



INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES

NEWS & NEEDS

SHARING GOOD

SUMMER 2013

IOCC PROVIDES MEDICAL LIFELINE FOR GREEKS

The 52,000 residents of Chios rely on the remote Greek island's sole hospital to help them stay healthy, but austerity measures put into effect by the Greek government have dramatically cut funding and crippled the medical institution's ability to function. Doctors and medical staff struggle daily to care for patients without essential medical supplies like surgical gloves, syringes, vials for blood samples and suture needles that the hospital can no longer afford to supply. IOCC responded to the urgent need with more than \$740,000 in medical supplies delivered to Skylitsion General Hospital of Chios. The government-run hospital serves the medical needs of young and old living on Chios and the neighboring islands of Psara and Oinousses.

Shortages in medical supplies are plaguing public hospitals across Greece and threaten access to quality health care that some



Despina Katsivelaki/IOCC

Newborns to geriatric patients will benefit from the more than \$3.5 million in medical aid that IOCC has delivered to Greek hospitals and free clinics in greater Athens, Thessaloniki and the islands of Crete and Chios.

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of the most vulnerable Greeks – the elderly, chronically ill patients, and the poor – are dependent upon for their well-being. IOCC continues to respond to Greece's deepening crisis with direct assistance and in support of Apostoli, the social service agency of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Athens.

Responding to the country's health care crisis is part of a larger, multifaceted relief effort by IOCC that includes supplying fresh food to protect the nutritional needs of poverty-stricken Greeks, and providing aid to institutions caring for people with disabilities, orphans, and the elderly.

From The Executive Director



THE JOY OF A CHILD'S SMILE

Summer was always a great time of year for me growing up in Texas. Sunny days meant Galveston Island, cutting grass, road trips to Clergy Laity conferences, picking blueberries on the hill and listening to the Red Sox games in the pool with my cousins in Massachusetts. Summer in many of the countries that we serve, like Syria and Greece, has changed for their children. They are faced with the real challenges of war, economic hardships and uncertainty.

IOCC is responding to the humanitarian needs of the world's most vulnerable, restoring a measure of comfort to displaced Syrian children and their families with urgently needed food and household items, and providing critical medical supplies to Greece's financially crippled hospitals to help protect the precious health of the country's young and old. For children in Bosnia where civil war more than a decade ago left many parents without jobs and a means to support their families, IOCC's microcredit program is helping fuel the country's entrepreneurial spirit and thousands of newly created jobs.

As you read this month's issue of *News & Needs*, please keep these children and their families in your prayers, and join IOCC in extending a helping hand to bring the light of childhood joys back into the eyes of vulnerable children around the world.

In Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou
Executive Director & CEO

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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ENTREPRENEURS FUEL ECONOMIC PROGRESS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



Dragan Isaretovic/IOCC

One of Slobodan's employees trims wood logs in preparation for export to Italy where they will be used to fuel pizza ovens. The equipment was acquired with a loan from IOCC's microcredit program, now in its 11th year of providing small business loans to Bosnian entrepreneurs.

Bosnian War survivor, Slobodan, 48, struggled for years to find enough work to feed his family. The construction company where he worked was completely destroyed during the war, and jobs were hard to come by in the post-war economy. Determined to support his wife and two sons, the former construction worker decided to start his own business and took out a small loan of \$1,500 to buy a carpentry machine. That was in 2005. Today, the entrepreneur employs ten workers and sells his wood products to restaurants and companies in four countries.

Slobodan's success is mirrored across Bosnia where more than 3,000 businesses have been launched with assistance from IOCC's microcredit program. Now

in its 11th year, the microcredit program has provided local entrepreneurs with \$14.3 million in small, short-term business loans averaging about \$1,700. The high repayment rate of 97% ensures that funds are readily available to assist future entrepreneurs achieve their dreams of self-sufficiency. The microcredit fueled businesses have generated an economic ripple effect across the region, creating more than 8,000 new jobs which in turn, help support 25,000 family members. For Slobodan, the success he's achieved through IOCC's assistance has been far more rewarding than he ever dreamed. "To be able to care for my family and provide a source of support for other families too brings me so much satisfaction and drives me to do well."



ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL
ORTHODOX BISHOPS
OF NORTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA

actalliance

HELPING FAMILIES FIND RESPITE FROM SYRIA'S TURMOIL

Nicolas, 3, has witnessed unspeakable violence and bloodshed in his short life. He and his family narrowly escaped with their lives when bombing in Al Qusayr destroyed their home and everything in it. Miraculously, their car remained untouched. They quickly drove away from their home and the only life they knew. On the harrowing journey across Syria to safety, the family encountered armed men, dead bodies and constant gunfire and explosions. "We were terrified," said Nicolas' father, Yosef. "We couldn't save anything from the house, even our identity cards. We had nothing to prove who we were. That alone would have been reason enough to get us all killed."

Nicolas, his parents and grandmother sought refuge inside Syria from IOCC relief partner, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East (GOPA). They were offered housing and IOCC, an ACT Alliance member, provided blankets, carpets and a stove to keep their small, bare apartment comfortable. Nicolas and his family are among the hundreds of thousands affected and internally displaced Syrians that IOCC has reached with emergency relief items, housing and educational assistance, and trauma counseling. Since 2012, IOCC has assisted more than 800,000 Syrian people displaced in their own country or living as refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Armenia.

Scan here for
more about IOCC's
Syria response



Rasha Kaba/IOCC

Nicolas, 3, clings tightly to his mother and never leaves her side. He's haunted by frightening images of the violence that forced the family to flee their home in the Homs region. IOCC helped them settle away from the fighting, but the parents worry about their young son's ability to feel safe again after everything he has witnessed in his young life.

NEW BOOKS KEEP LEARNING ALIVE FOR U.S. SCHOOLCHILDREN



Michael Prischman/IOCC

On the same day that the Chicago Public Schools announced the closure of 54 schools, IOCC responded with a donation of \$1 million in new books to benefit schoolchildren participating in the metro area after-school enrichment and summer

learning programs. His Grace Bishop Demetrios of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago facilitated the gift on behalf of Orthodox Christians in Chicago. The new books, which will also benefit local Orthodox Christian

Chicago Bulls forward Vladimir Radmanovic, who has supported similar educational initiatives for underprivileged children in the US and his native Serbia throughout his 12-year NBA career, also attended one of the ceremonies and spent time meeting with some of the children receiving new books.

day schools, were blessed at a special ceremony by His Eminence Archbishop NICOLAE of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America and Canada, His Grace Bishop LONGIN of the Serbian Orthodox Diocese of New Gracanica and Midwestern America, and His Grace Bishop PETER of Cleveland of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

The book distribution is part of a broader humanitarian effort by IOCC in the U.S. where, over the past three years, the organization has distributed \$30 million in educational support and emergency assistance to more than 20 states. IOCC plans to make the Chicago book distributions an annual event to meet the continuing educational needs of the community's children.

TRUE VICTORY: OF THE FLESH OR OF THE SPIRIT?

"Today, O Murat, you have won but I have also won."

(*St. Prince Lazarus of Serbia to the Turkish Murat after his worldly loss on the Battle of Kosovo, June 15, 1389*)



His Grace Bishop Longin of New Gracanica and Midwestern America, and His Grace Bishop Teodosije of Raška and Prizren, with children in Velika Hoca.

As worldly creatures, we think of victory as a material gain or defeat of a physical enemy, yet we often forget that victory for Christians is not always worldly but more often spiritual. In 1389, when the Serbian Prince Lazarus was defeated on the Battle of Kosovo by the Turkish Murat, he did not consider his defeat a loss, but rather understood it as a spiritual victory, having defended the Orthodox Christian Faith from the Moslem army of the Turks. He knew that the martyrdom of his Christ-fearing army would be a worldly loss, but a spiritual victory, as an addition to the heavenly

ranks of Saints. St. Lazarus understood that the rejection of Christ for his people in order to save their earthly kingdom would lead to an eternal spiritual defeat.

Everyday we are faced with choices. We must decide whether we want to witness Christ to the world around us, not fearing ridicule from mainstream thought, or if we want to submit ourselves to the temptations around us, forgetting our morals in order to fit in or please those around us who have either already rejected the Truth or do not yet know of it. We must not fear this suffering, we must only

fear the Lord: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (*Proverbs 1:7*), and true knowledge is to know the Lord God. We must prepare ourselves through prayer and good Christian habits on a daily basis so that we will truly become His. If we can do this, witnessing Christ to the world around us will be the fruits of our actions. Whether we are in school, at work or with friends, we must remember that our Faith and Church life are to be the center of our being, and that everything else must fit into it. Our Church life cannot only be a Sunday event, or even worse, an event that takes place once or twice a year.

Let us remember the sacrifice of the Great-martyr and Serbian Prince Lazarus and how his spiritual victory was the greatest of its kind. I beseech all of you to take this opportunity to pray for the suffering Serbian Orthodox people in Kosovo and Metohija who are suffering for their witnessing of the Orthodox Faith. May God help them and bless all of you.

His Grace Bishop LONGIN
New Gracanica and
Midwestern American Diocese
Serbian Orthodox Church



COMING SOON

The 11th edition of *My Prayer Journal*, a free publication created by IOCC for Orthodox children ages 7-12. Watch your mailbox for your free copy.
Learn more at iocc.org/prayerjournal

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Since 1992, IOCC has had a continuous presence in Kosovo supporting the work of the Serbian Orthodox Church to provide safe refuge for all people of Kosovo, as well as offering assistance in agriculture, education and small business development.