

As you may expect, being a missionary in a foreign country has many challenges, and two examples were detailed in past Parish Post articles, Cultural Challenges and Religious Challenges. This article will give you a glimpse of several families I was privileged to visit.

Part 3 – Challenges in the Mission Field

If you've never been to an area where you are the minority, and unable to communicate or understand those around you, I highly recommend exposing yourself to the experience. Having been born and raised in Philadelphia, I endured a lifetime of experiences of not being like "everyone else" and yearning for that feeling of "fitting in." Your ability to adapt to a given situation with flexibility AND NOT interject your own cultural bias is critical to your success in mission work.

"A", Bucuresti

Vitalii, Alina (9), Christiana (6), Daria (5)

Vitalii is a construction manager who works 6 days a week. His estranged wife was neglectful to the children and died from cancer during divorce proceedings. As a single parent, he relies on the before/after school program for his 2 oldest girls. His youngest daughter is in the process of getting adopted since he is unable to secure a full time caregiver. Their "quality time" as a family is going to the grocery store on Sundays.

I was amazed at how Vitalii's hardships did not affect his attitude. He answered all my personal questions with a smile. He seems to be very spiritual, and eager to learn more about Christ through church attendance. The girls enjoy attending Sunday School.



“B”, Alexeni

Robert, Florentina, Adriana (11), David (6)

Robert & Florentina are proud parents of 2 very bright children and multiple kittens that were taken in when the mom-cat was struck by a car. They relocated to the countryside because of job loss and could not afford to remain in Bucharest. They receive the equivalent to approximately \$100/month in social assistance. Robert is sometimes fortunate enough to secure temporary labor work to make ends meet.

Florentina was a victim of the enormous hole in their bedroom ceiling. Debris fell on her head, and cracked the bedframe of the top bunk. They were just thankful that the children weren't sleeping on the top when the ceiling fell in. They did not even have a tarp or duct tape to temporarily seal the opening, both commodities collecting dust in my garage at home.

I was amazed at how hard the parents work with their kids to have them excel in school. Adriana is in the finals of a math competition for the country. Top prize is the equivalent of \$200, which the family would spend solely on text books and school supplies for both children for the upcoming semester. What a choice to make between buying books and putting food on the table. Though Robert is currently not a believer, he does not stop his wife and kids from participating in bible studies and learning about God's Word.



“C”, Modelu

Bunica (82), Marioara, Ana Maria (13), Gabriella (12), Alexandria (11)

This family of 5 shares a room with one bed and a woodstove. One of the girls greeted me in the snow with no coat, shoes or socks to cover her feet. I found out at the end of the visit that one of the girls contracted lice, and had no access to treatment. When we arrived, there was no heat or refrigeration capacity. We brought them approximately 7-10 days of food to make soup, and some money to buy wood. Their mother has prostituted herself to make ends meet. The father was abusive and committed suicide a couple years ago. One of the daughters has bed-wetting issues, stemming from a urinary tract problem, which remains undiagnosed even after physician consults.

I was amazed at how happy, accepting and outwardly loving this family is. Their hospitality was discernable in all 3 daughters, not just the mother and grandmother. The experience with this family affected me deeply, not because of the disinfection protocols required for the next week, but because of the lack of basic needs, food and clothing. I prayed and wept the following day thinking about them while en route to the next town.



“D”, Petrechioaia

Nuta, Christina (13), Daria (3)

This family was fortunate enough to move into a “spacious” 3-room house. Recently, the rooms on both ends have ceilings that collapsed, making them unlivable. The family shares one bed in the middle room, with a functioning woodstove. They must travel almost 2 hours by bus to attend worship, and live well below USA poverty-level standards.

I was amazed at how little Daria tried so hard to understand the English words I was speaking. She constantly chirped, “Doamna, de ce nu vorbesti cu mine?” (Lady, why aren’t you talking to me?) We came to common ground when I pulled out my phone and showed her pictures of my family and pets. Young children have no reservations in asking questions and delight in you paying attention to them, even if they don’t know what you’re saying.

Update: Three weeks after my visit, the entire house has collapsed, rendering this family homeless.



“D”, Petrechioaia

Florin, Nina, Denis (10), Alex (9), Sara (7)

A few blocks away, this family “hit the jackpot” by renting their property from a retired physician (now deceased). The jackpot includes a 3-room dwelling that was up kept and in good condition since the father is handy and can perform repairs. However, the father drinks too much and is abusive. The boys excel in math. The girl loves literature. The mother is a God-fearing woman and tries hard to protect the children and raise them to love the Lord.

I was amazed at Nina. From what I heard and observed, she is the epitome of the “Ultimate Warrior” that was described in the Proverbs 31 lesson. Currently, the deceased owner’s adult children are squabbling over who inherits the house. I pray that this family does not become homeless as a result of their decision.



“E”, Targu Jiu

Catalin, Laura, Maria, Robert (9), Miruna (5)

This family was geographically the farthest town in our travels. We had to postpone our trip because of the weather, and were relieved we were able to squeeze the visit during our rounds with 7 orphanages and a hospital. This family has a son who was a burn victim from scalding water. The kids are precious and eagerly shared their Happy Meal toys with me to play with them.

I was amazed at watching the interactivity between the Maria and her kids. It was truly quality time, learning and playing, even with the presence of visitors. These children are being raised to appreciate the importance of their extended family living together and supporting each other through their hardships.



“F”, Teleormanu

Doamna Dumitra (78), Flori

After spending a relaxing evening and overnight at Laurentiu and Raluca’s (friends of Eugen) countryside home, I was given a choice to either travel by vehicle to the next village to visit a family with 5 children, or hike a couple miles through the snow in their own village to call on an elderly woman suffering from colon cancer. After confirming that I had to choose only one, I said a quick silent prayer and chose the latter family. It was this Divine Intervention that allowed me to experience the Holy Spirit at its utmost fullest glory.

Doamna Dumitra is a beautiful person who has endured so much pain from her medical complications and cancer treatments for the past 40 years. She truly thought the Lord would take her before the winter arrived. She struggles with the expense of her medications, transportation to doctor appointments and the guilt of living with her daughter who is her full time caregiver.

In the USA, I am NOT a prayer warrior (more like a prayer geek, for all you prayer nerds reading this). I get nervous praying out loud, and stumble over my words. Most times, I’m pretty sure the people I’m praying with have difficulty following my train of thought, and just wait for me to say, “Amen” and be done with it. In Romania, praying out loud was much more “put together,” as if the prayers were pre-written for this particular purpose.

The Holy Spirit inspired me to pray with Doamna Dumitra, incorporating all the worries she had relayed, weaving in the medical decisions she has to make in March, and praying for her estranged daughter. Scripture was also included in the prayer. The prayer circle our group formed with this family was truly awesome and marked the moment I knew I could be a full time missionary.

I am amazed and forever touched by the kind words from Doamna Dumitra. She cried as I left, wishing me safe travels, calling me her American friend, and thanking me for the time we took to sing songs to her, talk and pray with her. I later found out that Doamna Dumitra is like a second grandmother to Laurentiu, and I’m thankful that we were able to share this quality time together with her. It was truly the most fulfilling hour or so of my life.



Thank you for humoring me by sticking with me to the end of this article. Stay tuned for next month's segment, ***Part 4 – The Aftermath: How to Return to your “Previous Life”?***

Pace,

Ruth (with a little help from my Romanian friends)

