

NOROC NEWS MAY 2005

Publication of NOROC (New Opportunities for Romanian Orphaned Children), Inc., Abilene, Texas

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From Mary's Desk by Mary Ferris

No matter where I am in the world, I want to spend Easter in Romania. Where else is everyone in town out all night at church – singing, laughing, carrying candles, greeting everyone with “Christ is risen/He is risen indeed?” Saturday night I went to church with Costica and many of the kids from Speranta. Afterwards I went to Mrs. Jivan's (NOROC's newly hired social worker) for supper at midnight. Her apartment overlooks a large Orthodox church so we had an all night Romanian feast and listened to the church service being broadcast all over the city. All the Romanian TV channels were also broadcasting continuous church services. All stores are closed for the three days of Easter and people visit each other, just like at Christmas. I had a

big Romanian meal from 12:30 AM - 3:30 AM at Mrs. Jivan's as they were all breaking their Lenten fasts. When I left to walk home the streets were filled with church goers since the Orthodox have an all night Easter service. It really struck me that there is almost no other place in the world where a 57 year old woman would be safe alone at 4:00 AM Saturday night/ Sunday morning. The streets might be filled, but not with church goers. I am certain that it means a lot more to everyone since under Communism this was forbidden, although they celebrated secretly in their homes anyway. I was impressed that every teenager in town was at church getting their light and bringing it to their home. Mr. Jivan shared with us about

how the light begins in the Church of the Sepulchre in Jerusalem and is passed somehow all over the Orthodox world. My Romanian is good enough to understand most of what he said, but not good enough to understand all the details. What impressed me most was hearing the former head of the Securitate (Secret Police in the Communist government) explaining to his family about the “light of Jesus being spread all over the world.” He had read all this on the internet and was very excited about it. ALLELUIA - AMEN.

I left early (pun intended), slept a few hours, and then later on Easter morning I went to the Baptist service with Costica, Aurel and Marius. Because we were too late

Tales from Tulcea County: Youth Group Cleans Up at Casa Noastra



As the Spring sun begins to warm the earth in Tulcea, the yard at Casa Noastra is getting a facelift. Youth from Mary's first Youth Group spend the day cleaning and trimming to bring new life to the property at “Our House.” After a day of hard work everyone enjoys a much deserved cookout with lots of tasty Romanian cirnati (sausages). This youth group meets regularly with Mary for work, Bible study, food, and



Prayers of Thanksgiving and Concern:

- For the successes we have experienced with our young people
- For the work team coming in June
- For the Easter light that moves through and in the world
- For Eugenia Jivan as she begins her work with NOROC
- For the orphans as they are moved from place to place

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for a seat up front, I discovered that the Baptist church has a balcony where all the teenagers sit. It was full of all the youth. I had always thought the church was mostly older people. It felt good to sit with the youth. I was impressed because the services in Romania are much longer. I loved the singing. We sang many songs but He Lives and Up From the Grave He Arose were my favorites. It was really special that Aurel and Marius were able to participate in the singing because they can now read, thanks to NOROC. After church I parted company with the boys for awhile and went to lunch with the Popas, the music ministers from the Baptist church. The Popas run the program at the center where Aurelia is now staying. Then I went home and prepared a big dinner for Bianca, Eusebiu, Ina, Gabi, Dragos, Mihaita, and Liza. While Costica, Dragos, and Eusebiu cleaned up the kitchen for me I had a great conversation with Eusebiu. He told me what it is like to live with an alcoholic who, when he is drunk, gets a look in his eye like he wants to kill you. Eusebiu is the last of the three children from one family that we need to rescue.

Bianca and Aurelia are his sisters. He said that before he was returned home to his father, "I used to like to learn and I was good in school, but now I can't seem to think. My head just pounds noise all the time and I cannot make it stop."

On day two of Easter we went to the Orthodox Church where the priest is friends with Aurel and Marius. Aurel is visiting Tulcea from Camena for the weekend. He has adjusted well in Camena where he is living with his sister's family. I visit him so he won't run away to see me, but will gradually taper this down.

This past week I went around to different centers and presented the Easter story. I started my talk with something for us all to think about: If you knew you were in the last week of your life, what would you do? Where would you go? Who would you want to be with? Well, this is what Jesus did in his last week. You would want to be with your friends, right? Jesus spent all his time with his friends and family around him. They all had a one last special meal together. When we have Communion it is like we are be-

ing invited to this special meal with Jesus and his friends. The children and youth all seemed to relate to this approach... at least everywhere I went they were very attentive. It helps to use icons to tell the story as they are familiar to the children.

My 5 & 6 year old group from Speranta all told me the story before I could tell it to them. "And then Jesus did this and then he did that and then they killed him and they were all covered with sin. But He is raised and now He lives." This is what I understood from their Romanian as they excitedly told me the entire story. I was really impressed. I asked who told them all of this about Jesus. Then I had a God moment. They looked really puzzled, like what a stupid question, and they said...you did! I wanted to cry. I thought they had never listened. We have been going every week with Alina Jivan and Jessica (Jessica has returned to the US but we still consider her a part of our little group.) As the end of Easter week in Romania approaches I say again...ALLELUIA, AMEN!

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Mission/Work Trip Group Begins Preparations for the Big Event

It's a go!! Recently the NOROC Board of Directors awarded a contract to officially begin construction for the completion of our new building on the Casa Noastra property. The existing structure will be transformed into a one story chapel/meeting place for use by Mary and the many groups she shepherds. As the Mission/Work Trip participants begin to plan how best to use their talents during the upcoming trip in June, several possibilities lay before them. Depend-

ing on the progress on the new building the group may paint, plaster, or stucco. Benches or stools will be needed for seating, as well as storage closets. In Casa Noastra there are bunk beds to be built and the summer kitchen needs to have the walls and floors refurbished. This will double the space available to house young men on a temporary or emergency basis. The work group will leave on June 23 and return on July 5. Members of the group are: Adam Andrews

and Jennifer Cleveland from First Central, Abilene; Clay Cooper, Jennifer Haley, James Pollard, Olivia Sims, and Robert Sims from Canadian; Teddy and Dawn Kingsbery, Bill and SarahLee Morris, Carol Schempp from Covenant, Lubbock, and Rich Schempp, Executive Presbyterian. Young people from Mary's youth groups will be working alongside the Palo Duro participants. Donations toward this project are still welcomed and needed.