a spiritual kinship and the ideas which we share.”

The partnership between IOCC and the Russian Orthodox Church not only serves to preserve the dignity of those who receive the aid, it makes it possible for aid to reach some of the smallest towns and villages over this vast country.

Over the next year, nearly half a million people in Moscow and thirteen other regions in Central Russia will receive 28,470 tons of food through the program. The support of Patriarch Alexei and the Russian Orthodox Church not only makes such an undertaking possible, as Fr. Antonov illustrates, it also exemplifies Christ’s calling to serve our neighbors.



Photo: Michael Sullivan, IOCC-Moscow

Michael Sullivan, IOCC Project Manager for the USDA-supported food aid project in Russia, together with Anna Sibiriova of the Department of Church Charity and Social Services of the Russian Orthodox Church and Tatiana Vinogradova, the interpreter for IOCC Moscow. IOCC works closely with many Russian Orthodox parishes to distribute food to needy Russians.



# From the Executive Director

IOCC's partnership with the Orthodox Churches is an integral part of our mission. Over the last eight years, we have seen the remarkable achievements that are only possible through this cooperation.

In each of the countries where we are present, IOCC works at the invitation of the Hierarchs of the Orthodox Church. This is not just a formality.

Through the support of the Church, IOCC instantly has a network through which the needy can be served by people who know them, in ways that are culturally sensitive and in a manner that holds great respect for the traditions and values of the Orthodox and non-Orthodox people in each country.

IOCC was created as a formal international organization for humanitarian and development assistance that has increased the ability of the Orthodox Church in many areas to respond to the needs of the people.

- With assistance from IOCC, the Georgian Orthodox Church established "Lazarus", the charitable arm of the Georgian Orthodox Patriarchate in 1994. Today, Lazarus is the principle implementing partner for IOCC in the Republic of Georgia and directly assists over 30,000 people.

International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc. (IOCC) was established in 1992 by the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA) as the official humanitarian aid agency of Orthodox Christians to work in cooperation with the Orthodox Churches worldwide.

*The mission of IOCC is to respond to the call of our Lord Jesus Christ, to minister to those who are suffering and are in need throughout the world, sharing with them God's gifts of food, shelter, economic self-sufficiency and hope.*

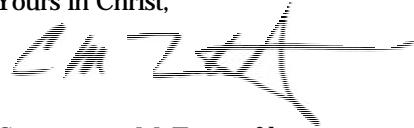
**Published three times a year by IOCC,  
News & Needs is edited by Mark Hodde and Kosara Gavrilovic.**

- In the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Serbian Church also established a charitable organization "Philanthropy". Working closely with IOCC, Philanthropy has undertaken a number of projects, including agricultural programs that utilize land owned by the Church to help refugees and others in need to grow their own food.

- In Russia, the Department of Church Charity and Social Services of the Russian Orthodox Church and hundreds of local parishes work with IOCC to deliver much-needed food to the elderly, children and others in need.

With God's blessing and the continued support of Orthodox Christians worldwide, IOCC is working to continue these efforts in Romania, Albania, Ethiopia and beyond. This newsletter, which focuses on our work with the Orthodox Church worldwide, demonstrates how God's love is manifest in so many ways through the humanitarian mission of IOCC.

Yours in Christ,



Constantine M. Triantafilou



Photo: IOCC-Tbilisi

IOCC Board Member George Marcus, along with IOCC Regional Director George Antoun, Judy Marcus, Lazarus Director Matthew Bolkvadze and IOCC staff member Darejan Dzotsenidze, looks at a blanket sewn as part of an IOCC project run in cooperation with the Georgian Orthodox Church.

# IOCC Opens Office in Romania

Photo: IOCC Romania



Romanian Patriarch Teoctist, IOCC Representative Nicholas Chakos and US Ambassador James Rosapepe jointly launched an aid program in flood stricken portions of Romania.

**Baltimore (IOCC)** — When heavy rainfall and run-off from melting snow triggered floods and touched-off landslides that affected a quarter of Romania in April, a humanitarian partnership that began weeks earlier between IOCC and the Romanian Orthodox Church was solidified.

With the assistance of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the encouragement of James Rosapepe, the United States Ambassador to Romania, IOCC and the Romanian Church provided emergency assistance to the victims of the flooding and thereby began a program that is planned to expand to include services for children and the disabled, as well as development programs focused on the elderly, many of whom can be seen begging on the streets to make ends meet.

"The distribution of the humanitarian aid to the flood-affected people, irrespective of religious beliefs, is an opportunity to show brotherly love," commented Romanian Patriarch Teoctist at a

press conference during which he blessed the initiative.

People living in Romania's flood-affected areas received food and personal care items made possible through a grant from USAID. Thanks to the close cooperation between IOCC and the Romanian Orthodox parishes, an estimated 12,000 people were helped. The grant was also supplemented with gifts received by IOCC from the Orthodox Christian community in the United States.

"This activity is the first of what will be a series of efforts led by International Orthodox Christian Charities to bring together Americans of Orthodox faith and good will to work with Romanians in the humanitarian field" emphasized Ambassador Rosapepe. Rosapepe underscored the significance of the growing partnership between the people of the United States and Romania and the potential benefits of the joint effort.

Just weeks before the flooding occurred, IOCC had established an

office in Romania at the invitation of Romanian Patriarch Teoctist. Rosapepe was also instrumental in encouraging IOCC to begin operations in Romania. "This is a partnership between peoples and a partnership between believers. And the role that International Orthodox Christian Charities has taken on this project brings us together," commented Rosapepe. "They reflect the humanitarian and fraternal spirit of Americans of the Orthodox faith."

In addition to disaster response programs like the flood relief assistance, the estimated 110,000 Romanian children currently residing in government institutions and foster homes is a key area of concern for IOCC. The orphaned and abandoned children are a lasting legacy of the totalitarian regime that held power in Romania before 1989.

Photo: IOCC Romania



US Ambassador James Rosapepe and IOCC Program Coordinator Nicholas Chakos assist in distributing food and hygiene supplies to families in the flood stricken areas of northwestern Romania. The US Government-funded project was implemented through a partnership between the Romanian Orthodox Church and IOCC.

# A Place to Call Our Own

By Ivan Bojanic

Photo: Ivan Bojanic, IOCC-Belgrade



Settling into the new offices of the Orthodox Pastoral Counseling Center in Belgrade are Frs. Petar Lukic and Srbojjub Bulic, the Center's director.

"We finally have a place to call our own," smiles Rev. Dr. Srbojjub Bulic in the newly relocated office of the Orthodox Pastoral Counseling Center in downtown Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

An office of one's own is a given for many agencies, but to the Center, which modestly counts every achievement as a blessing, it represents the culmination of four years of extraordinary dedication, work and faith. It also represents the fulfillment of a vision shared by IOCC and the Center — and the beginning of a new stage of cooperation between the agencies.

With the help of an IOCC grant, the Center recently moved to its new facility which will allow it to quadruple the size of its unique program of faith-based clinical therapy and continue to train future counselors in the synthesis of theology and counseling it calls Pastoral Psychology.

The Center's staff is comprised of 15 highly dedicated professional counselors, all of whom donate their time and services. Since 1996, the Center has conducted over 6,200 counseling sessions. Despite the fact

that in that time visits increased by 50% to the current average of 200 per month, the Center was limited to one room in a shared office. The waiting period to see a counselor stretched for months. The Center's new facility will allow it to schedule up to 800 counseling sessions per month.

The Center has experienced this growth in spite of the absence of a culture of therapy in Yugoslavia today. People experiencing psychological problems typically shun professional treatment because of the social stigma it carries. "If someone seeks therapy in a hospital in Yugoslavia, they're [considered] 'crazy'," says Fr. Bulic. "If they come to the Center, they only have 'problems'."

The Center's volunteer professionals do not work merely as academic experts, but rather bring the love of their fellow humans into their work as well. By providing psychological counseling services in the context of Orthodoxy, the Center responds compassionately to the needs of individuals who "feel an emptiness - a pain in their souls," in the words of Father Petar Lukic, who also serves as a volunteer counselor.

Addressing the long-term counseling needs of Yugoslavia, IOCC is in its second year of supporting the Center's "School for Helping Professionals" that trains 50 pre-graduate students of theology, social work, medicine and psychology in Pastoral Psychology, which synthesizes elements of all four disciplines. "We help [students] in

their approach to helping people," says Fr. Bulic. "It is a combination of psychology and a Christian way of dealing with another human being."

What began as an idea at the outbreak of war in Croatia in 1991 only came to fruition in 1996, when IOCC helped the Orthodox Pastoral Counseling Center access funds from the Council of European Churches to establish operations. With the blessings and support of the Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as IOCC's continued assistance, the Center has since grown into the only faith-based counseling center in Yugoslavia. "We count that as a principal success," notes Fr. Bulic, adding that the Center has received inquiries from Bulgaria, Greece and Russia.

The challenges of providing these and other counseling services in a country still in the throes of social and spiritual disintegration are daunting. IOCC and the Orthodox Pastoral Counseling Center look forward to overcoming these challenges as partners. Together, we hope to continue to provide a place that those in need can truly consider "their own".



Fr. Srbojjub Bulic counsels a woman in the one room of a shared office that used to be the only space for the Center's staff. The new facilities will allow the Center's volunteer staff to extend its services to as many as 800 people each month.



Photo: Jovica Anafalovic, IOCC-Belgrade

# Common Acts of Uncommon Courage

Compiled from reports by Nenad Prelevic, IOCC-Podgorica and Tina Wolfe, IOCC-Banja Luka

Photo: Sasha Antonic, IOCC - Banja Luka

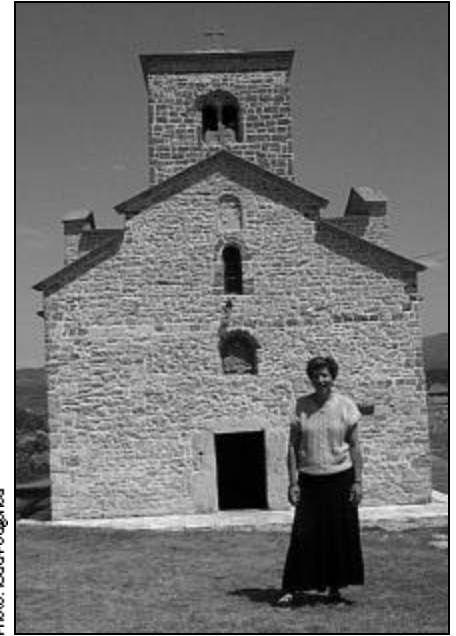


Children enjoy snacks on the opening day of the "Small Angel" Kindergarten in Banja Luka. The kindergarten is just one of the many ways in which the Circle of Serbian Sisters are making a difference across Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.



Photo: IOCC-Podgorica

(right) Sonja Krivcevic, a leader of the Circle of Serbian Sisters in Berane, Montenegro, worked tirelessly with Abbot Nikodim Komljenovic at the Djurdjevi Stupovi Monastery to assist people displaced by fighting in Kosovo. The Monastery grounds are used to cultivate crops that help sustain the people who have taken refuge in the community.



**Baltimore (IOCC)** — In 1995, during the height of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, IOCC convoys laden with relief supplies slipped deep into war zones to bring aid to innocent civilians who had no place to turn to and were in a desperate fight for their survival.

Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks who had maintained a tentative, yet shared existence in the towns of northwestern Bosnia, also shared the aid that was delivered by IOCC during those dark hours. The simple act of receiving food from IOCC became a symbol of acceptance which spared the lives of many who received it.

The courage of the IOCC staff and truck drivers who risked their lives to deliver a life-preserving assistance was admirable, but perhaps not as surprising as that of the crews who came to unload the trucks.

Groups of women, Orthodox women of the Circle of Serbian Sisters, or Kolo Srpskih Sestara as it is called in Serbian, appeared to distribute the aid which had been delivered.

Their common acts of uncommon courage and generosity made a difference in the lives of thousands of people during some of the most horrific scenes of war.

"Working to unload the cargo as quickly as they could, the women whisked boxes of food from the trucks in a race to meet the trail of refugees pouring out of the region before they themselves had to leave," recounted IOCC Executive Director Constantine Triantafilou, who served as the IOCC Country Representative in Yugoslavia and accompanied the trucks to distribution points where they were frequently greeted by the women of Kolo.

The women's efforts continue today

in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where they are active in local organizations that are working to rebuild the fabric of civil society. With the support of IOCC and the Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Banja Luka, one local branch has even started a kindergarten to provide care for children in an area where many of the schools have been converted into refugee shelters.

In Montenegro, Kolo members sprang into action when their towns and cities became places of refuge for hundreds of thousands who fled the strife in Kosovo last year. The Kolo Sisters in the town of Berane, working closely with local parishes and supported by IOCC, assisted more than 6,000 displaced persons—Albanians and Serbs alike—and frequently worked 16 hours a day to ensure their safety and well-being.



# The First Day on the Job

By Darejan Dzotsenidze

Photo: Kaha Legashvili, Lazarus



(above) Seventy-four year old Elena is bed-ridden and has no family to assist her. "God has sent you in order to save me from a lonely and hungry death," she says of the care she receives from IOCC and Lazarus.



Photo: Kaha Legashvili, Lazarus

(below) Romanoz, the father of two children, became disabled after a car accident in 1990. Kaha Legashvili, the Southern Georgia Food Distribution Program Coordinator for Lazarus, visits with him while delivering food made available through a program in cooperation with IOCC.

**Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia (IOCC)** — The first couple of days at a new job can be tough. You don't know many people, if any at all. The first day is an exciting, perhaps a little confusing or even frightening, day. For someone beginning his or her first job, the anxiety of a new situation is even more intense.

These were some of the feelings for Irma, a 63-year-old lady from Sukhumi, who took her new job sewing blankets in an IOCC-led project at the age of 59—a time when most people look forward to retirement.

Recalling fond memories of her life on a farm before she and her family were forced to flee from their home from separatist fighting in 1993, she says, "we were so happy then" in the familiar past tense used by most of the displaced people she shares the

shelter with.

Irma now lives together with her four daughters and six grandchildren in a cramped "collective center" located in the Georgian capital, Tbilisi. Although the space is less than ideal, she is grateful. For three years, before she began participating in the IOCC project, she and her family have struggled with the uncertainty of their situation and the meager assistance they receive intermittently from the cash-strapped Georgian government.

Irma is not alone in the confusion, fear and uncertainty she faces. Each day, volunteers working with Lazarus, the charitable organization of the Georgian Orthodox Church, assist the elderly, orphaned children and displaced persons who are confronted with new situations they

could not have anticipated and are often not prepared to deal with.

The special group of volunteers augment the efforts of the professional staff of Lazarus who work in tandem with the IOCC staff to implement large-scale projects. With the help of volunteers, Lazarus assists the elderly, providing both food and moral support. They also bring medicine, clean their houses and cook dinner for them—small tasks that mean so much for the people for whom they're done.

The group of volunteers has also established close relationships with a number of orphanages and boarding schools for vulnerable children. They have found that loneliness and isolation for the elderly and the lack of affection for children are even heavier burdens than poverty or other material problems they face. The caring presence and attention they provide are as highly appreciated as the warm meal or blanket they receive.

In 1994, it was the staff of Lazarus who experienced a collective first day on the job when IOCC helped establish the organization at the invitation of Patriarch Ilia II of Georgia. Today, IOCC continues to work closely with Lazarus and its volunteers to bring help to more than 30,000 people through a countrywide network of churches and monasteries.

For both Irma and Lazarus, the jitters of the first day on the job have given way to a new perspective on the future.



# Extending Brotherly Love

**Baltimore (IOCC)** - When devastating earthquakes struck Turkey last year, the ecclesiastical center of Orthodoxy, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, became a focal point for emergency relief projects and the rebuilding effort. For IOCC, it was also an opportunity to offer support for the initiatives of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew who has blessed the work of IOCC since it began.

"According to the teachings of the Apostle to the nations, Paul (Rom. 1:4), as Christians we are obliged toward all men, everywhere in the world, regardless of ethnicity or religion," Patriarch Bartholomew reminds us. "Having been created by God in His 'image and likeness,' we are all brothers. For this reason, service to others is a natural and obligatory duty. The efforts of IOCC, as a proactive manifestation of this duty, are laudable."

In this spirit, IOCC worked with the Ecumenical Patriarchate to provide school materials to more than 2,500 children in the town of Bolu, Turkey, halfway between Istanbul and Ankara and one of the areas which was hardest hit by the tremblers. The school kits not only gave the children much needed provisions, but also was an opportunity for Orthodox Christians to fulfill the duty that the Ecumenical Patriarch has encouraged through IOCC.



Photo: IOCC / Turkey

His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew surveys the devastation wrought by earthquakes in Turkey. Working directly with the Ecumenical Patriarchate as well as through ACT, a worldwide consortium of church-related humanitarian organizations, IOCC provided school materials and emergency provisions to victims of disaster.

## Remember IOCC for Your Workplace Giving Programs!

IOCC participates in many workplace giving programs, including the United Way and Combined Federal Campaigns. IOCC is also recognized as an eligible participant in the State Employee Campaigns and many corporate programs.

International Service Agencies is IOCC's agent for many of these campaigns and has designated **0348** as the IOCC donor number. Please note that some campaigns have different designation codes for IOCC. Please consult your campaign materials, the IOCC website ([www.iocc.org](http://www.iocc.org)) or call IOCC at (877) 803 4622 for more information.

# IOCC Sunday — a Day for Celebration and Remembering

It's not too early to start thinking about IOCC Sunday which is to be celebrated on November 19 this year. The Hierarchs of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas established the annual "IOCC Sunday" to highlight the philanthropic work of this Orthodox ministry to the world's poor.

"What a joy it is to witness the growth of this ministry, like a tiny mustard seed growing into a tall plant," reads a Hierarchical encyclical that will be read in Orthodox parishes that day. The encyclical likens the work of IOCC

to the parable in Matthew 13, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches.'

"We, your Archpastors, look to IOCC as a unifying force among the Orthodox faithful in America and globally who seek to fulfill the Gospel of love. We envision the work of IOCC to provide you, the Church's faithful, with an opportunity to realize your

Christian calling by responding to the call of Jesus Christ to minister to those who are suffering and are in need."

And in our special Thanksgiving tradition—on October 9 in Canada and November 23 in the United States—IOCC invites all Orthodox Christians to set an extra place at their Thanksgiving table. As a way of sharing your blessings with those who are less fortunate, you are asked to consider offering a gift of \$20 or more to assist in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless and offering new prospects for well being among the poor.



## IOCC

711 West 40th St., Suite 306  
Baltimore, MD 21211 USA  
Tel: 410-243-9820  
Fax: 410-243-9824

website: [www.iocc.org](http://www.iocc.org)  
e-mail: [relief@iocc.org](mailto:relief@iocc.org)

Non-Profit  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Baltimore, MD  
Permit No. 4280

Address Correction Requested.

