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From Mary's Desk

by Mary Ferris

This past month has been busy and rather grueling with the deaths of three persons close to the NOROC family. The mother of Nelu Ivanov, our sports facilitator, died at the age of 80. She was a person whose light shone brightly wherever she went and was one of the first persons I met when I came to Romania. Her passing will leave dimness in this corner of the world. Also, our beloved "Gica the plumber" passed away at the age of 47. His death reminds me how lucky we are in America to have access to good healthcare. The third death was the mother of a young woman, Ancuta, who works for NOROC with the youngest children at Speranta, the center for boys and girls. Ancuta's mother was one of Petru Solca's college classmates. Three funerals in four days were hard, but they gave me an appreciation of the Ro-

manian traditions surrounding grieving. If you have traveled to Romania you have probably witnessed the funeral processional. It is called "ultimal drum" (the last road) as the deceased is accompanied by loved ones from their house, to the church, to the cemetery. At the cemetery "coliva" (a heavenly food) and wine are served in honor of the deceased. It is a fitting recognition of the resurrection. To refuse coliva is "a sin" according to a friend who was instructing me in Romanian funeral etiquette. After the grave side service the family of the deceased hosts a meal called "pomana" in honor of their loved one. At this special meal the guests are a mixture of the people in need whose life the deceased had touched and the closest friends and family of the deceased.

It is a great honor to be invited to the pomana. Gifts are given to the poor in honor of the loved one, and every guest receives a token gift from the deceased. This meal is a wonderful witness to the table fellowship which

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Gathering for the blessing of the new house.

Tales from Tulcea County: Our Success Stories

- The new house now has a nice fence around it so we have some privacy and security at the new property. The house is already a happy place. lunel, the young man who lost his finger, is able to stay there during his recuperation. This week the house is "home" to college students on their semester break. In the spring we will have a garden.
- Jessica McAlister, a remarkable and dedicated young woman from Texas, arrived in Tulcea on January 9 for three months as a Young Adult Volunteer in Mission. The children, teens, and young adults alike love her. Since she has enabled us to reach certain youth we would not have been able to reach otherwise her visit has been and will continue to be a real blessing.
- Our college youth have successfully completed another semester!

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Concern:

- The new house which is providing much needed housing for young men
- Bianca's continued good attitude and good grades
- The young people who have just completed their mid-year exams
- The new director at Speranta who seems to be well loved by the children there
- Jessica McAlister's presence here in Tulcea
- lunel's recovery
- The families who are grieving the loss of their loved ones

"I am thankful every day for all the supporters back in America who...support our ministry here."

From Mary's Desk

Jesus was a part of at all times. It is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet we will enjoy with Jesus and all the saints who have gone before us. The rich and the poor are gathered at this heavenly banquet and worship service led by the priest. It truly is a holy time. I found the poem a great comfort.

This last week Lunel, a young man we are providing temporary housing for at our new house, had his finger severed at his job. Again, the lack of basic medical services was disheartening. With no attempt to reattach his finger he was sent out into the freezing weather only hours after his accident to search for and purchase his own medi-

cine and bandages. Tonight he is in good spirits, despite the fact that this is the second finger he has lost at this job. He says he will look for another job. I think this is a wise decision. An investigation for safety violations is needed. Lunel says the loss of fingers and hands where he works is a common occurrence.

It has been fun to see the children wearing their gloves, hats and slippers given to them at Christmas. I have gratefully put into use the Christian crafts given by friends in Austin, Minnesota and the school supplies given by many churches. Last week I used the homemade dolls of Jacob and Joseph to tell the story of

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Joseph and his brothers. They were a huge hit. This is a poignant story for the children as they know all about treachery, jealousy, and unfair treatment.

With the advent of bitterly cold weather and snow I am reminded of how lucky I am to have heat and a comfortable place to live.

I am thankful every day for all the supporters back in America who give their time, energy, and money to support our ministry here.

In all that we do, God goes before us, preparing our way. NOROC, and God Bless you all!



Booties, booties, everywhere! Which ones did you knit?



Young mother Has a Chance to Keep Her Babies

Nine months ago a young, single woman named Cristina gave birth to twin girls, Andreea and Iona. Unlike most unwed mothers Cristina chose to keep her babies. She was offered room and board at the baby orphanage where she could nurture and care for her babies instead of abandoning them. After 6 months Cristina was expected to find a job and eventually move out of the "maternal center." She walked to work everyday (nearly an hour each way) and was gone for

over ten hours. Luckily, the Department of Child Protection has extended the amount of time she can stay at the center with her babies. Through NOROC (and thanks to some special people in Virginia) Christina now has money for bus tickets so she gets to work faster and can spend more time with her happy, healthy daughters! (The NOROC Grannies love to see these two beautiful girls at playtime.)



If you wish to send a donation to NOROC, please mail it to: NOROC, INC, 200 Hedges, Abilene, TX 79605

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