



INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES

# PRIEST *to* PRIEST

VOLUME 2, NO. 1 SPRING 2001

## *IOCC'S U.S. Program is Launched*

Robert Pianka, at one time IOCC's representative in Yugoslavia and Georgia, has returned as Director of our U.S. Program. He is the author of this issue's guest article.

Fr. Jim Kyriakakis, *Director of Development*

### "Responding to the Call at Home"

"The Orthodox still represent less than 2% of the American population. Divided into a dozen jurisdictions, they simply cannot survive the growing pressure of the American "melting pot". . . No "jurisdiction" by itself can meet the urgent needs of better education, Orthodox presence on university campuses, in the public communications media, in philanthropic work, etc."

SCOPA, 1965 report, *Ad Hoc Commission on Unity*

After 9 years of experience overseas, IOCC, the pan-Orthodox humanitarian aid organization founded by SCOPA, has launched its United States Program.

By applying expertise developed overseas, we will define a Domestic Agenda to better enable the Orthodox faithful of all jurisdictions to take common, direct and meaningful action against poverty and alienation in the United States. Success will be achieved only if IOCC's Metropolitan Committee volunteers and their fellow parishioners experience philanthropy that is more uplifting spiritually and more inspiring because it is more reflective of the Orthodox faith and, therefore, more effective.

Concerted effort will be made to complement and support the many initiatives and institutions already launched by our communities, to seek out financial support and partnerships from sources beyond our communities and to enhance the paradigm of "volunteerism" and stewardship at the parish level.

The type of projects planned draw on the philanthropic tradition of our Faith. Again, from SCOPA: "...a living link and continuity with all that in the past constituted the treasure of Orthodoxy must not only be preserved but made a common heritage - the root of a fuller church life here."

Our ancient traditions of philanthropy are anchored in the wisdom at the core of our Faith and in the transformation of our inner selves through the Eucharist. As such, these traditions can unite, inform, and guide us as one body in our modern lives.

Our tradition of *responding to the call of our Lord Jesus Christ to minister to those who are suffering* applies to modern projects:

- The ancient traditions of our Faith with regard to hospitality for strangers can be applied to assisting refugees and, indeed, to raising the level of assimilation, success, and security of our communities.

- Our Faith cradles the dying and our traditions apply beautifully to the modern efforts of Hospice, the widely available, faith-based program of care for the terminally ill and their families.

- Faith-driven volunteerism of Orthodox Christians in community-wide social action projects will reflect the ideals of the Church's philanthropic tradition, while enhancing Her image in the eyes of others.

Our tradition remains eminently practical. A guideline from the 1100's tells us that "to give to those who do not deserve it is to deprive those who merit it." Our tempered character disposes us towards undertaking myriad effective and precisely targeted local projects to *share God's gifts of food, shelter, economic self-sufficiency, and hope*. Let us come together in mutual support and let us use our network of IOCC Committees to respond quickly to the victims of natural disasters.

As related by Rev. Professor Demetrios Constantelos, in our tradition of philanthropy "charity was viewed as the *wings of prayer*. St. John Climacus wrote that the soul needs wings to fly to heights. . . (for) prayer fails in its goal when it is not accompanied by charity." A goal of IOCC's U.S. Program is to instill this message in the hearts of the average parishioners and to motivate them to engage beyond their "comfort zone."

The success of IOCC's U.S. Program will depend in great part on the clergy, who can use our philanthropic traditions to inform and spiritually animate the faithful. The Church sets a high standard for IOCC, its new U.S. Program, and its volunteers. Guided by our priests, we are called to help others in a way that enhances their dignity while sharing Christ's love with humility and gratitude.

In sum, we ask that our clergy in every Orthodox jurisdiction join us in a campaign to promote the message at the core of Orthodox Philanthropy, to guide and involve the faithful in a renewed Orthodox volunteerism. Help your international humanitarian aid agency apply the skills it has honed overseas to combat poverty and alienation in the United States through and in the name of our Faith.

## IOCC Part of Global Food Program

At a recent White House ceremony, former President Clinton announced the start of the "Global Food for Education" program that will provide nutritional meals to school children in underdeveloped countries world-wide. IOCC is one of 14 non-government agencies (NGO's) named along with the United Nations World Food Program to receive \$300 million in surplus U.S. farm commodities for a one-year program to provide school lunches or breakfasts to 9 million children in 38 countries.

IOCC plans to initiate program efforts in the near future in Georgia and Lebanon. A major objective of the program is to keep children in school by providing them with a nutritional meal. After the first year, continuation will require congressional approval.

A leading congressional advocate for action against hunger pointed out that "this is the first time we've ever had an initiative for food for children worldwide." Clinton was joined in making the announcement by former Senators Bob Dole and George McGovern, both strong advocates for children's nutrition initiatives. Mr. Clinton pointed out at the ceremony: "This initiative by itself is not a solution to the global hunger problem. But it's a down payment and a beginning. Now it's up to Congress, the United Nations, other developed countries, the non-government organizations represented here, and the next administration to continue this fight."

The selection of IOCC to participate in this ambitious program indicates recognition of our Church's humanitarian aid agency's professionalism and progress. IOCC has come a long way, but there is much more to be done. We share sentiments of pride with you and your parishioners, and we offer thanksgiving to the Lord for your continued support for our work.



Office Blessing — Bishop Dimitrios of Xanthos and priests of all Orthodox jurisdictions in Baltimore dedicated IOCC's new offices on January 12, 2001.

### "This and That"

- We will be happy to send you a supply of IOCC brochures, *News & Needs* newsletter, or copies of the IOCC video *New Beginnings*. Help us make IOCC a household word by getting these items to your parishioners. Just let us know — phone, email or letter.

- IOCC's meeting of Metropolitan Committees in Chicago last November drew representatives from 16 Committees. The consensus was to strive for an annual meeting at which ideas can be shared, information can be provided and national structure can be discussed. The effort continues to establish Metropolitan Committees in additional parts of the country.

- A press release was sent to all priests recently announcing an IOCC appeal to provide relief for El Salvador earthquake survivors. Please offer an appropriate opportunity to your parishioners to participate in this appeal for assistance through their Orthodox humanitarian aid organization. Collections should be forwarded to IOCC at P.O. Box 630225, Baltimore, MD 21263-0225.

"The soul needs wings to fly to heights, which are provided by *eleemosyne*." St. John Climacus

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