



# Prayer Journal

REACHING AROUND THE WORLD WITH CHRIST'S LOVE

And the King will answer ...  
“Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did  
it to one of the least of these my brethren,  
you did it to me.” –Mt 25:40



Above: Children in Lebanon play after an IOCC health workshop for their mothers. Cover (clockwise from top left): Enjoying healthy snacks in Gaza, a moment with friends for young refugees in Ethiopia, classes for refugee families in Greece, and hygiene education in Lebanon.

Please let IOCC know how you use this prayer journal.  
Scan the QR code to complete a very brief survey. Thank you!



## What Is IOCC?

International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) is the humanitarian and development agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America. Through IOCC, Orthodox Christians serve people around the world who need help. These people and families have survived natural or human-caused disasters, and some face extreme poverty or even war. IOCC helps them and helps the Orthodox Church to meet their needs.

Matthew 25:35-36, 40 is the inspiration behind IOCC. In this scripture, Christ asks His people to serve the people around us and show our love for Him by caring for others—even if we don’t know them and even if they aren’t like us (e.g., sick, in prison).

As Christians, we are called to love Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Lord and Savior. He explains in this parable that we can serve Him by serving others, by showing them kindness and compassion, and by making sure they have what they need to live in good health and dignity.

This booklet explores how you and IOCC, together, can help people who may not have the most basic items they need in life—our neighbors, whether they are down the street or around the world.



**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.**



## What's a Humanitarian?

The word *humanitarian* comes from the root *human*—because a humanitarian is someone who helps other human beings. *Philanthropist* is similar, from the Greek *phileo* (to love) and *anthropos* (person).

Both words connect to IOCC's work, because IOCC helps other human beings, showing God's love for people through our actions. Humanitarian work is serving other people, especially those who have experienced difficult or tragic things.

*Photo: One way IOCC helps people in need is by making sure communities can easily get safe, clean water.*

## Let's Pray Together

The Orthodox Church teaches that every single person carries the image of God. So no matter what kind of help someone needs (food, water, someone to listen, etc.), we offer it because God loves people, whom He made in His image, and because He asks us to help one another.

The stories in this booklet show a few ways we can help people around the world. As you read, please pray for the people in the stories and for those helping them by doing humanitarian work every day.

Each chapter ends with activities you can do with your family or Sunday School class (virtually or in person) to think a bit more about IOCC's inspiration scripture in Matthew 25 (see next page).

Thank you for your prayers—they connect us all in service to Christ.

# Inspired by Faith, Driven by Purpose

“I was thirsty and you gave me drink;  
I was a stranger and you took me in;  
I was naked and you clothed me;  
I was sick and you visited me;  
I was in prison and you came to me.”  
... And the King will answer and say to them,  
“Assuredly, I say to you,  
inasmuch as you did it to one of the least  
of these My brethren, you did it to me.”

— Matthew 25:35-36, 40



When people leave their home and country because it is too dangerous to stay, they sometimes become refugees. Many refugees go to cities, but some live in informal settlements like this one in Lebanon. Photo: Philipp Brey / DKH



## “I Was Hungry”

*“Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave me food.” (Mt 25:34-35a)*

What does Christ call us to do when it comes to helping the hungry? What in the past year may have affected how people in the world or in your community receive food? What can you do as an Orthodox Christian to help those in need and to offer healthy and sustainable food for the hungry?

One of IOCC’s goals is to help communities grow their own food. The COVID-19 crisis has made it even harder for many families to find reliable sources of food. But through the support of IOCC and the faith and resilience of people around the world, Orthodox Christians have been able to make a difference. Through education, planning, and action, we can work together to live the words of Christ: “For I was hungry and you gave me food.”

I’m praying for \_\_\_\_\_

I thank God for \_\_\_\_\_



# GREECE



*IOCC's long-running Give for Greece programming includes helping families in need access healthful, nourishing food, even during economic hardship.*

## When Families Don't Have Enough to Eat

In Greece, it's expensive to buy things, including food, and many people have lost their jobs. The pandemic has caused even more problems for Greece's economy. Many adults have lost their jobs, and some families can't afford to buy food.

To help, IOCC is helping hundreds of families in Greece with monthly dry-food parcels and prepaid grocery cards. This way, they have things like flour, rice, pasta, tomato sauce, beans, and evaporated milk. With the prepaid cards, families shop at local supermarkets for fresh fruit and veggies, milk and yogurt, chicken, and eggs. They can choose what they need when they need it and keep food on the table.

Together we're helping people get through a difficult time—and letting them know they're not alone.



# LEBANON



*Randa's family is one of hundreds of households in need who are receiving hot meals from IOCC's community kitchen following the August 2020 explosion in Beirut.*

## Hungry in an Emergency

Randa is a mother of two boys who lives in Beirut, Lebanon's capital city. She's always worked hard but lost her job during the COVID-19 pandemic. Determined to do her best, Randa started collecting and selling scrap metal in her neighborhood—but money is still scarce.

When a huge explosion destroyed parts of Beirut, Randa's house was damaged. She couldn't afford to fix it and didn't know what to do. Some neighbors helped with small repairs, but Randa didn't have enough money to buy groceries. This is where IOCC could help. After the explosion, IOCC opened a community kitchen to make and deliver hot meals to families in need across Beirut.\* Randa's family received hot meals from IOCC several times weekly. She thanked IOCC, saying: "If I don't receive this food, my family and I would go without any."

Even before the pandemic, Lebanon faced economic crisis and high unemployment and was hosting many refugees from Syria. With hot meals from IOCC, Randa's family—and hundreds like them—don't need to worry about this basic need.



*This family of three—mother Neli, father Paata, and son Davit—received a new IOCC greenhouse, plus agricultural training. They helped set up the greenhouse and now have space to grow more vegetables for their own meals and to sell at market.*

## Sunny Days

Living conditions in the nation of Georgia are difficult. Many Georgians live below the poverty line, and some get by on less than \$1.25 per day.

In 2017, IOCC began working with local farmers and the Georgian Orthodox Church to build sturdy economical greenhouses to help Georgians grow vegetables and sell them, earning better incomes. Now, IOCC is training local farmers and people who have been displaced by conflict. IOCC also provided solar-powered produce dryers to families and helped them learn to use them.

This way, many Georgians are learning how to grow food for their families in gardens and greenhouses. They're also learning to preserve food to use later by using the new solar dryers. They can eat the dried fruit and other products themselves or sell them to earn money. So the sun is helping families in Georgia grow food, earn more, and improve their quality of life.

## Activities

GRADES 3 - 5

1. An important thing to practice as we grow in our faith is *gratitude*. Some stories in Chapter 1 talk about people around the globe who show positivity and thankfulness even in tough situations. This is a valuable lesson for us, too.

With a friend or family member, write down on a piece of paper some of the tough situations you face in your daily life. Try to focus on three or four of them, and leave some space after you write down each one. Then, in a different color marker, write down something positive you can gain out of the tough situation.

Example: One tough situation I face is I struggle with my schoolwork.

***But I have teachers who want to help me improve and are willing to work with me!***

2. One theme in this chapter is the importance of supporting and connecting with others through food. Whether it's feeding families in need, creating sustainable food sources, or even providing long-term jobs through farming and agriculture, we can show our love for others by feeding those in need.

Learn how to make a simple recipe on your own. Make a batch of the recipe for your family or friends. You can also make a batch of the recipe and give it to people in need, either in your community or through your parish. Afterward, think about how it feels to feed someone else through your own hard work. You can write about how you feel in a journal, draw a picture, or talk about it with an adult, teacher, or your priest.

### Example: Recipe for Peanut Butter Power Balls

- 1/3 cup chunky peanut butter
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/3 cup nonfat dry milk powder
- 1/3 cup quick-cooking oats
- 2 tablespoons graham cracker crumbs

In a small bowl, combine the peanut butter, honey and vanilla. Stir in the milk powder, oats and graham cracker crumbs. Shape into 1-in. balls. Cover and refrigerate until serving.

## Activities

GRADES 6 - 8

1. One important lesson in this chapter is understanding how people around the world live their daily lives and the challenges others may face. It is helpful to compare parts of your own life to those of people in these stories.

Spend three days tracking how much money you spend (or your family spends) on yourself. Think about things like clothes, food, transportation, school costs, and even entertainment. Add up the total amount spent during this time and compare that to the \$1.25 a day referenced in the article about people in Georgia.

2. It's important for us as Christians to know about the needs of our neighbors and local community, as well as needs of people around the world. It's not just families in other countries suffering from hunger; people in our own towns and cities also need help.

Use this activity as a way to learn about needs in your community. Ask a family member, teacher, or priest about groups in your area that help feed the hungry, or search the internet for local nonprofits and food banks. Once you find one, contact the organization by email. Draft the email first and have an adult send an inquiry to the group. Include the following questions:

- a. How are people in my city/community impacted by hunger?
- b. What's the best way to help?
- c. How can people my age get involved?
- d. What could my family, class, or parish do to make a difference?

Share what you find with your family, class, or parish by talking with them, setting up a meeting, or sending an email or letter.



## “I Was Thirsty”

*“I was thirsty and you gave me drink.” (Mt 25:35b)*

How do you get your water? How much time do you spend worrying about where to find safe water to drink? How is your ability to get safe water different from people in Jesus's time? Do you think people living in other parts of the world today worry more or less than you do about having enough to drink?

For many people in the world, finding water is a big worry and part of their everyday lives. While humans can go for longer without food, without water a person can usually go just three days. Many people in the world today don't have safe or nearby water sources. In addition, clean water has become even more vital since the COVID-19 pandemic began, because handwashing is an important way to prevent illness and stay healthy. IOCC is serving communities in need by helping people find safe water to use for drinking, cooking, cleaning, and growing crops—as well as for protecting their health.

I'm praying for \_\_\_\_\_

I thank God for \_\_\_\_\_



*This kindergarten in Gaza received new water-storage tanks to keep water clean and easy for students and teachers to use.*



*Lebanese grandmother Naifeh enjoys a glass of fresh water after IOCC upgraded the water network in her village.*

## Water in the Desert

In Gaza, the climate is very hot and dry, and electricity and running water do not always work properly. This means that families often don't have the water they need to cook or wash. Sometimes water must be delivered on trucks and then kept until it's needed. Many homes and schools have water tanks to store and protect their water.

IOCC works with kindergartens in Gaza to help make sure their young students stay healthy. School can be a place where children learn not only to read and write but also to take care of their health. It's important for schools to have safe water, so IOCC installed and repaired water-storage tanks. Several kindergartens also received new sinks, restrooms, or kitchens, depending on what they needed. All these items help children, their teachers, and their families stay healthy.

Small changes like having a reliable source of clean water can make a big difference to a person's health. Especially with the risk of COVID-19, having enough safe water to wash hands often and well is vital for students and teachers to stay healthy. That's why doing things like installing water tanks is one of the ways that IOCC helps people in need.

## Water is Life

Naifeh, a 90-year-old Lebanese grandmother, remembers decades without safe water in her North Lebanon village. "This problem went on for so long," she said. "40 years—but thank God we don't suffer from it anymore." In dry places where water is scarce, building a new system can get water to more people. That's what happened for Naifeh's village.

Both Lebanese and refugee families needed water for their homes, but there wasn't enough. So IOCC helped expand the water system.\* This meant drilling into the earth to reach the water still underground, and then installing a pump to move water to the surface. IOCC also installed solar panels to run the pump. "Now, safe water is available whenever we need it," said Naifeh. She added, "And I like it a lot."

Naifeh's village was one of several in Lebanon where IOCC expanded water systems. In addition, IOCC field officers educate thousands of children and adults every month about the importance of proper handwashing, how to safely clean and prepare food, and the role of hygiene in preventing illness, including COVID-19. In these ways, IOCC is equipping communities, families, and individuals for better health and brighter futures.





This spring in Ethiopia is now covered so the water will stay clean, and people can use the faucet to fill their containers.

## Safe Water = Better Health

Many people around the world must find their water outside and carry it home. This is a problem if the water available is polluted or also used by animals—then it's unsafe for drinking or cooking unless it's boiled or purified another way.

In rural Ethiopia, IOCC and the Orthodox Church are helping communities keep their water safe and use it in healthy ways. One program covered a natural spring to help keep it clean and keep animals out of it. People now get fresh water through a faucet. The same program also built a reservoir, stations for handwashing and others for filling containers, and two cattle troughs. Separate water stations for animals and people helps keep everyone safe and protects the cows from disease. This is important because most people in this area raise cows for food and income.

Finally, people living nearby organized committees to manage the new system and take care of it. This work is helping people stay healthy and continue earning a living—not just now, but for years to come.

## Activities

GRADES 3 - 5

### 1. Try to use naturally collected water to support life

After you read the stories in this chapter, consider how important water is, not just for our own needs, but to grow food for our families and neighbors. In this activity, you will start and care for a plant using only water you collect from outside.

First, find a way to collect water from outside. It could be by placing a small cup for water outdoors before a rainstorm, finding a rain barrel at a community or family garden, or collecting it from a clean puddle. Once you have a water source, put a seed in a paper cup with soil. Try to get the seed to sprout by watering it regularly with water you collect this way. A seed does not need too much water at once—just enough to keep the soil damp—but it will need to be watered about every one or two days. Also be sure to place it in a sunny spot. As you try to get the seed to grow, think about what a precious resource water is, especially for people who don't have easy access. If your seed sprouts, put it in the ground, and keep caring for it!

### 2. Blessing Ourselves with Holy Water

Work with a teacher or family member to get a container of Holy Water. You may already have some in your house or classroom, or you can contact your parish and ask for some. Bring the Holy Water into your home or classroom, and bless yourself with the water by drinking it after you read this prayer:

*Incline your ear and hear us, Lord, as you accepted to be baptized in the Jordan and sanctify the waters, and bless us all, who signify our calling as servants by the bending of our necks. And count us worthy to be filled with your sanctification through the partaking and sprinkling of this water. And let it be for us, Lord, for healing of soul and body. For you are the sanctification and health of our souls and bodies, and to you we give glory, thanksgiving, and worship, with your Father who is without beginning, and your All-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, now and forever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.*

Afterward, talk with your family, classmates, or teacher about what this prayer means and how it helps us connect with God through the use of Holy Water.

# Activities

GRADES 6 - 9

## 1. Help coordinate a blessing of your home, room, or classroom

The practice of blessing ourselves and our life with Holy Water is an important tradition in the Orthodox faith. Holy Water plays a critical role in the holy sacrament of baptism and the Feast of Theophany within the Church, and we use it in our personal lives to bless our homes, ourselves, and even important objects.

Work with your religious education class, youth ministry group, or your family to talk to your parish priest about scheduling a blessing. It can be a blessing of your house, classroom, icons, or even a family vehicle before a long journey. With an adult's help, organize a time for the blessing, and ask the priest if you can assist by reading or chanting some of the prayers or holding the vessel for the Holy Water. During the blessing, pay attention to the prayers and think about the important role of Holy Water in our faith. Afterward, share what you learned and how you can take an active role in this tradition, especially as you grow into an adult.

## 2. Track how much water you use in a three-day cycle

One of the activities in the last chapter was to track how much money you or your family spends, to be more mindful of the resources we use each day. In this activity, track your water usage in a similar way.

Keep a log of how much water you use or your family uses in a day. Remember, many people around the world don't have safe water readily available at home. As you track this, think about ways you or your family could use water with less waste. You can also extend this activity by taking water to people who may be in need in your own community: donate cases of water to a local shelter or connect with service groups that may know of ways to help.



# “I Was a Stranger”

*“I was a stranger and you took Me in.” (Mt 25:35c)*

What does it mean to feel like an outsider? What sort of events can leave people without a home or job or place to stay? What should we do as followers of Christ when we see someone who needs protection from people or events?

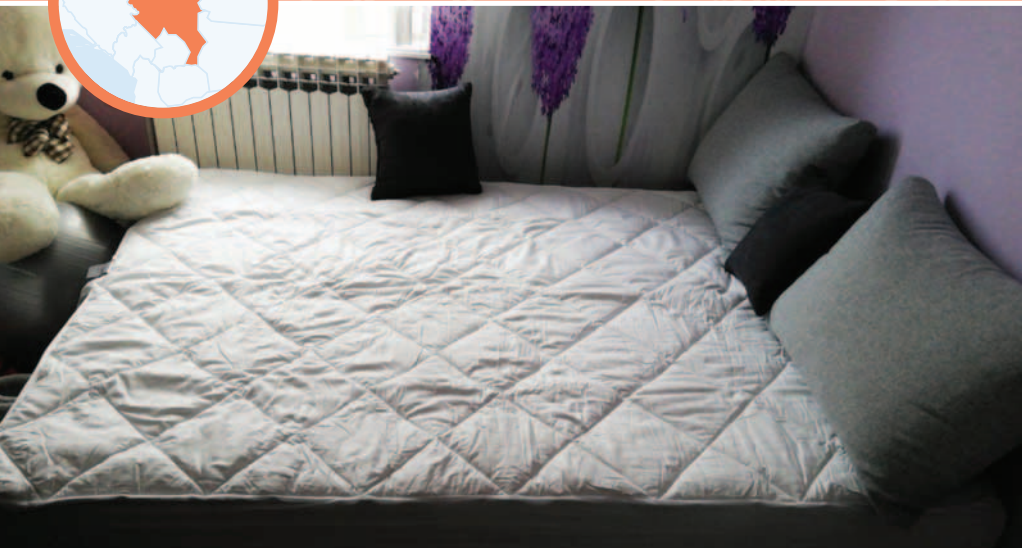
Whether it is from big events like natural disaster or war, or from things happening at home like violence or trouble finding a job, every day many people are left without a safe or loving place to live. IOCC answers the call to help in many ways—for example, helping rebuild schools or repair homes for those in need. Both in the United States and across the globe, there are many opportunities to find people who feel like strangers, take them in, and care for them like family.

I'm praying for \_\_\_\_\_

I thank God for \_\_\_\_\_



# SERBIA



New pillows, blankets, mattress pads, and comforters will help Serbian families in need stay cozy in their homes this winter. Photo: Red Cross of Belgrade.

## Simple Comforts

“I just received the package,” wrote a mother in Serbia after her family received warm new bedding through an IOCC donation. Sharing items like this is one way IOCC serves people in need.

This time, IOCC delivered pillows, comforters, blankets, mattress pads, and bed linens—enough to fill a 40-foot shipping container—to Serbia, where the Red Cross of Serbia made sure they went to people who needed them: families under economic strain, hospitals, and centers for migrants in Central and Western Serbia. These items help ensure that during winter—especially during the pandemic—these families would stay cozy and warm in their homes.

“Thank you very much. I am surprised and in shock,” continued the mother’s message. “This must have cost an arm and a leg. Thank you to the moon and back. The children are very happy ... I don’t know what we did to deserve this, but your team deserves all our appreciation for showing unlimited kindness and respect.”



# UNITED STATES

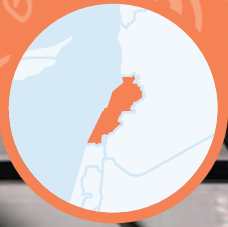


IOCC helped clean up after a windstorm damaged homes and farms in Iowa.

## After the Storm

“They were a Godsend to us,” said Eleonora, 68, of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, after an IOCC-led team cleared six fallen trees from her yard. “They did a beautiful job ... I cannot believe what they were able to do.” When derecho windstorms—straight winds as strong as a hurricane—crossed the US Midwest, they damaged many homes and farms. In Cedar Rapids, Iowa, roofs blew off homes, while fallen trees blocked roads and tangled in power lines. Eleonora and her husband, Randall, sheltered in their basement during the storm, praying.

After first responders and emergency managers ensured the area was safe, IOCC organized a cleanup response in Cedar Rapids. First steps can be overwhelming after a disaster, so IOCC helps people like Eleonora and Randall get started. Eleonora told staff, “I cannot thank you guys [enough]. That’s a wonderful organization ... Keep doing the good work.” IOCC’s team spearheaded cleanup, and local Antiochian and Greek Orthodox parishes partnered in the response. Working alongside IOCC’s trained team leaders were volunteers from AmeriCorps and NECHAMA Jewish Response to Disaster. Together we helped Eleonora and Randall, and other families like them, begin moving forward again.



## LEBANON



Repairs through an IOCC program have restored this small shop in Beirut, and business owner Nathalie (not pictured) is ready to get back to work.

### Helping Beirut Rebuild

Gyro Neon has been a family-owned business near Beirut’s port since the 1950s. Gerard was a well-known neon-lighting specialist; now his daughter Nathalie runs the shop. Things were already tough because of the pandemic and Lebanon’s deep economic crisis. Then, when a huge explosion shook the city in August 2020, the Gyro Neon workshop completely collapsed, and Nathalie was forced to close her shop.

IOCC assessed and repaired this small business.\* Repairs included rebuilding the workshop’s walls, installing a new steel roller door and windows and repairing electricity and lighting fixtures.

“IOCC extended a helping hand to us and was so kind to help us when we were hopeless,” said Nathalie. “Now, the store is back to what it looked like before.” In its emergency response to the Beirut explosion, IOCC has repaired hundreds of buildings, including homes, small businesses, schools, health clinics, and a hospital, helping the people of Lebanon’s capital rebuild their lives and communities.

\*Program supported by IOCC partner DKH Germany



## GREECE



Frontistirio graduates Anastasia and Eleni, pictured here at Frontistirio before the pandemic moved all courses online. Photo: IOCC/Konstantinos Tsakalidis.

### Welcoming Students to a Better Education

In Greece, students need to take extra lessons to pass their university entrance exams, get accepted to college, and continue their education. Extra tutoring is the only way to go on to college after finishing high school. But those lessons cost money, so families who can’t afford them miss out.

That’s why IOCC is helping the Archdiocese of Athens offer tutoring for talented students who otherwise couldn’t afford it. With high-quality courses offered free of charge, this program is helping hardworking students continue their education—and have a chance for better jobs in the future.

The pandemic made things challenging last year, but with support from IOCC and Church partner Apostoli, all lessons moved online, helping students meet their goal of passing their exams and moving on to university studies. With a little help from IOCC, this program’s graduates are shaping brighter futures for themselves.

## Activities

GRADES 3 - 5

### 1. Plan and make a connection with someone. Share what it was like when you were a stranger.

One of the big ideas in this chapter and our reading from the Gospel of Matthew is helping people we may not know. When Jesus says, “I was a stranger and you took Me in,” we remember we should work hard to care for those around us, get to know them, and help however we can.

Think about someone in your daily life you want to get to know better—maybe a classmate, a neighbor, someone at Church, a teammate, or someone who does the same activities as you after school. With a teacher or parent’s help, make a plan to get to know that person better. You could eat lunch with them at school, invite them over for a meal, or talk to them after church or practice. After you spend some time with this person, talk to your classmates or family about how you felt. How did your feelings change toward someone who used to be a stranger once you got to know them better?

### 2. Donate bedding to a homeless shelter

Often when we think of donating to a local shelter or group, we focus on providing clothes or food. However, a common need for local homeless shelters is bedding, because many of these groups help people in need by giving them safe and warm places to sleep.

Talk with your teacher, priest, or parents, and get help contacting a local shelter. You can look on the internet, ask people who work with nonprofits, or even call the local nonemergency line for police. See if the shelter accepts new or used blankets, pillows, linens, or towels. If they do, drop off some donations to help provide people in your town a safe, warm place to sleep—just like IOCC does by offering blankets and bedding to people in emergencies or rebuilding homes after natural disasters. If you want to take this activity even further, work with your class to sponsor a bedding drive in your parish or community, especially in colder months.

## Activities

GRADES 6 - 9

### 1. Take on a Safe and Easy-to-Accomplish Repair Job

In this chapter, some stories focus on helping build and repair people’s homes after a disaster.

For this activity, learn how it feels to help someone care for their home by taking on a safe and easy-to-do repair job. You can focus on your own home, a family member’s, a neighbor’s, or maybe even someone from your parish who needs help. Have your parent or teacher help you choose an easy repair job. It could be jobs like fixing a fence, repainting a wall, cleaning windows, or fixing squeaky hinges. Work with an adult to make sure you are safe and have the right tools. When you are finished, talk to your class or family about how it felt to help someone by making their home better. Consider how IOCC takes this type of work on a worldwide level, and how you could get involved in building or repairing homes for people as you get older.

### 2. The Life of a Refugee

One group of people who are often viewed as *strangers* or *outsiders* is refugees, both in our home country and across the world. IOCC has many ministries and programs helping refugee communities and people who’ve lost their home because of conflict. For this activity, take some time to learn about a refugee’s perspective.

With your family or classmates, first talk about what you know about the term *refugee*. What people experience refugee status today? Why do they leave their homelands? Then, learn more by searching the internet (be sure to check [IOCC.org/blog](http://IOCC.org/blog) for plenty of stories and resources), reading the news, or even talking to people who have been refugees in your community. Your parish priest may even know some who would talk to your class. After you learn more, discuss with your class or family:

- 1) How might it feel to be a refugee in today’s world?
- 2) If you were a refugee, what sort of help would you want for you or your family?
- 3) What can we do as Christians to help refugees?



One way IOCC helps people is with emergency relief. After the Beirut explosion, IOCC staff visited neighborhoods to find people who needed help and to get them medical care, food, and other kinds of assistance. This team is delivering hot meals to families who survived the explosion.



## “I Was Sick”

*“I was sick and you visited Me.” (Mt 25:36b)*

What does it feel like to have a friend or family member who is sick? What does it feel like to be sick yourself? How do we help ourselves and others stay healthy so we can enjoy God’s blessings together?

Taking care of those who are sick and caring for our own body and mind are an important part of our job as Christians. This chapter gives examples of ways IOCC helps the sick, including new ways to help during the COVID-19 pandemic. When we pray for and meet other people, we can make their health a priority, just as we would make our own.

I’m praying for \_\_\_\_\_

I thank God for \_\_\_\_\_



## JORDAN



*With her own low-vision reader provided through an IOCC project, Sedra can keep up with her classmates as remote learning continues in the pandemic context.*

### Low Vision, High Hopes

“Just like other girls my age, I seek to make my dream come true ... but unfortunately I faced an obstacle.” Sedra, age 16, is a Jordanian girl with low vision: her eyes need more light than most eyes. She doesn’t leave home without a cane and special glasses with a filter, and she needs an electronic low-vision device to read. Sedra’s school had one low-vision reader that she could use at school, but she couldn’t take it home. When schools closed during COVID-19 and classes moved online, Sedra couldn’t use this crucial tool anymore, and her family couldn’t afford to buy her one of her own. So Sedra’s mother began searching for help so her daughter could do what she loves most: read.

Through an IOCC project,\* clinic staff from IOCC’s partner the Institute for Family Health visited Sedra’s home to check her needs. Sedra received a diagnosis—and her own low-vision device. The reader helps Sedra study and do schoolwork at home, like her classmates do. This was especially important during the public health crisis for remote learning. “I can pursue my dreams again,” Sedra said. “I can communicate with my friends ... Now I can achieve my goals and complete my studies without any help. My life changed for the better, and that’s what matters.”

\*Supported by the US State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration



## ROMANIA



*Trainees learn about counseling people facing addiction in Church partner Federatia Filantropia’s new course for health and social work professionals.*

### Fighting Addiction Together

With support from IOCC, Romanian Church partner Federatia Filantropia has offered vocational training for adults, with a specialization in addiction counseling.

Through the course, professionals including psychologists, social workers, and medical staff learned administrative, interpersonal, and professional skills for working in the field of addiction treatment, and earn a recognized certification. The course equipped them to better communicate with clients, document and protect their clients’ information, educate young people and adults about addiction, and counsel those affected by addiction, whether directly or indirectly. This means they’ll be better able to help people who are dealing with addiction, as well as their family and friends.

IOCC support helped Federatia Filantropia develop this course and secure accreditation. Federatia Filantropia, in turn, makes the course available to its member organizations and partners across the country, creating a ripple effect. The program especially aims to prevent and treat digital addictions among children and young people in Romania—helping secure a healthier future.



# KENYA



# UGANDA



Medical supplies received at Providence Children's Home in Kenya, as part of IOCC's gifts-in-kind program. (Photo courtesy of Providence Children's Home.)

## Supplies to Stay Healthy

Shipping large quantities of medical supplies to places where they're needed is an important way that IOCC helps people in need. Donating things this way is called "gifts-in-kind," and the medical items IOCC shares help partners and other service organizations overseas take care of patients.

One shipment of pharmaceuticals sent things like antibiotics, malaria treatment, and multivitamins to Kenya, where they were received by IOCC's local partner, Providence Children's Home. The home, which cares for 400 orphaned children and runs a free clinic serving its residents and the local community, will put these supplies to good use. In addition, another part of the shipment went to clinics run by the Orthodox Church in Kenya.

Basics like these are more important than ever now, with health a huge concern for so many people. IOCC is grateful to support the efforts of our partners to serve those in greatest need.



IOCC helped equip Orthodox parishes in Uganda with handwashing equipment, masks, educational material, training for clergy, and more so they could resume services during the pandemic.

## Helping Parishes Reopen

Partnering with the Uganda Orthodox Medical Bureau, and with the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Jonah of Kampala and All Uganda, IOCC helped Orthodox parishes there get the equipment and training needed to safely operate during the pandemic.

When Ugandan authorities allowed houses of worship to resume services, parishes needed handwashing stations, educational materials, and training for clergy in infection prevention. Many Ugandan parishes couldn't meet these requirements on their own because of cost.

So an IOCC program supplied most of Uganda's Orthodox parishes with supplies and information about preventing COVID-19. It also taught religious leaders and parishioners how to curb the virus's spread and provided handwashing stands, soap and sanitizer, masks, and WHO messaging materials to parishes. With new equipment and safety measures in place, parishes could safely welcome their people back for worship.



## Activities

GRADES 3 - 5

### 1. Reflect on COVID-19

Like most of the world, IOCC had to adjust its work to help people in new ways during the COVID-19 pandemic. As someone who has lived through a global pandemic, take some time to think about how it changed your life and what you learned during that time.

As a class or a family, sit in a circle. Go around the circle and finish this statement: *“My life during COVID-19 was....”* Let everyone have a chance to share, and be sure to practice active listening by not interrupting. Look at the speaker, and pay attention as they talk. Then repeat the same process with the following statements:

*“Something I learned about myself during COVID-19 was....”*

*“Something I learned about others during COVID-19 was....”*

After everyone shares, think or talk about how you can use the experience of living through this crisis to better understand and help sick people in the future.

### 2. Video Message for the Parish

One way to help those who are sick is to share prayers and messages of support with them. Talk to your parish priest or teacher about people in your community who are sick or unable to leave their homes. In your class or at home, and with teacher supervision, use a computer or phone to film a few short videos sharing “get well soon” messages. At the end read, or sing the Trisagion Hymn:

*Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.*

When your priest visits these people, ask if he will show the video to the sick so they know you are praying for them and care about them.

## Activities

GRADES 6 - 9

### 1. How Did COVID-19 Impact Different Nations?

Having lived through the COVID-19 pandemic, you know how the new disease affected your life, but do you know about the experiences of people living in other countries?

In small groups, or by yourself, research the impact of COVID-19 on countries of different sizes and wealth. A great place to start is the World Health Organization website or the IOCC blog ([IOCC.org/blog](http://IOCC.org/blog)). Talk as a class or as a family about how your experience may have been different if you lived in another country.

### 2. Coping with Stress

Just as it is important to keep a healthy body, it is also important to keep a healthy mind.

For this activity, fold a piece of paper in half. On the left-hand side, write down things that make you feel pressured or stressed out. On the right-hand side, write down the ways you usually deal with the stress. Once you’re finished, look at your right-hand column and CIRCLE any ways to deal with stress that are helpful in the long run. UNDERLINE any that are harmful in the long run. Afterward, share your helpful strategies with your family or class, and if anyone mentions a helpful way to deal with stress that you like, add it to your list. Finally, talk about how a relationship with God and the Church can help us stay healthy in both mind and body, and can help us feel more at peace.



## The Jesus Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,  
have mercy on me, a sinner.



## Daily Prayers

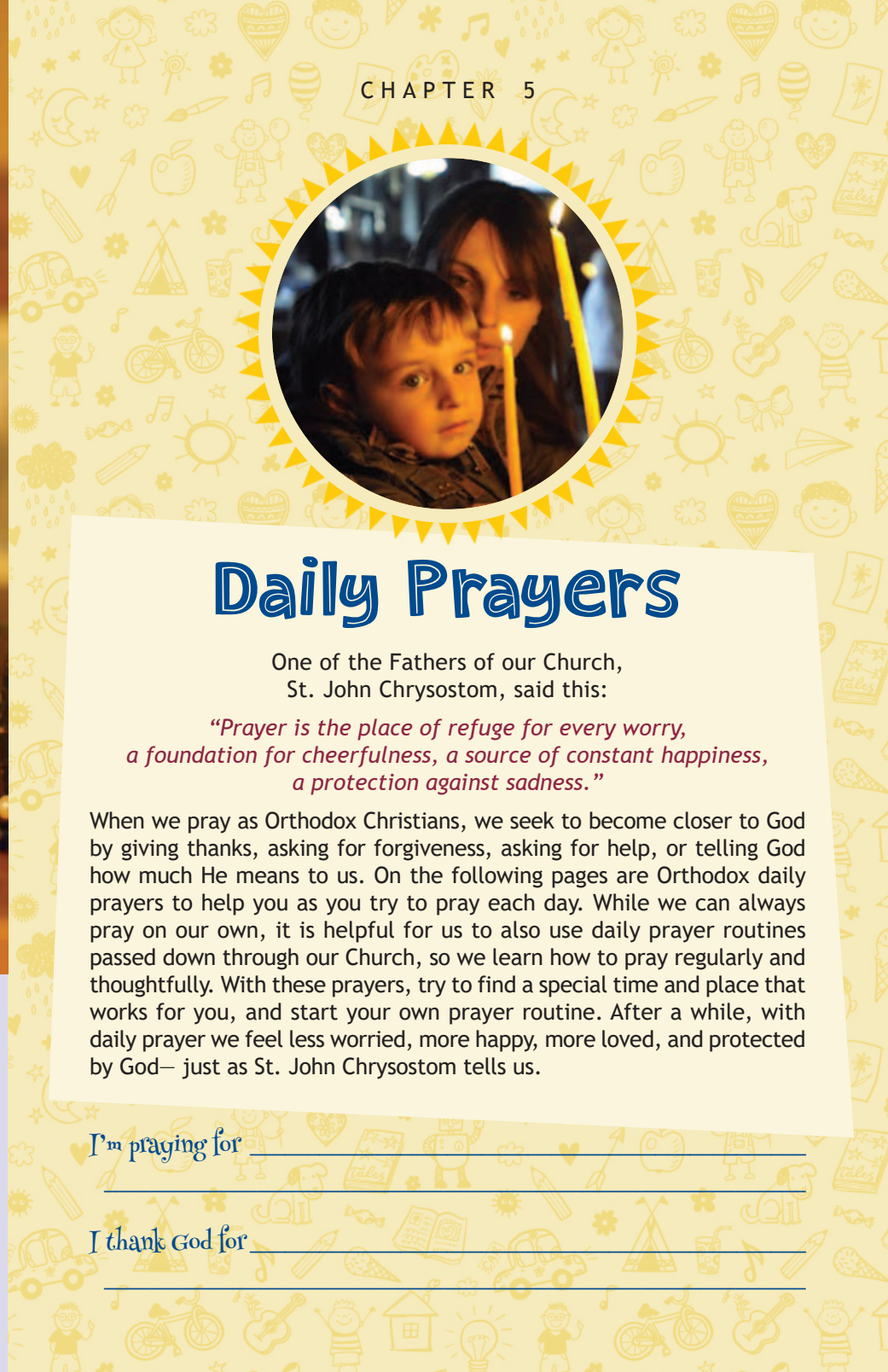
One of the Fathers of our Church,  
St. John Chrysostom, said this:

*“Prayer is the place of refuge for every worry,  
a foundation for cheerfulness, a source of constant happiness,  
a protection against sadness.”*

When we pray as Orthodox Christians, we seek to become closer to God by giving thanks, asking for forgiveness, asking for help, or telling God how much He means to us. On the following pages are Orthodox daily prayers to help you as you try to pray each day. While we can always pray on our own, it is helpful for us to also use daily prayer routines passed down through our Church, so we learn how to pray regularly and thoughtfully. With these prayers, try to find a special time and place that works for you, and start your own prayer routine. After a while, with daily prayer we feel less worried, more happy, more loved, and protected by God— just as St. John Chrysostom tells us.

I'm praying for \_\_\_\_\_

I thank God for \_\_\_\_\_





*IOCC helps small businesses thrive amid economic uncertainty in Greece. Photo: Glykaki*



*In Ethiopia, this man received treatment for podoconiosis from an IOCC-supported clinic, where he also learned to manage the illness himself.*

#### PRAYER BEFORE MEALS

Christ our God, bless the food, drink,  
and fellowship of Your servants,  
for You are holy always, now and ever  
and unto ages of ages. Amen.

#### PRAYER AFTER MEALS

We give thanks to You, Christ our God, that  
You have satisfied us with Your earthly blessings;  
deprive us not also of Your Heavenly Kingdom.  
As You came to Your disciples and granted  
them peace, so come to us and save us, Savior.

#### HYMN TO THE THEOTOKOS

It is truly meet to bless you, Theotokos,  
ever-blessed and most pure, and the Mother  
of our God. More honorable than the Cherubim,  
and more glorious beyond compare than the  
Seraphim, without corruption you gave birth to  
God the Word. True Theotokos, we magnify you!

#### LENTEN PRAYER OF ST. EPHREM

Lord and Master of my life, take from me the  
spirit of sloth, despair, lust for power, and idle talk.  
But give rather the spirit of chasity,  
humility, patience, and love to your servant.  
Yes, Lord and King, grant me to see my own  
transgressions, and not to judge my brother,  
for You are blessed, unto ages of ages. Amen.



*When children have enough to eat, they can concentrate on learning. IOCC's school-snack program offers healthful food to over 16,000 students each month in more than 35 Lebanese public schools.*



*IOCC has provided devices such as hearing aids, glasses, low-vision readers, and wheelchairs to children, including this boy in Jordan, shown receiving an ear exam. Photo: Christian Jepsen*

### PRAYER OF THE HOURS

You Who at every season and every hour, in Heaven and on earth are worshipped and glorified, Christ God, Who are long-suffering, merciful, and compassionate; Who loves the just and shows mercy upon the sinner; Who calls all to salvation through the promise of blessings to come— Lord, in this hour receive our supplications, and direct our lives according to Your commandments.

Sanctify our souls. Purify our bodies. Correct our minds; cleanse our thoughts; and deliver us from all tribulations, evil, and distress. Surround us with Your holy angels that, guided and guarded by them, we may attain to the unity of the faith, and unto the knowledge of Your unapproachable glory. For You are blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

### PRAYER FOR THE SICK

Christ, Who alone are our Defender: Visit and heal Your suffering servant [Name], delivering him/her from sickness and grievous pains. Raise him/her up that he/she may sing to You and praise You without ceasing, through the prayers of the Theotokos, You Who alone loves mankind.

### PRAYER FOR THOSE IN NEED

Christ, Who alone are our Defender: Be mindful, Lord, of the young and the old; orphans and widows; the sick and the suffering, the sorrowing and the afflicted, all captives, and the needy poor; upon them all send forth Your mercies, for You are the Giver of all good things.



The icon of Matthew 25:35 was generously donated to IOCC by an anonymous iconographer.



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