



# Annapolis College Ministry

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*"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you..."  
(St. Matthew 28:19-20).*

Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt

Dear Friends of Annapolis Pan-Orthodox College Ministry:

## OCF Romania RealBreak 2014

Christ is in our midst! It's with great joy that I write to you following our 2014 OCF Realbreak mission trip to Romania. The mission trip and pilgrimage with Orthodox student leaders from around the country took place from March 22-29. It was a tremendous blessing to minister Christ's love to "the least of these." And Christ gave us so much in return.



*1: Our impressive OCF group, loving and ministering to the children of Romania*



After arriving in Romania's capital, Bucharest, the ten of us traveled to Valea Scrazii and the Pro Vita ("For Life") ministry, where we jumped right in encouraging the adults who care for the orphans, abandoned or abused children, and the women, families, and elderly who have sought refuge in this safe haven of Christ's holy Church.



*2: Our OCF group at Crasna Monastery--one of the great blessings of our journey*

*3: One of many children who grabbed our hearts*

We prayed Evening Prayers with the children and I served Vespers for them, which was a particular blessing since they no longer have a priest serving in the village. We played with the children and brought many smiles to their faces, we read to them, we held them, we shared the love of Christ and His Church with them. We became part of their family.



*4: Praying with the children of Pro Vita--the beautiful faces of "the least of these"*



*5: One of the sick children and a care-taker we visited and ministered to*

There were some things that made us sad: one beautiful little girl, three years old (the same age as my daughter) also shared the same name, Anastasia, which means "the resurrection." She has a brain tumor and is not



*6: One of our daily debriefings that gave us a chance to process some of what Christ was teaching us*

expected to live. We spent time taking turns holding her as she is not able to walk. God gave us comfort in such situations, seeing that our love and affection was ministering to the children and their care-takers alike. The children opened their hearts to us and enabled us during those days to love them, pray for them, play with them, and remind them that they are not forgotten by their brothers and sisters in Christ far off upon the seas. We came to minister to the 400 plus children of Pro Vita, our little brothers and sisters in Christ, but we found that Christ was using us in far more ways than we could have even anticipated: I was able to hear the life



*9: Visiting one of the churches Pro Vita built for the children*

confessions of two of the women who have sought refuge at Pro Vita, fleeing abuse and the girls on the trip ministered to the women of Pro Vita in diverse ways.

While we came to be a blessing and to minister to others, we found that we were at least equally, if not more, blessed ourselves. As a priest, I was so greatly blessed and humbled to lead this group of young adults and to see God working in each of their lives through their encounters with the children, adults, and others they ministered Christ's presence to.

At the beginning of the week, I asked each of them to share something they wanted to receive from Christ in the course of the week. God exceeded all our expectations and gave us even more than we asked. It is said, that a week on a short-term mission trip can be packed with the lessons of a whole year. This was certainly the case for us.



*10: In Bucharesti with Fathers Vasile and John, visiting with Romanian OCF students*

Our last day-and-a-half was spent on pilgrimage in the capital, Bucharesti, where we were met by a group of representatives from the Romanian version of OCF called, ASCOR. We visited several churches and monasteries, venerated relics of the Saints, and were continuously strengthened and edified for our return to the States by the rich spiritual treasures Christ God prepared for us in this Orthodox country, that just 25 years ago emerged from one of the darkest periods of persecution against Christians in the world.

Many of the students commented that their experience in Romania will have a direct impact on their living out of their life in Christ back home. Many of them shared how discouraging it can be to be among just a few Orthodox Christian believers on their campuses or places of work. This trip gave them courage to see God at work in them and through them to a greater degree than they thought possible. As one student leader wrote to me after the trip, "This Realbreak trip has truly changed my life." Glory to Jesus Christ!

I want to thank you as a contributor to Annapolis Pan-Orthodox College Ministry (ACM) for your support of this ministry, which enabled me to lead these student leaders in their ministry to "the least of these," who are so precious to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

In Christ's love and wishing you every blessing for Holy Week and Pascha,

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*10: Some of the children's stories are heart-breaking*



*7: It was a great blessing ministering to and along-side these Christ-loving young women*



*8: Blessing the children after one of our services*



*11: Our blessed OCF group at one of the monasteries we were blessed to visit in this life-changing week*



*11: One of Pro Vita's children humbly posing next to the beautiful icon he wrote of St. Tatiana*