



Fr. Robert Archon

My vision of the study trip beforehand was simply to observe the work of IOCC in Bosnia-Herzegovina and nothing more. Well, God had other plans for me and the entire group. While visiting with the people whom IOCC is helping, I began to see something very distinctive in this ministry and the ministry of the Orthodox Church at large. The scope of IOCC is not to offer handouts, but rather to “help others help themselves.”

“Why,” I asked myself, “is this organization so successful?” One reason only: incarnational stewardship. The organization under SCOBA is vigilantly trying to bring the message of God’s love to those who suffer. When one does this through the Holy Church, there is only one result — God’s blessings.

The IOCC staff members who traveled with us, and the local staff in Bosnia-Herzegovina, radiated the love and mercy of our compassionate Savior. By extension, those to whom they ministered also radiated with the presence of God because they became partakers in His love.

If God blesses all of us — and He does — then we have a divine responsibility to share those blessings with our neighbor.

Fr. Robert is pastor of Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Elkins Park, Pa.



Fr. Jerry Hall

The point of our trip was to see the work of IOCC first-hand “on the ground” in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The beneficiaries of IOCC now had names and faces. We saw their homes and played with their children and grandchildren and enjoyed their hospitality.

We humbly accepted the handshakes, hugs and kisses for all of you who have been so generous in your support of IOCC since 1992.

IOCC works and serves others, always remembering to respect the dignity and capability of those being served. IOCC strives to help people begin again, allowing them to help themselves while using the tools and resources of IOCC.

Having seen the work of IOCC first-hand, I know with even greater certainty that all IOCC donations are put to good use and that God is truly glorified in the work of IOCC. The Orthodox faithful in the United States can take pride in the quality of service provided and in the vision that guides IOCC.

Each of us must continue to do our part to remind others of the work and ministry of IOCC. We must encourage and inspire the faithful to continue to support the many worthwhile programs of IOCC — an organization that works to relieve suffering and lift up the downtrodden so that Christ may be known and glorified.

Fr. Jerry is pastor of Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Akron, Ohio



INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES

PRIEST *to* PRIEST

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In this special issue of Priest to Priest, five Orthodox priests reflect on their participation in the IOCC study tour of Bosnia-Herzegovina Aug. 30-Sept. 7, 2004. The priests were among 15 Americans who went on the study tour, witnessing first-hand the impact of IOCC’s humanitarian programs in post-war Bosnia. I was privileged to accompany these faithful IOCC supporters during their travels in northwest Bosnia. On our last Sunday together, we all gathered for the Divine Liturgy at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Banja Luka. My prayer is that these reflections inspire you to continue your support of IOCC’s life-sustaining mission.

— Fr. Irinej Dobrijevic



Fr. Marc Vranes

Despite of the incredible suffering of these Balkan people, their eyes reflect a small glimmer of hope. It is the eyes which provide a window into the deepest part of their tormented hearts. This hope is, to a large extent, provided by IOCC. While the work of IOCC may not be well known in America, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, it remains the very lifeline of thousands.

It is difficult to imagine what their lives would be like without IOCC. It most certainly would be poorer. The presence of IOCC in their lives is extraordinarily real.

IOCC brings tangible Christian joy to their souls. When IOCC staff members arrive at their homes, life takes on a different meaning. Joy replaces sadness; light overcomes darkness. The look in their eyes says this is the case. IOCC continually provides this radiance to our Lord’s most vulnerable throughout Bosnia, and the world.

To be alone, forgotten, is ultimately humanity’s greatest fear. But IOCC provides hope, it gives comfort, that the people of this land of war refugees and displaced persons have not been forgotten or abandoned.

Fr. Marc is pastor of Holy Trinity Orthodox Church (OCA) in Bristol, Conn.



Fr. Joseph Kimmett

In our part of the world, so many people have the opportunity to work, to watch children play soccer, or to enjoy a night at the movies. But that is not the case everywhere: war, poverty, hunger, disease and homelessness are issues

confronted by normal people every day. Reconciling these extremes can be difficult unless we, 1) give thanks to God for the abundant blessings He has poured upon us and, 2) support IOCC, which turns the noble desires of our hearts and minds into reality.

What makes IOCC such a tremendous organization is that our support provides a vehicle for doing humanitarian work every day of the year. Having been fortunate enough to be part of the IOCC study tour to Bosnia-Herzegovina this past summer, I can say from personal experience that the generosity of Orthodox Christians in North America is making an incredible difference. The people of that beautiful land have suffered immensely, but through the dedication and vision of IOCC, there is not only relief, but hope.

I commend IOCC for its dedication and pray that many more people will support its work (*our* work), whether in the Balkans or wherever brothers and sisters are suffering.

Fr. Joseph is pastor of St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church in Norwood, Mass.



Fr. Luke Uhl

A vital aspect of our IOCC support is that every dollar we donate is multiplied many times over. The 2003 annual report shows that individuals and Orthodox parishes donated about \$2 million, which IOCC used as leverage to generate more than \$16 million in humanitarian assistance.

When we learn of a disaster — whether hurricanes in Florida or wars in foreign lands — our instinct is to take up a collection and give it to an organization set up to handle that particular crisis. But we need to realize that we will get more “bang for the buck” if we give those donations to IOCC, which ensures that they are multiplied by other donations and matching grants, and that they are applied appropriately to accomplish the greatest benefit.

Seeing IOCC in action in Bosnia-Herzegovina, I have gained the highest regard for *our* Orthodox institution, and I am proud of the work being done in my name and in the name of all Orthodox Christians in this country.

Fr. Luke is chancellor of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Denver.

“Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”
— 2 Corinthians 9:7

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A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION FOR ORTHODOX CLERGY
from the Church Relations Committee of the IOCC Board of Directors
Very Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky, Chairman, Rev. Irinej Dobrijevic, Very Rev. Michael Ellias
Very Rev. Robert S. Kondratick, Rev. Nicholas C. Triantafilou

STUDY VISITORS WITNESS REBIRTH OF BOSNIA

From Aug. 30-Sept. 7, IOCC led a group 15 committed supporters, including five clergy, on a study tour of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Participants visited IOCC humanitarian projects in northwest Bosnia and learned about how their support of IOCC is making a difference in the tiny Balkan nation.

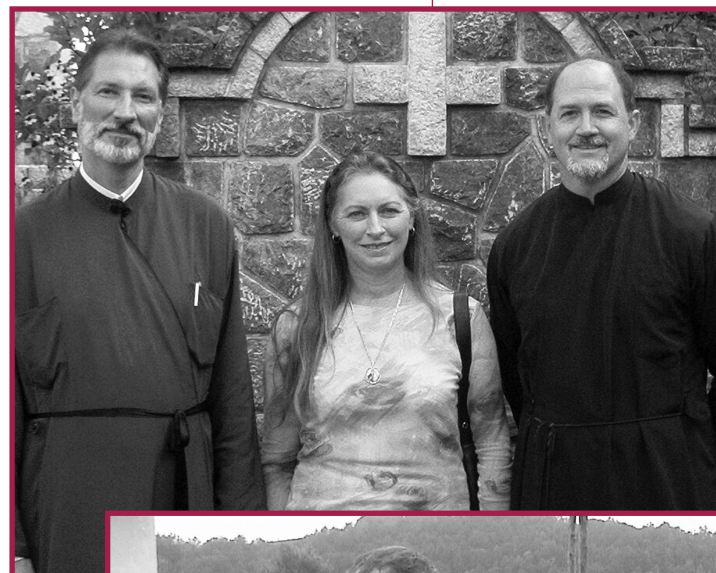
Since 1992, IOCC has delivered \$58 million in humanitarian assistance to people of all ethnic backgrounds in the former Yugoslavia. In Bosnia, IOCC has worked to repair war-damaged homes and community infrastructure, and to help people rebuild their lives through agricultural, economic and civil society development programs.

The following was the study tour itinerary:

- **Sept. 1** — Meeting with returning refugees in Mrkonjic Grad, Cadjavica and the Majdan area; visit to the monastery of Krupa on the Vrbas.
- **Sept. 2** — Visit to an IOCC-supported community organization called First Smile, which does youth training and advocacy, and Protect Me, a school and boarding house, both in Banja Luka; reception with His Grace Bishop Chrysostom in Bosanski Petrovac; prayer service in Krnjeusa; visit to agricultural cooperative in Vrtoc.
- **Sept. 3** — Meeting with micro-credit clients in Novi Grad, greenhouse project participants in Rudici, and beneficiaries in Mala Krupska Ruiska; visit to Agro-Japra agricultural cooperative in Donji Agici; meeting with young people involved with projects at the Lighthouse community center in Prijedor and a school in Trnopolje.
- **Sept. 4** — Visit to the community organization called Ecologica and the NGO Forum Resource Center, as well as the Association of Beekeepers in Derventa, and a school in Sevarlija.
- **Sept. 5** — Divine Liturgy in Banja Luka's Holy Trinity Cathedral, with guest U.S. clergy concelebrating with local priests and deacons with the blessing of His Grace Bishop Jefrem of Banja Luka. Visit to the monastery of Liplje.
- **Sept. 6** — Visit to the Ethno-cooperative Rainbow and the Circle of Serbian Sisters in Banja Luka; farewell luncheon.

"God is truly glorified in the work of IOCC."

— Fr. Jerry Hall,
Greek Orthodox
Archdiocese of America



"The work of IOCC is our Orthodox theology in action."

— Fr. Joseph Kimmett,
Antiochian Orthodox Christian
Archdiocese of North America

"I am filled with the highest respect and esteem for the excellent work being done by IOCC in our name and in the name of our Lord and His holy Church."

— Fr. Luke Uhl,
Greek Orthodox
Archdiocese of America



"The loving and tender hand of IOCC is undeniably felt throughout the Balkans. It is an incredibly powerful force."

— Fr. Marc Vranes,
Orthodox Church in America

"Witnessing the sacred ministry of IOCC in Bosnia, and the lives being touched, often brought me to tears."

— Fr. Robert Archon,
Greek Orthodox
Archdiocese of America



(above) Fr. Irinej Dobrijevic, Serbian Orthodox Church, Consultant to the Holy Synod of Bishops on International and Interchurch Affairs; Member, IOCC Board of Directors