

HELP FOR REFUGEES, INC.

A tax-exempt, non-profit corporation

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We help orphans and elderly Christians (many in their 80s, even 90s) who had been imprisoned for their faith in present or former communist countries



December 2020

" Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

Saying, **Where is he that is born King of the Jews?"**

(Matthew 2:1-2)

Late Reverend Richard Wurmland spent 14 years in Romanian communist prisons. Mrs. Wurmland was imprisoned for nearly three years, also for her Christian faith in some of the same communist prisons.

From an unpublished Bible meditation by late Reverend Richard Wurmland

Where is Jesus born?

When Michelangelo used a stonemason as model for a statue of Christ, he was criticized by his teacher Ghirlandaio for having used a commoner as a model. Michelangelo defended himself: "But Christ was also a workingman, a carpenter." The master replied, "Florence won't accept a working-class Christ. They are used to having Him as a nobleman."

A Christmas focusing only on the outward, historical event, is perilous to the soul. It brings death in the disguise of merriment. The three wise men desiring pay their respects, searched for Jesus at a physical location. They presented whom they perceived physically as the newly born King of the Jews, with worldly treasures. As soon however they later realized, that worshipping Jesus would be dangerous for them, they absconded from the murderous King Herod, taking a different return road, so as not to be caught.

Some believe that Christ was born in Bethlehem for our salvation and they celebrate this event at Christmas. To all outward appearances, Jesus was a Jewish carpenter and rabbi (a Jewish teacher.) Thousands knew him without observing that He was more.

Again outwardly, the birth of Jesus, appeared being at first, a merry event. When the three wise men saw the star, "they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." The angel appearing to the shepherds

proclaimed: "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Soon after Jesus' birth, major tragic events happened. Joseph, Mary and Jesus had to flee to Egypt. The evil king Herod, "slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under." The Gospel wrote how in Israel, "In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."

Sad events happen to Christians

The Prophet Isaiah describes the historical Jesus as "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." (Isaiah 53:3) Necessarily so, his true disciples. Apostle Paul led his missionary life "in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." (2 Corinthians 11:27)

Just as the birth of Jesus which we feast, occurred in the unlikely environs of a crude stable. so other Christians today endure uncomfortable Christmases. The Russian Nobel prize-winner and Christian writer SOLZHENITSYN describes how, in the prison of VORKUTA situated at the Polar Circle, the prisoners were mocked by being allowed to get coal to warm themselves but not matches to start a fire. Some prisoners were kept in winter completely naked. They had no mattresses or straw. The temperature within the barracks was approximately -45 degrees Fahrenheit. He also writes about prisoners driven to madness through hunger.

I myself have slept in winter in unheated cells, on the concrete without blanket or mattress. When you enjoy a warm Christmas, remember your brethren in faith shivering with the cold in Communist jails. And if you pass through sorrows at Christmas, remember that others might have to suffer more than you.

Those accustomed only to a historical Savior would be in for a real shock. They would not accept an inner Christ. Rejecting spiritual contraceptives made of unbelief and pride, Christians have allowed Christ to be born in their own souls after being touched by the Holy Ghost. Furthermore, they have kept worldliness and false teaching from bringing the Divine embryo to abortion. He lives within their hearts. The real Christ must dwell within the heart. One must be a Christian "in the inward parts." The Bible verse in Psalm 51:6 reads: "Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden *part* You will make me to know wisdom." Christ born within brings life eternal. Once Christ lives in us, we are "the light of the world"(Matthew 5: 14), "the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5: 13), "partakers of the divine nature (II Peter 1:4),"children of God" (John 1:12), yea, more than that: "gods" (John 10:34).



The Communist Jilava Prison.
Entrance to the underground cells.



Prison cell with bunk-beds with no mattress, prisoners were obliged to sleep on. Stove for show only, never heated in cold winters.



Mug-shot of Late Reverend Richard Wurmbrand when held in the Jilava prison, in communist Romania.

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father are this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” (Apostle James Epistle 1:27)

Helped with your Gifts!

Some pictures of Christians Imprisoned under Communism for the Faith

Read their full testimonies in our past newsletters at <http://helpforrefugees.com> (third column!)



Andrei Borinsky

Was able to participate during 8 years, in the secret printing of Bibles inside the former Soviet Union. Read his testimony in the 11/2017 Newsletter.



Andrietz Alexander

Suffered 3 years of communist prison in the former Soviet Union for printing a children New Testament and Christian song books. Read his testimony in the 12/2017 Newsletter.



Fedor Akimovich POIUNOV

Suffered 7 years imprisonment in the former Soviet Union for daring ask publicly for church freedom. Read his testimony in the 1/2018 Newsletter.



Petru Vasile SMETANIUK

Suffered 3 years imprisonment in the former Soviet Union for being a Baptist minister. Read his testimony in the 1/2018 Newsletter.

Persecuted Christians Helped with your Gifts

Reverend Gheorghe Marian (deceased*)

Was Imprisoned 12 years for his Faith, in Former Communist Romania



Minister Gheorghe MARIAN

His son, Adrian Marian (89) * wrote: “My father suffered at first one year of communist imprisonment between 1948 to 1949. In 1952 he was rearrested and sentenced to hard labor and was freed only in 1964, under the general amnesty given that year (when communist Romania obtained loans from the United States. Reverend Richard Wurmbrand was also freed then from imprisonment - N. Ed.)

For the longest prison term, he was confined in the prison of Aiud (considered the harshest prison of the Romanian communist regime – N. Ed.) and then he was taken to hard labor at the construction of the Bistrita Dam. Prisoners were carrying heavy stones by hand.

He was also obliged to work gathering reeds in the Danube Delta in a locality named Periprava. This was called by former inmates, a true "death camp." Prisoners who were unable to fulfill the daily quota of 8 thick bundles of reeds were beat unconscious by guards wielding rubber clubs. (After the fall of communism in Romania, the commander of this prison camp was convicted in March 2017 for crimes against humanity, and sentenced to 20 years in prison for the deaths of 103 political inmates at Periprava. – N. Ed.)

When he came out of prison, he found a job with great difficulty but was laid off, because some Christians where overheard greeting him, saying "Praise Lord Jesus!" He continued an intensive underground church activity, surreptitiously using his home for church gatherings. One thousand five hundred believers attended his funeral in 1990!"

*The mission sent help to the surviving son!

Persecuted Christians Helped with Your Gifts

Sentenced to 5 Years of Prison and 5 Years of Exile, for Preaching the Gospel!

“Greetings, dear brother in Christ!

Galya Shevchenko, wife of brother Sasha Shevchenko is writing to you.

In 1968, brother Sasha was judged and sentenced under the Soviet Penal Code, Article 209, to 5 years of prison and 5 years of forced labor exile. His “crime:” his active participation in the church, he evangelized the youth he conducted the singing of Christian hymns with an orchestra, he preached the Word of God. After he completed the prison sentence, he was sent into exile in Yakutia, in the village of Ust-Nera (the so named North Pole of Cold, the coldest place in the former Soviet Union. Prisoners described how the spit would freeze, before it touched the ground – N.Ed.)



Though I was not imprisoned, I joined my husband Sasha, into exile, and lived there until the end of his sentence. It was the well-known Baptist minister Mikhail Khorev who blessed our marriage, before he also ended up imprisoned for 12½ years. (See the testimony of Khorev’s wife in our newsletter of 11/1/2016 at:

<https://www.helpforrefugees.com/NL/110116-letter-to-donors.pdf>. N. Ed.)

Sasha was not allowed free time for the entire period. Other Baptist brethren, like brother Dubovoy, brother Shaptala and others, dared come visit us. The frost was severe, -76 degrees Fahrenheit and more.

There was a problem with water, once a week the car brought it into a barrel - 200 liters, the water was frozen and then we chopped the ice. There were problems with getting any fuel. We tried chopping and collecting firewood. We tried getting coal from a faraway town called Magadan (about 650 miles distance, also the site of a huge prison camp holding over 80,000 prisoners – N.ED.)

In winter, there was solid ice under the floors, raising the floors. Ice would break through and protruded in the middle of the living room while in summer, due to warmth, the ice melted and flooded the room, creating a hole. The summer was very short.

There lived, exiled Christians of different denominations, Baptists, Pentecostals, and Orthodox. On Sundays, everyone gathered and we had subreptitious prayer-meetings. The participants did not pay attention to a particular denomination. Everyone was glad to meet each other.

In 1978 the exile term ended and we left for our relatives in Odessa (in present Ukraine.) With God's help, those difficult times passed away. My husband Sasha died of cancer. Sasha has gone to eternity. In our heart there is always gratitude to God, for all His mercies, for help through all our lives. In difficult times God did not leave us alone but helped.

May God bless your work and care, and reward all the good. “

Helped with Your Gifts

Letters from children in the Agape Orphanage, Pascani, Romania



Alex P.

Ingrid B.

Diana V.



Monica P. (Sister of Alex P.) Elena D.

Am venit la Agape acum 7 ani pentru ca tatal meu plecase si erau mari probleme in familie. La Agape ma simt ca intr-o familie si alaturi de mine sunt si fratii mei: Monica, Serban si Bia cu care ma inteleg foarte bine.

Eu doresc sa invat bine ca sa intru la un liceu bun si sa fac si facultate ca sa devin profesor sau inginer.

Alex (13 ani)

Alex P. writes: "I was brought into the Agape Orphanage seven years ago, because my father abandoned us and there were major problems in the family. At Agape, I feel like I belong to a family and also here with me are my siblings, Monica, Serban and Bia. I get along well with them. I want to study well in order to enter a good high school and then complete a college degree, to become a teacher or an engineer."

Alex (13 years old) Full names of minors are not disclosed.

The Agape Orphanage was started in 1993, in Pascani, Romania, by Pastor Richard Wurmbrand and wife Sabina. Initial orphanage expenses, amounted to about US \$25,000 per year. After new requirements imposed in the European Union and rampant inflation, the orphanage needs, in order to function decently, over \$120,000 a year. Due to limited funding, the orphanage counts also on local canned food donations.

Am ajuns la Agape acum 10 ani deoarece Mama consuma alcool, la fel si Tata. Noi eram multi si nici nu aveam conditii sa ne creasca. Am ajuns la Agape impreuna cu doi frati ai mei Elena si Vasile.

In prezent, am trecut in clasa a Va. Urmas sa termin scoala si apoi sa studiez facultatea de pedagogie sau drept.

Maria D. (sister of Elena, pictured above) wrote: "We arrived 10 years ago, at Agape, since mother and father consumed alcohol. We were many children and they had no means to raise us. I arrived together with two of my siblings, Elena and Vasile. I just entered 5th grade. After ending school, I need enter college to study teaching or law."

Christians Helped with Your Gifts Suffered 3 Years Imprisonment for his Faith



Good peace and greetings brother Michael!
My name is Bogdanov Iurii Nicolae. I was born in Moscow in 1940. In the Soviet Union, believers were always persecuted. The Bolshevik Communist Revolution took place in 1917. This communist system fell in 1990. Since reaching maturity I was a member of the Moscow Baptist Church. In the 1970s, I was involved in children's education in the church. I ran the Sunday school in the church. In those days, all these activities were illegal. We held our gatherings inside the homes and apartments of the faithful. We were being harassed by the KGB (Soviet Secret Police.) The police and other administration workers often came to interrupt the services. They drew up citations and we were fined. In 1969, I was arrested where I worked. A thorough search was conducted at my home. I was arrested and imprisoned for interrogations in the Butyrka Prison. The interrogations lasted 4 months. During this investigation period, we were asked to collaborate with the authorities (to provide them with all the information about the church, the pastors of the church, and many other things related to the life of the church.) I refused of course, any cooperation with the authorities and the KGB. After 4 months of interrogations, I was sentenced to 3 years of prison. I served my sentence in a prison in the town of Klinty, the Breansk region (close to the present borders of Belarus.) I was subjected to forced labor in construction. Other brothers from the Breansk region were also in this camp. In our free time, we gathered and had small surreptitious prayer-meetings of Christian brethren. We were noticed by the prison authorities and were scattered to different areas. I was transferred to a harder prison camp (I worked on a kiln for burning bricks.) But the mercy of God was great upon me. He gave me the strength to go through it all. During these 3 years, His hand has guided and cared for me in all circumstances. And thanks be to God for caring for me so far. His Blessing has been upon me.

409	Власенко	Валентин	Медведевич	1958	Украина
410	Вольф	Андрей	Корнеевич	1958	Казакстан
411	Курбан	АЛЕКСЕЙ	ЯКОВЛЕВИЧ	1958	Россия
412	Левен	НИКОЛАЙ	ВИКТОРОВИЧ	1958	Казакстан
413	Романюк	Владимир	Николаевич	1958	Украина
414	Тиссен	Давид	Давидович	1958	Россия
415	ТУРКЕВИЧ	Василий	Тарасович	1958	Украина
416	Барнов	Степан	Павлович	1959	Украина
417	ДРИСВЯННИКОВ	АЛЕКСАНДР	АЛЕКСАНДРОВИЧ	1959	Россия
418	СКВОРЦОВА	ЛЮБОВЬ	НИКОЛАЕВНА	1959	Россия
419	Варовин	Виталий	Федотович	1959	Россия
420	Дубицкий	СЕРГЕЙ	АДАМОВИЧ	1959	Россия
421	Лашенко	Борис	Владимирович	1959	Украина
422	Ташенко	ИВАН	ИВАНОВИЧ	1959	Казакстан
423	МАРЧЕНКО	Станислав	Полович	1960	Украина
424	Донченко	Александр	Максимович	1960	Украина
425	Озмекко	Венедикт	Александрович (Валерианов)	1960	Узбекистан
426	Савченко	Михаил	Михайлович	1960	Эстония
427	Федерева (ШВЕЦОВА)	ДИНА	ВЛАДИМИРОВНА	1961	Алания
428	ШВЕЦОВА	Анна	ВЛАДИМИРОВНА	1962	Алания
429	Богодимов	Александр	Валериевич	1962	Эстония
430	Миньков	Павел	Дмитриевич	1962	Эстония

Above, a **sample only** of a long list, our mission was able to compile beside other lists, of over 480 elderly Baptist Christians most of them still alive, who suffered for the Christian faith in the former Soviet Union. The prison sentences amounted from 2 years, to as many as 18 years of communist prison. If considered together, their years of prison-sentences shown in our **abbreviated** table, would most likely add up to over 2,000 years of prison. The 4th and 5th column together, show year of birth and the most recent country they live in (like Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, etc.) We try obtain exact addresses, so we may be able to send encouraging help to those still alive. We were able to send repeated help to about 120 such elderly Russian-speaking Christians and over 110 of other languages. Many of their testimonies you can read in the monthly newsletter. Testimonies available also on the internet. **Look up third column at:** <https://helpforrefugees.com>

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(EIN: 95-3064521)

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