



INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES NEWS & NEEDS

SHARING GOOD

SPRING 2014

The Art of Restoring Hope

Teofil, the Romanian man who painted this remarkable portrait of Christ, has battled schizophrenia most of his adult life. Because of the mental illness, Teofil had difficulty keeping friends and working, and ended up homeless and living on the streets for months at a time. Help came to him through the House of Solidarity and Hope Foundation, the humanitarian arm of the Iasi Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese. It provided a safe and caring place for a struggling man to express himself through art therapy and to discover that the gentle strokes of a paintbrush could help him cope with the debilitating symptoms of his illness. Now Teofil paints out of a rented studio, supports himself with the sale of his work and is taking medication for his condition.

Helping at-risk people like Teofil overcome life-limiting



obstacles brought on by mental illness, alcoholism and substance abuse is one of many ways an IOCC program is helping to create more resilient communities in Romania. Working closely with the Romanian Orthodox Church,

IOCC has trained 114 clergy, educators and social service providers in three dioceses – Iasi, Bucharest, and Craiova – to develop more effective administrative, financial and programming skills. Upon completion, the newly trained participants return to their parishes and social service agencies with a better command of how to provide guidance and support to families and individuals facing issues such as domestic violence, joblessness, and child abuse. This multi-year project, launched in 2009 with support from the Romanian Ministry of Labor,

Family and Equal Opportunity and the European Social Fund, is one of the largest endeavors by IOCC specifically dedicated to strengthening the Orthodox Church's ability to respond to the needs of underprivileged Romanians.

From The Executive Director



In my travels with IOCC, I have been invited into many homes all around the world, from historical residences in Europe and spiritual oases in the Holy Land, to the humblest huts on an African plain. No matter the shape, size or standard of living, these homes all shared one very important quality – they each provided a sanctuary to their owner. We all work hard to create a home that will shelter us and surround us with small comforts like the familiar sounds of our children playing or our family gathering at the dinner table each night. Now imagine, in an instant, all of it vanishing from your life, the home life you worked so hard to build. Poverty, natural disaster, and manmade conflict each have the power to take away the protection a home brings. No one is immune.

Your continued support helps IOCC reach families that have faced this great loss. In war-torn Syria, IOCC is providing displaced families with shelter and counseling to help them cope with the uncertainty and stress of war. In post-conflict Kosovo, IOCC is assisting families who have returned to their homes with support for the farmers and education support for their children. And in the Philippines, homeless Typhoon Haiyan survivors are receiving much needed construction materials from IOCC to help rebuild their homes and their lives.

The next time you open the door to your home, please remember the families who have lost their homes and welcome them into your heart. By opening your heart to them, you keep hope alive for vulnerable families so that they too, can one day again find sanctuary in a place they call home.

In Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou
Executive Director & CEO

SUSTAINING COMMUNITIES IN THE BALKANS



A farmer from the village of Brestovik explains how his locally constructed greenhouse gets year-round use, growing crops during warmer months and as a drying shed in winter for the wild forest herbs and mushrooms collected from nearby mountains.

Fifteen years after NATO bombings and many ensuing conflicts in Kosovo, poverty and isolation continue to be a challenge for the more than 100,000 people who make up the region's non-majority communities. IOCC has maintained a humanitarian presence in the region since 1998, and is continuing its work through a new initiative to help these vulnerable families improve their farming techniques, raise their household incomes, and improve the learning environment for their children.

Kosovo is mainly a rural area, with about two-thirds of the population living in villages. Most are small-scale farmers trying to eke out a living with limited farm equipment and an often unreliable water supply. Working with the Serbian Orthodox Church Diocese of Raška and Prizren, and Visoki Decani Monastery, IOCC is helping local farmers extend their growing season by providing support for the production of

greenhouses, and the digging of new wells to improve access to water.

The education system in Kosovo is also seriously limited by a lack of adequate facilities and qualified teaching staff for primary and secondary students. The fifty children who attend the primary school in Osojane live in the surrounding villages, with some traveling many miles to and from school on foot. Without regular jobs, most of the parents don't have the necessary financial means to provide a hot meal for their children. IOCC is providing assistance to the school kitchen to ensure that each day, the children will have a hot, nutritious lunch.

This humanitarian initiative in Kosovo is provided through the generous support of a \$50,000 matching grant from the George and Judy Marcus Foundation, which has pledged to match contributions to IOCC for its efforts to assist people living in non-majority enclaves in remote areas of Kosovo.

International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc. (IOCC) is the official humanitarian aid agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central 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.



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ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL
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actalliance

HELPING FAMILIES REBUILD AFTER TYPHOON HAIYAN

Recurring flooding and landslides since Typhoon Haiyan's destructive forces swept over the Philippines last November are slowing progress for families struggling to rebuild their homes and lives. IOCC and its church partners in the Philippines continue to reach families in the hardest hit areas with food and assistance to repair and reconstruct their homes. With generous support from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, IOCC is also providing support for shelter repair to families left without a roof over their heads in Tacloban City, where thousands of homes were swept away by the 195-mile winds and torrential rain.

Typhoon Haiyan has impacted the lives of more than 13 million people across 41 provinces, destroying more than a million homes and leaving its survivors homeless and in desperate need of food, water and shelter months after the storm. IOCC, an ACT Alliance member, is responding with new distributions of urgently needed hygiene and household items to more than 500 survivors, as well as water, sanitation support and cash for work to repair homes and construct temporary shelters for homeless families.

IOCC relief efforts in the Philippines have reached nearly 9,000 storm survivors with food, medicine, emergency first aid, and water purification tablets, and shelter repair assistance.



Neighbors work to erect a temporary roof on a home that was laid open to the sky by Typhoon Haiyan in Tacloban, Philippines. The powerful storm destroyed 1 million homes and displaced more than 4 million people. IOCC is responding with building materials to help families repair homes & construct temporary shelter in the country's hardest hit areas.

HEALING THE HIDDEN SCARS OF DISPLACED SYRIANS



Face painting, singing and performing are all activities used by IOCC/GOPA trauma counselors to help displaced Syrian children express their feelings through art and play. These children are among 2,300 displaced Syrian men, women and children who have benefited from the counseling program since it was first provided in March 2012.

As Syria's violent civil war enters its fourth year, the number of Syrians traumatized by what they have witnessed or endured continues to grow. Recognizing the importance of addressing not only the physical but also the psychological needs during this time of conflict, IOCC and its church partner in Syria, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East (GOPA), are providing trauma counseling to more than 2,300 displaced and vulnerable Syrian people.

Families take part in a four-day retreat where children and the parents engage in separate activities in a safe environment. Children's activities such as puppet making, drawing and drama are designed to help the youngsters rebuild their communication and interaction skills along with confidence and trust. The children are also encouraged to strengthen their connections with people, and to develop a stronger sense of self and community. Adult participants are taken through activities that provide them with the necessary tools to cope with their own stress as well as the emotional needs of their children, and to help rebuild self-confidence.

O Lord and Master of my life: take away from me the spirit of laziness, lust for power, idle talk and despair.

Rather, grant unto me, O Lord: the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love.

Yes, O Lord and King: Grant that I may see my own sins and to judge not my brother, for Blessed are You, always, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

This is the prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian, which we offer during liturgical services and private prayers prominently throughout the Great Lenten season. It is a powerful prayer that defines the essence of the Lenten journey for any Orthodox Christian, placing before our mind, heart and soul the most basic elements of Christ's teachings and enables us to focus our entire being upon the straight and narrow path leading to the salvation won for us through our Lord's ultimate sacrifice on the Holy Cross.

In today's secularized and Christian-threatening society, we should be aware that our focus upon the teachings of our Lord and following that straight and narrow path is not the business of the Great Lenten season alone. Our lives need to be focused on a daily basis from the moment we open our eyes after a night's restful slumber - for which in our evening prayers we have beseeched our Lord - to the moment we close them to enter again into that slumber after a long and hard day's "work" of living our Faith.

I very often - and I don't believe I am alone in this regard - so often find myself behind schedule from the moment I awaken in the morning until I am exhausted at the end of the day - from just trying to keep up. During my spiritual pilgrimage, I have discovered that if the first words that descend from my heart, mind and soul to my tongue and lips each day - regardless of

how "late" I am - are to our Lord in the beautiful petitions of St. Ephraim's prayer, I am able, by God's Grace, to establish a foundation for every thought, word and deed that issues forth from me during that day.

I urge those who read these words to consider the practice of the Prayer of St. Ephraim in their prayer life beyond the confines of Great Lent. If these words are offered with desire, sincerity, hope and love, it seems, at least from the personal experience of this unworthy soul, highly likely that the daily spiritual pilgrimage will be enriched and enhanced for one's own benefit and that of all with whom we interact and beyond. What we receive in faith from our Lord and Master will certainly fill and encompass us so completely that even if we wanted it to, we could not prevent it from spilling over into the lives of those around us.

May this Great Lenten season of 2014 be a "turning-point" - a moment of true repentance - in each of our lives - enabling us to realize that following the straight and narrow path is a life-long journey requiring constant vigilance, because the closer we come to our Lord, the greater will be the temptations of the Evil One to lead us astray.

+ Antony, Metropolitan

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the United States of America - Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

SCHOOL KITS ARE URGENTLY NEEDED



Please encourage your parish youth group to help families in need by assembling IOCC School Kits. Instructions are available at iocc.org/kits.

Make a charitable bequest to IOCC and give families challenged by war, disaster, poverty or illness a new beginning.



Learn more by contacting William Brown, IOCC Director of Development at 1-877-803-4622.