



# INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES NEWS & NEEDS

FOCUS ON RACE TO RESPOND

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## Cyclists 'Race to Respond' to humanitarian needs



around the world.

According to IOCC Executive Director Constantine M. Triantafilou, the "Race to Respond" served the humanitarian mission of IOCC in a number of ways: by raising financial support for IOCC's programs; by raising public awareness of the needs in the countries where IOCC works; by increasing understanding of IOCC's

work; by

Antiochian Village in Ligonier, Pa. There, the cyclists were met by 250 campers chanting "I-O-C-C!" The young campers peppered the cyclists with questions and requests for autographs, and the Rev. Michael Nasser, camp director, gave the cyclists a generous donation collected from campers throughout the summer.

"Standing at camp while 300 people chanted 'I-O-C-C' touched my heart," said counselor Christa Shalhoub, 20, of Livonia, Mich. "You guys came near the end of our summer, when I, personally, felt tired and ready to go home. Once I thought about what the cyclists were really doing, and how physically hard it must be to ride your bike for 25 days, it gave me confidence that I could finish my work for Christ at the Village."

*Continued on page 6*

Photo: Stephen Hubal-IOCC

**Baltimore (IOCC)** — Standing at the foot of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco on Aug. 28, "Race to Respond" lead cyclist Jim Angelus easily could have reveled in the conclusion of the 25-day ride for International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC).

Instead, he issued a challenge to all Orthodox Christians. "Go back to your own communities and have your own race to respond," Angelus said. "The 'Race to Respond' did not begin on Aug. 3, and it did not end (on Aug. 27). The race to help others in need goes on."

That theme of sacrificial service repeated itself throughout the cross-country cycling event, which took five volunteer cyclists from Keyport, N.J., to Point Reyes Station, Calif., on behalf of IOCC. The August bicycle ride was a vehicle to show how IOCC races to respond to the needs of suffering people

The "Race to Respond" helped connect communities around the world, including campers at Antiochian Village in Ligonier, Pa. (left), whose donations to IOCC, raised over the summer, make it possible to provide assistance such as the school lunch program for children in the Republic of Georgia (right).

illustrating the importance of volunteerism and teamwork for IOCC's mission; by demonstrating IOCC's efficiency and effectiveness as an organization; and by bringing Orthodox communities together in pursuit of a common goal.

As the cycling team crossed the country, enthusiasm for their effort and the cause they represented was obvious. Nowhere was that more true than at



Photo: Michael Tsakalos-IOCC



# From the Executive Director

I was overwhelmed with emotions as I stood in the back of the Greek Orthodox church in Holmdel, N.J., and Fr. George Dounelis started to bless the riders and their bicycles on the eve of the “Race to Respond.” Here we were: After two years of planning, five young Orthodox Christians stood ready to challenge themselves physically, emotionally and spiritually to ride more than 3,000 miles across the United States for IOCC and its mission to “reach out to those who are suffering and in need throughout the world.”

Then joining the race as it wound its way across America last month, I was struck by the way local communities responded to the IOCC cycling team. Everywhere the cyclists and their support crew went, they were met by a warmth and generosity of spirit that represents the best of Orthodoxy in America.

It was obvious that people were enthusiastic not only about what the five cyclists were doing but also about the cause they were representing. People were excited and inspired to see their faith in action around the world through IOCC.

At St. Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church in Steelton, Pa., joy and happiness radiated off the smiles of the people as the cyclists entered. When Fr. Srbojub Jockovich thanked the riders and blessed their journey, I realized how important the work of IOCC has become. This reception, repeated many times across the country, reinforced for me the

importance of volunteers, metropolitan committees and local parish communities for the work of IOCC.

In fact, one of our goals for the “Race to Respond” was to connect communities — with each other and with suffering people around the world. That’s something that IOCC has been doing for more than 10 years now. The “Race to Respond” was a fresh, creative way for us to say, “We thank you. You are feeding someone in need. You are helping a refugee family return to their homes and dreams. You are giving hope to a child. You are making a difference in someone’s life.”

The race was a great start at communicating that message. It made Orthodox Christians across the country feel like they were part of something bigger. In places such as Salina, Kan., and Ely, Nev. — smaller communities where Orthodox parishes are few and far between — people were able to participate in IOCC’s life-changing work in a tangible way.

As we enter the next decade of IOCC, the Board and staff are committed to the mission to “respond to the call of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Thank you for supporting IOCC. Thank you for joining the race to respond.

Yours in Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou  
Executive Director



Photo: Ivan Bojancic-IOCC



Photo: Mark Hodde - IOCC

Hierarchs such as His Grace Bishop Ilia of the Albanian Orthodox Diocese (left) and His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese showed tremendous support for the “Race to Respond” cyclists as they rode across the country in August on behalf of IOCC.

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.*

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## Church opens its arms to IOCC cyclists

**Baltimore (IOCC)** — Between being sprinkled with holy water on Aug. 2 and feeling the cold Pacific surf on Aug. 27, the cyclists of the “Race to Respond” felt the support and prayers of Orthodox bishops, priests and lay people throughout their ride on behalf of International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC).

Just as IOCC has carried out its humanitarian mission over the last 10 years in close cooperation with the Orthodox Church, the “Race to Respond” would not have been possible without Church support at all levels.

It started on April 18 with the prayers of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, who gave all the cyclists crosses to accompany them on their journey, and it continued through the end of August with the prayers and planning of Orthodox clergy and laity of all jurisdictions.

“In the Orthodox Church, we have always tried to promote the gospel on one hand and social outreach on the other,” said the Rev. Alexander Veronis, pastor of Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Lancaster, Pa., one of the stops along the way. “We’re totally supportive of what IOCC stands for.”

The cyclists began their benefit ride on Aug. 2 with a bicycle blessing offered by the Rev. George Dounelis, pastor of Kimisis Tis Theotoku (Dormition of the Theotokos) Greek Orthodox Church in Holmdel, New Jersey. Fr. George said the Prayer for Blessing a Vehicle and the Prayer for Beginning a Journey. Similar prayers were offered by other priests throughout the 25-day journey.

A major part of the “Race to Respond” was a series of planned

events — more than 30 altogether — at parishes and other locations along the race route.

Parishioners organized the events in coordination with IOCC and welcomed the cycling team warmly and generously as it came through their town. Whether big or small, the events gave the cyclists the strength and motivation to continue their cross-country benefit ride.

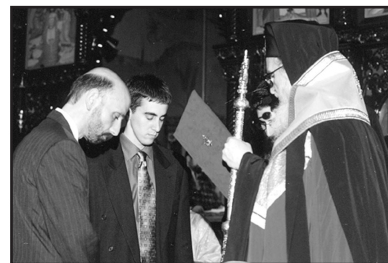
In Colorado, a coalition of 19 Orthodox parishes prayed daily for the safety of the riders and the success of their mission. (See inset for prayer.)

Orthodox hierarchs, including those on the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA), also offered their support. The race route made it possible for the cycling team to meet with His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese, His Grace Bishop Basil, auxiliary bishop of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, and His Grace Bishop Ilia of the Albanian Orthodox Diocese.

His Eminence Metropolitan Isaiah of the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Denver praised the cyclists for their sacrifice, a word which, he said, has “virtually disappeared from our contemporary vocabulary.”

Bishop Ilia, who donned a cycling helmet and official team jersey, described the cyclists’ effort as a “witness-in-action” for IOCC. “Your cycling is comparable with what IOCC does — it requires effort and preparedness,” he said.

In addition to visiting dozens of Orthodox parishes, representing six jurisdictions, the cyclists visited two monasteries of the Orthodox Church



His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America blesses “Race to Respond” cyclists Jim Angelus (left) and Michael Tsakalos in April.

“In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord Jesus, You traveled with the two disciples to Emmaus after the Resurrection and set their hearts on fire with Your grace.

Travel also with your IOCC bicyclists, gladdening their hearts with Your presence.

During their journey, surround them with Your holy angels to keep them safe from seen and unseen dangers.

Grant that they may complete their race and that the monies raised may be blessed for use in the love of your people.

Help them to see the beauty of Your creation and to comprehend the wonder of Your truth in all things.

For You are the Way, the Truth and the Life, and we glorify and worship You, together with Your Father who is everlasting and Your all-Holy, Good and Life-giving Spirit. Amen.”

*Prayer offered by the  
Orthodox churches of Colorado*

in America: Holy Transfiguration Monastery (for women) in Ellwood City, Pa., and the Monastery of St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco (for men) in Point Reyes Station, Calif.

“God has blessed you with a good work,” said Father Jonah, abbot of St. John’s. “May it be for his glory.”



# 'Race To Respond' connects communities around the world



**Aug. 3, Keyport, N.J.** — The five volunteer cyclists dip their back tires in the Atlantic Ocean and begin their journey across the United States on behalf of the people served by IOCC. At various points along the race route, the cycling team is reminded of IOCC's humanitarian programs throughout the world.

**Aug. 5, Johnstown, Pa.** — The cyclists roll into Johnstown, Pa., a city that has known devastating floods in its history, and visit nearby Antiochian Village and His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese. In places such as Romania and Mozambique, IOCC has brought critical emergency assistance to flood-ravaged communities.



**Aug. 7, Cleveland, Ohio** — The cyclists are feted by Cleveland Mayor Jane Campbell. Throughout its 10-year history, IOCC has worked closely with local governments around the world to carry out its programs.



**Aug. 11, Quincy, Ill.** — The cycling team reaches the Mississippi River, where flooding caused destruction to river communities in the spring. The floods once again are a reminder of IOCC's own emergency relief efforts in the face of floods and other natural disasters.



**Aug. 13-15, Kansas** — The cyclists ride through the Kansas heartland, where fertile fields call to mind IOCC's successful agriculture programs in places such as Bosnia-Herzegovina.



**Aug. 19, Estes Park, Colo.** — The cyclists climb Trail Ridge Road through Rocky Mountain National Park, near areas where recent forest fires have caused significant damage. IOCC and a local partner (Rocky Mountain Orthodox Christian Charities and Missions) recently trained volunteers to work with children who have been displaced and traumatized by the Colorado forest fires.



**Aug. 21, Helper, Utah** — The cyclists get a police and fire truck escort at a town whose name fits well with IOCC's humanitarian mission.



**Aug. 23-25, Nevada** — U.S. 50 in Nevada, the "loneliest highway" in America, is reminiscent of some of the remote places in the world where IOCC brings help and hope to vulnerable people.



**Aug. 26, Jackson, Calif.** — The cyclists visit the oldest Serbian Orthodox parish in North America.

Since 1992, at the invitation of the Serbian Orthodox Church, IOCC has delivered more than \$50 million in humanitarian assistance in the war-torn former Yugoslavia.



**Aug. 27, Point Reyes Station, Calif.** — The cyclist reach their destination after 25 days of riding, demonstrating the power of volunteerism and collective action.





## 'Race to Respond' advances IOCC's mission

(Continued from page 1)

At about the same time the IOCC cyclists were greeting young people at Antiochian Village, IOCC learned that its school lunch program in Lebanon and the Republic of Georgia had been extended for another year by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Through the Global Food for Education Initiative, IOCC will provide nutritious lunches to an estimated 8,400 children in the Republic of Georgia and an estimated 5,600 children in Lebanon during the 2002-2003 school year, said Samir S. Ishak, IOCC director of operations. The \$2.7 million project, which also provides teacher training and instructional materials, is made possible by IOCC supporters such as the campers at Antiochian Village.

The volunteer cyclists were reminded of IOCC's programs in other ways as they crossed the country. For example: At Serbian Orthodox parishes such as St. Nicholas in Steelton, Pa., and historic St. Sava in Jackson, Calif., they had an opportunity to reflect on IOCC's 10 years of humanitarian service in the

war-torn former Yugoslavia. Since 1992, at the invitation of the Serbian Orthodox Church, IOCC has delivered more than \$50 million in program services in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The cyclists were overwhelmed by the response they received at St. Nicholas on Day 2 of the "Race to Respond." They had spent a difficult morning tackling the hills of Pennsylvania. When they arrived at St. Nicholas, they received a standing ovation and a hot meal. The Rev. Srbojub Jockovich, parish pastor, prayed for IOCC and the safety of the cyclists.

IOCC board member Dr. Beverly Yanich, a member at St. Nicholas, said the cycling event helped the parish feel connected to the work of IOCC.

"If you needed any evidence of how impressed the parishioners were with the challenge undertaken by the cyclists and the faith the fellows demonstrated, just consider the rapt attention when the guys and their crew were introduced, the spontaneous bursts of applause whenever

**"The 'Race to Respond' did not begin on Aug. 3, and it did not end (on Aug. 27). The race to help others in need goes on."**

— Jim Angelus, lead cyclist

the guys made a move around the hall, the en masse move of attendees out of the hall and into the brutal sun to see the guys off, and the four-part harmony of the parishioners singing 'Many Years' for the fellows when they were departing," Dr. Yanich said.

The cyclists also realized that someone had gone before them. In 1979, and again in 1989, the Rev. Kosmas Karavellas, now pastor of Sts. Constantine & Helen Greek Orthodox Church in Annapolis, Md., went on cross-country bicycle trips to raise money for Cooley's Anemia research.

With little support, organization or media attention, Fr. Kosmas blazed a trail from New York to San Francisco and made a difference in the fight against the genetic blood disorder. At the time, though, he wasn't sure what impact he'd have.

"You'd see the effort you were making, and sometimes you'd wonder, 'What are we doing?' But if you save one soul, it's enough," Fr. Kosmas said. "I'm sure the Lord's going to bless (IOCC)."

So far, the cyclists' effort has raised an estimated \$225,000 of the \$250,000 goal.

"I think IOCC has done a very good job with this," said cyclist Konstantin Kanelis, 35, of Munich, Germany. "The result is the important thing: We helped in an effort to sharpen the consciousness of people, to wake them up."



"Race to Respond" cyclists pause with children in front of the support-and-gear truck at St. Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church in Oberlin-Steelton, Pa. while riding through Pennsylvania on August 4.





# 'Perseverance, hope' drive IOCC cyclists

**Baltimore (IOCC)** - In Pennsylvania, it was thunderstorms. In Kansas and Utah, it was high winds. In Colorado, it was the Rocky Mountains.

But no matter what obstacles the "Race to Respond" cyclists faced during their 25-day ride, they pale in comparison to the hardships of war, poverty and natural disaster. The cyclists rode cross-country from Aug. 3-27 to raise awareness and support for the humanitarian mission of International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) on its 10th anniversary.

"When you compare this with the plight of other people (served by IOCC), then you see it's nothing that we've done," said cyclist Konstantin Kanelis, 35, of Munich, Germany. "Here, we ride, we're fed, we stay in hotels. We can't say that we've done a big job. It's all relative."

Kanelis said the end result is what matters most: That people have been made more aware of IOCC's mission and how they can participate in that mission. "Hopefully, they will open their hearts more and give more," he said.

Kanelis said he welcomed the opportunity to see the United States in greater depth, not just as a tourist or businessman, as he had on two previous occasions. "I've made so many friends in one month," he said. "For me, it was a cultural enrichment."

Cyclist Alex Mazarakos, 27, Burbank, Ill., said he was able to accomplish two personal goals: to ride a bicycle cross-country and to volunteer for some kind of service project.

"It was pretty satisfying to work with IOCC and to have our goals met, mutually," he said.

Mazarakos, who was reared Greek Orthodox, said participating in the "Race to Respond" made him more aware of the diversity of Orthodox Christianity in America. "Going to different churches and monasteries was a learning experience. I really had no contact with them before," he said.

Mazarakos said he'll never forget the feeling of finally reaching the Pacific coast after spending 25 ten-



Photo: Elias Zimiantis

The "Race to Respond" cyclists arrive at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Oak Lawn, Ill., the home parish of two of the cyclists, on Aug. 9.

hour days on a bicycle.

His cousin, Constantine "Dino" Davlantis, 30, of Oak Lawn, Ill., said "hope and perseverance" got him through the last day. "I believe in taking the best that God gives you and doing the best with it," he said.

Davlantis said he hopes IOCC can "keep the momentum going" after the cycling event, especially through all the contacts that were made along the race route. "I think people were really happy that we visited their churches," he said.

Michael Tsakalos, 27, of Phoenix, Md., agreed that the "Race to Respond" was a "good vehicle to bring people together to learn about IOCC. I think it awakened many communities that otherwise wouldn't have known about us."

Upon reaching the Pacific Ocean, Tsakalos said he thought about the line in the Lord's Prayer that says, "Give us this day our daily bread.... I was thinking, 'I have used up my supply of today's daily bread. I have nothing else to give.' It was a good feeling to be done."



Photo: Ivan Bojancic - IOCC

Cyclists (from left) Konstantin Kanelis, Constantine "Dino" Davlantis and Michael Tsakalos savor the moment at California's Point Reyes National Seashore after finishing their 25-day benefit ride for IOCC on Aug. 27.





# Civic leaders support race

U.S. Rep. Dennis Kucinich, D-Cleveland (second from left), meets with IOCC Board Chairman Bert Moyar (far left), his wife, Marjorie, and IOCC Board Member Fr. Irinej Dobrijevic outside Cleveland City Hall on Aug. 7, just prior to a public ceremony for the five "Race to Respond" cyclists with Mayor Jane Campbell. All along the race route, local government leaders welcomed the cyclists and praised their effort on behalf of IOCC's humanitarian mission. The 25-day, cross-country cycling event raised support and awareness for the people served by IOCC throughout the world.



Photo: Ivan Bojanic - IOCC



## IOCC

110 West Road, Suite 360  
Baltimore, MD 21204 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)

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