

Loving God by Loving Others continued from front cover

Our Orthodox faithful see the suffering of our world. They want to help; they need to help! They understand that most of us are blessed living here. We have what we need and what we want. As their spiritual fathers and priests, we must lead them. The answer is IOCC. My parishioners in Oakland—and many of the Orthodox parishes in the Bay Area cooperatively—have responded with financial support, health kits, school kits, and by praying for IOCC's ministry for over 25 years. St. John Chrysostom explains: "The rich man is not one who is in possession of much, but one who gives much." May we be rich in our giving.

As your humble brother and unworthy priest, I encourage you to offer your leadership and voice to support the sacred ministry of our Lord to the needy and suffering of the world through IOCC.

Fr. Thomas Zaferes, Protopresbyter, Ascension Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Oakland, CA



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*If you wish to
contribute a reflection
to the next issue of
Priest to Priest,
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PRIEST *to* PRIEST

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Loving God by Loving Others

A Reflection by Fr. Thomas Zaferes, Protopresbyter

And this commandment we have from Him, that he who loves God should love his brother also.

— 1 John 4:21

Dear brothers in the Lord: Christ is in our midst!

As pastors and parish priests, we are called to be servant leaders of our communities. This leadership is rooted in our love for God and others, and requires that we guide our beloved parishioners in how to serve Christ by serving our neighbor. IOCC's mission states: "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." IOCC is a pan-Orthodox expression of love for our brothers and sisters in need throughout the world. The vision of IOCC tells us that "IOCC will respond, without discrimination, to those who are suffering and in need, to enable them to continue to improve their own lives and communities and to have means to live with dignity, respect, and hope." This mission and vision will continue if we are willing to lead.

Here in the Bay Area, we have a huge challenge with homelessness. We can argue as to why, but it does not change the basic fact. You drive along the freeways and side streets, and people are living in RVs, cars, tents, poorly assembled shacks, camped in underpasses. We see human beings created in God's image and likeness suffering, and we are moved to respond, reach out, and be the hands of Christ.

Through the leadership of clergy, laypeople, and the youth of Ascension Cathedral, and inspired by efforts like IOCC, we have a food ministry serving homeless people several Sundays a month and a special meal on Thanksgiving. We've incarnated the love of Christ by fulfilling His call in Matthew 25 to feed, clothe, and minister to "the least of these my brethren." Many of our Orthodox churches throughout North America are doing the same. And we can do even more because of IOCC.

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UKRAINE

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Hope and Help in Time of Tremendous Need

With strong partner relations and long experience across Eastern Europe, IOCC is now addressing immediate and long-term needs in and around Ukraine. Work is ongoing in Poland and Romania to assist refugees and those serving them. Programs are reaching people in need inside Ukraine with food, hygiene supplies, and other basics.

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