

Lenten 'Project Axios!' kicks off

A new partnership between IOCC and the Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) will enable college students in your parish to extend Christ's compassion to children throughout the world each Lenten season. *Project Axios!* is a national service project developed by IOCC for OCF chapters on American campuses.

Through *Project Axios!*, Orthodox college students will be able to support IOCC youth programs and learn more about the faith foundations of the ministry of IOCC. For *Project Axios!* to succeed, IOCC needs your support, whether as an adviser to an OCF chapter or as pastor to a college student involved with OCF. Your encouragement can make a meaningful difference.

A life of service to those in need is a life that is certainly well pleasing to God. Now, it is a life which *Project Axios!* will allow Orthodox college students to begin experiencing first hand. To learn more about this special initiative, please visit www.projectaxios.org.

Prayer journals still available

The second edition of the popular IOCC children's prayer journal is still available in limited quantities through the Department of Religious Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Just call 1-800-566-1088 to order yours. The book is free, but shipping charges may apply.

The 32-page book features some new countries where IOCC is working, plus Orthodox daily prayers, fun facts, and quotes from the Bible, the Church Fathers and the Divine Liturgy.

"At the Last Judgment ... I shall be asked, did I feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and the prisoners: that is all I shall be asked."
— Mother Maria of Paris

Upcoming events scheduled

The following events are being sponsored in the next few months by local Metropolitan Committees in support of IOCC's work. See details at www.iocc.org/events about these and other events.

- **SEATTLE, WA**
IOCC Presentation at Pan-Orthodox Vespers service, March 18, St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church
- **SYRACUSE, NY**
IOCC Presentation, March 20 (Sunday of Orthodoxy vespers), Hosted by St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church
- **COLUMBUS, OH**
Presentation at joint Presanctified Liturgy, April 6
- **GRAND RAPIDS, MI**
IOCC Metropolitan Committee of Grand Rapids Lenten Concert, April 17
- **LOUISVILLE, KY**
IOCC Luncheon, April 20, Hosted by St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church
- **ATLANTA, GA**
Fifth Annual 5K (3.2 miles) Run/Walk, May 7
- **WESTON, MA**
New England IOCC Metropolitan Committee Children's Fair, May 22, hosted by St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church
- **CHICAGO, IL**
IOCC Chicago Metropolitan Committee Grand Banquet, May 22



INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES

PRIEST to PRIEST

VOLUME 6, NO. 1 SPRING 2005

'And the waters subsided ...'

The story is told of St. Herman of Alaska that once, when a tsunami threatened the Aleut people of Spruce Island, he placed an icon of the Theotokos in the sand and prayed for the waters to stop. And they did, but not before striking terror into the hearts of the people and sending them to higher ground. Once again, we have witnessed the awesome force of nature in the destructive power of the South Asia tsunami.

Rather than address the question "Where was God?" I'd like to take a moment to reflect on the innumerable actions of compassion that have followed the tsunami. For the same God who answered St. Herman's prayer, whose Spirit hovered over the waters of Creation and Jesus' Baptism, who saved Noah from the flood, and who led his people through the sea, is at work today in the recovery and relief efforts taking place in the tsunami-affected countries.

IOCC has been actively responding to the tsunami disaster, and, in so doing, has extended the hand of God's love and mercy to people who have suffered so much. It's hard for us to even imagine the magnitude of their suffering — the lives taken, the children orphaned, the property destroyed, the livelihoods lost. The task of rebuilding and restoration seems overwhelming, unless taken one day at a time.

Right now, your support is enabling IOCC and its partners to focus on people's immediate needs — providing clean drinking water, food, medicine, shelter and the like. But there will come a time not too far down the road when the attention will shift to more long-term needs — employment, agricultural development, home and business reconstruction, the return of displaced people.

IOCC has been doing this kind of work in other parts of the world — the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus — for more than a decade. Now, in partnership with the Orthodox Metropolitanate of Hong Kong and South East Asia and other local bodies, IOCC puts its experience and resources at the service of the suffering people of South Asia.

The waters have subsided, but the work has just begun. As a member of the IOCC Board of Directors, I urge you, my brother priests, to continue supporting this God-pleasing work through your stewardship, your time and your prayers. They are needed now more than ever. Thank you.

Fr. Michael Elias
Fr. Michael Elias



IOCC bringing tsunami relief

Less than 24 hours after a tsunami devastated parts of South Asia on Dec. 26, 2004, IOCC responded with emergency plans and an appeal to raise \$100,000. That goal was reached within days, enabling IOCC to respond with airlifts of humanitarian supplies and other forms of assistance in India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

To date, IOCC and its partners have airlifted 43,000 soy rice meals and 20 tons of canned meat to the island of Sumatra; delivered medicine boxes with enough medicines and medical supplies for 1,000 adults and children for up to three months; provided shelter and sanitation kits to those hardest hit by the tsunami; and distributed blankets and emergency foodstuffs to people who have lost everything.

A team of IOCC humanitarian aid workers and Indonesian church officials is leading coordination efforts on the ground, while additional airlifts of medicine boxes are under way.

Parishes contributing health kits

This time of year, when Orthodox Christian families are having their houses blessed, they're also trying to be a blessing to others.

All across the country, Orthodox Christians young and old are assembling "Gift of the Heart" health kits for victims of the South Asia tsunami in response to an appeal by IOCC. From national Church organizations to the smallest parish, tens of thousands of kits are being packaged for shipment overseas.

"This outpouring of support from across the country will make a meaningful difference in the lives of thousands of tsunami survivors who are lacking in common necessities," said IOCC Executive Director Constantine M. Triantafilou.

To learn how your parish can participate in this initiative, please visit www.iocc.org/healthkits. To learn how to pack a "Gift of the Heart" school kit, which also are greatly needed, please visit www.iocc.org/schoolkits.

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INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES



A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION FOR ORTHODOX CLERGY

from the Church Relations Committee of the IOCC Board of Directors

Very Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky, Chairman, Very Rev. Michael Elias, Very Rev. Robert S. Kondratich, Rev. Nicholas C. Triantafilou

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IOCC PROGRAMS COUNTRY-BY-COUNTRY

A Q U I C K O V E R V I E W - M A R C H 2 0 0 5

THE FOLLOWING ARE SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS FROM AMONG IOCC'S PROJECTS. PLEASE POST IN YOUR PARISH

Bosnia-Herzegovina

The social service agency Zdravo da ste ("Hi Neighbor"), one of many Bosnian organizations supported by IOCC, is implementing an educational project to prevent drug addiction, alcoholism, smoking and risky behaviors among young people. It does so by instilling values based on work, ethics, responsibility, healthy lifestyles, tolerance and compassion. With IOCC's support, "Hi Neighbor" has established youth clubs — an ecological section, a drama group and a journalism section — to offer kids a positive learning environment and keep them off the streets.

Ethiopia

Tens of thousands of Ethiopians have attended "Save the People" rallies led by His Holiness Abune Paulos of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the past few months. The patriarchal rallies are part of an AIDS prevention initiative being led by the Church in partnership with IOCC. The rallies are a way to spread a faith-based message of AIDS awareness, compassion and nondiscrimination to greater numbers of Ethiopians. The \$6 million project also offers community-based care to AIDS orphans and vulnerable children, and palliative care to people living with HIV/AIDS.

Iraq

Because of the current economic situation in Iraq, 12 years of international sanctions and periods of war, many Iraqis lack basic computer skills and knowledge. As an integrated program of training, education and technical assistance, IOCC partnered with the Greek Orthodox Church in Baghdad to establish a computer center at the parish. Now the center is open to the public and provides access to the Internet and training three days a week. The center already is raising computer awareness among Muslim and Christian young people, creating educational and vocational opportunities for their future.

Republic of Georgia

The children of the Republic of Georgia received some special gifts during this Christmas holiday season, within the framework of IOCC's continuous program to strengthen education in Georgia. IOCC, in partnership with Church World Service, distributed 15,000 "Gift of the Heart" school kits to the most marginalized primary school students across the nation. Many of these kits were assembled by Orthodox Christians in the United States. To learn more about how your parish can assemble school kits for children in need, please visit www.iocc.org/schoolkits.

Romania

Eighty percent of Romanians living with HIV/AIDS are under the age of 17, and when they become adults, they face the grim prospect of a life of poverty and unemployment. Against this bleak picture, the Romanian Orthodox Church offers the prospect of hope and social change. With IOCC, the Church is working to develop and spread a faith-based message of AIDS prevention and nondiscrimination; empower young people with better awareness and methods of protection; update religious curricula to address HIV/AIDS; and train clergy and lay people to effectively assist people living with HIV/AIDS.

Southeast Asia

Less than 24 hours after a tsunami devastated parts of South Asia on Dec. 26, 2004, IOCC responded by participating in a series of humanitarian airlifts and sending a team of aid workers to lead coordination efforts on the ground. To date, IOCC and its partners have airlifted urgently-needed humanitarian supplies to the hardest hit parts of Indonesia, India and Sri Lanka. IOCC is coordinating its continuing response through His Eminence Metropolitan Nikitas of the Orthodox Metropolitanate of Hong Kong and Southeast Asia, Indonesian church officials, and other ecumenical partners.



United States of America

IOCC and Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) have teamed up to offer a unique opportunity for college students in your parish to extend Christ's compassion to children around the world each Lenten season. *Project Axios!*, a national service project developed by IOCC for OCF chapters around the country, will enable Orthodox college students to support IOCC youth programs and learn more about the faith foundations of the ministry of IOCC. To get involved in this special initiative, please visit www.projectaxios.org.