

Small Offerings and Divine Multiplication *continued from front cover*

The fruit of our partnership with IOCC calls me to remember that the size of the offering is not the issue. Even as Christ fed thousands with a few loaves and fish, He can bless the world through the faithful witness of even tiny communities in places where most people have never even heard of the Orthodox Church. In Abilene, many people have now heard of the Church precisely because of IOCC. We plan to make the Easter bake sale a regular part of our Lenten offering to the Lord who identifies Himself with the suffering people to whom IOCC ministers around the world.

Fr. Philip LeMasters

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*If you wish to
contribute a
reflection to the
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PRIEST *to* PRIEST

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Small Offerings and Divine Multiplication

A Reflection by Fr. Philip LeMasters

As a priest employed full time outside of my small parish, I can easily become consumed with the practical demands of sustaining the most basic dimensions of our community's life. While new initiatives requiring additional time and energy often seem pointless, my parish's involvement with IOCC over the years has challenged me not to place limits on what God can do even with the smallest of offerings.

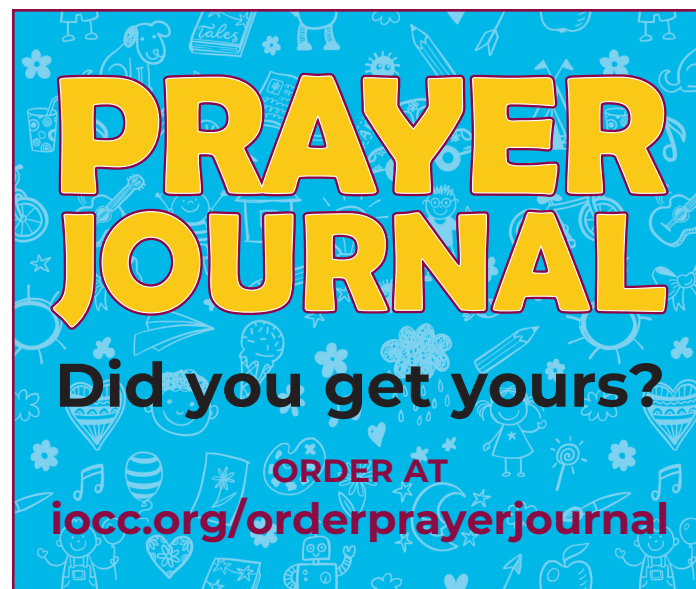
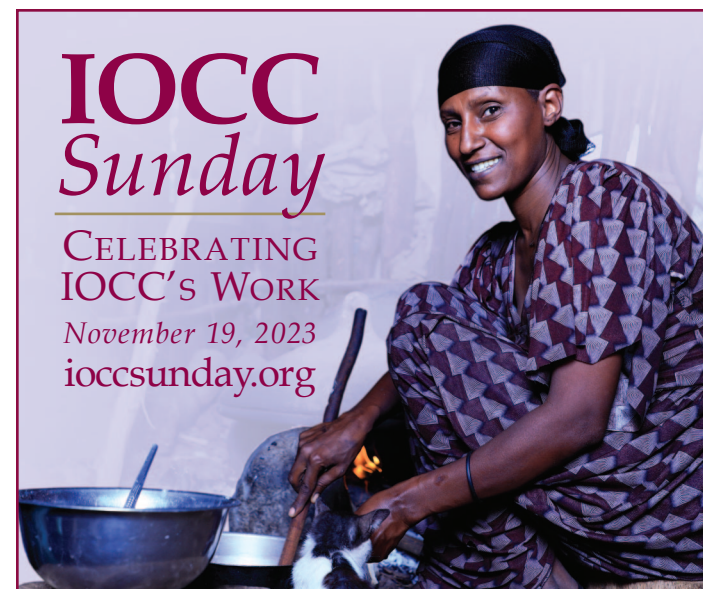
During the worst days of the humanitarian crisis in Syria, we invited IOCC Gift Officer Nick Kasemeotes to speak at a forum in Abilene about relief work. I publicized his talk, which was attended by members of a local Protestant congregation. A few weeks after the event, Nick let us know that the church made a sizeable donation in support of IOCC's vital ministries. Though our parish was not able to write a check like that, Christ multiplied our small offering of time and energy to reap a great harvest of blessing for suffering people.

In response to the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria in early 2023, our parish decided to make another small offering. This time it consisted of pies, cakes, and other baked goods prepared by a few parishioners and yours truly. We held a bake sale timed for western Easter, the proceeds of which would support IOCC's relief efforts for the survivors of those tragedies. Thanks to effective promotion on social media and through contacts in the community, an ample number of customers paid in advance and picked up their delicacies in our hall on the afternoon of Lazarus Saturday. The effort raised \$650 for IOCC, which far exceeded our expectations. The Lord multiplied the small offerings from our kitchens to bless suffering people as a sign of His kingdom.



IOCC continues to work closely with partners on the ground to meet the needs of people displaced by the earthquakes in Syria and Turkey. (Photo: GOPA-DERD)

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Critical Nutrition for Children in Ethiopia

“God intervened, and my child is very well,” said Aregu, a 25-year-old Ethiopian mother. “I am very happy.”

Aregu was talking about her daughter Mekiya, age 3, who was diagnosed with acute malnutrition through an IOCC program in rural Ethiopia. Aregu works hard but has struggled to provide for her two children amid civil conflict, recurrent drought, and an overwhelming desert locust infestation. Mekiya was underweight, weak, and inactive but received treatment through IOCC, while her mother received emergency food support and nutrition education.

Aregu and Mekiya are just two of over 2,600 young children, pregnant women, and nursing mothers who have received support through this IOCC initiative – because of your generosity. Thank you.

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