

ECL Door of Hope

Bringing Hope to the hopeless and Help to the helpless

“Broken little lives lovingly cared for”

May/June 2011



A few weeks ago on a very cold Bulgarian day, I drank hot tea with an amazing man, the nearest I have ever come to a real saint! Father Ivan, an Orthodox priest (who is in fact called “Saint Nikolai” by many who know him), founded and now maintains an Orphanage in the west of Bulgaria.

As a wild young man, he worked for the police until the day he entered the ancient Church of St Petka in Sophia. Suddenly, a miracle happened which transformed his life. “A radiant light surrounded me,” he said, “Diseases in my body departed and I was overwhelmed by the presence of God.” Leaving the police, persecution commenced. Arrested by the Communist

secret police, he was thrown into a single cell for two months. Each day, his diet consisted of a slice of musty bread and half a flask of water. Accused of being a Western spy, he was sent to a Security Prison for eight years.

But his life had changed. Smiling at me, he whispered: “Money is nothing, God is everything.” With a dilapidated Russian car and £200.00 in his pocket, Fr. Ivan began building a home for homeless children. Gradually, over the years, money has dribbled in and extensions added to the building. The home is for deprived children. Boys and girls who have nowhere to live. Orphans from poverty stricken ghettos whose parents are in prison, addicted to vodka, acutely ill or forced onto the streets as prostitutes.

As well as 150 children to feed, Fr. Ivan offers food and beds to prostitutes and their small children. “This very much depends,” he said, “on whether they can escape the gangs who control them.” If they do, the girls work in the kitchen and clean the rooms. “I never ask them about their past,” he murmured. “They will tell me if they want to. Why press my finger on painful wounds? Everyone can stay here while they have difficulty finding their way in life. If they find it, I will help them.” Fr. Ivan duly does his best to scrape people



DOOR OF HOPE, P.O. BOX 60, BATTLE, E.SUSSEX TN33 0QB.

Telephone/Fax: 01424 870836

Email: Doorhope@aol.com Registered Charity 1083260

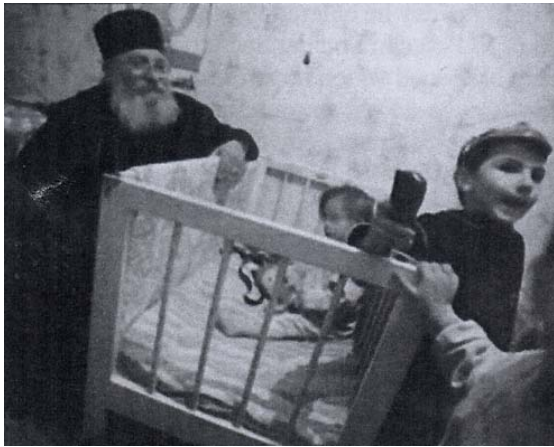
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out of life's mud and disease in an effort to produce citizens of dignity, spirituality and awareness of the wonder of who they really are. "Before everything else," he said, "I want food for the children, but it's not an easy task." He then showed me a "needs" list for a typical day. One that I share to you.

1. 'Pampers' for 17 children
2. Toilet paper for 150 children (mothers included)
3. Red Pepper puree (children's favourite) 30 jars.
4. Chickens 10kg.
5. Butter 3kg.
6. Potato 10kg.
7. Milk 20 litres.
8. Electricity/water & all things for function of kitchen
9. Purees for different fruits (at least 15)
10. Sugar. 4kg.
11. Cooking oil 3kg.
12. Salami 2kg.
13. Cheese 2kg.
14. Beans 5kg.
15. 30 loaves of bread
16. Vegetables and fruit.

As you can imagine, the list could be easily enlarged. This is simply daily needs.



Beneath grey Bulgarian skies, I said farewell to the saintly Fr. Ivan. What could I do to help? Door of Hope is committed to so many needs. Dusk was settling in and I was hungry, but so were the children wandering around the garden! At least we could provide some daily menus as indicated in the above list. To provide whatever we can as Jesus did on that long-ago "Picnic on the hill."

Our plan is to provide a series of daily meals in proportion to the income that we receive from this appeal. At the present moment I do not have the exact daily cost but **however much you manage to donate will be exchanged for the equivalent amount of food.**

Would you like to provide a day of food for homeless children?

How many days can we arrange a spread table for some of the poor and unwanted?

I know that Fr. Ivan will be thrilled and thankful to the people of the UK.

We thank you in anticipation.

Please donate. We are grateful for all your support – past and present.

Phil and Diane S.

Rev. and Mrs Philip and Diane Streeter.
(Door of Hope)



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