

Hosman, Easter 2018

Dear friends,

Ruth Zenkert's diary tells of Easter, of the daily toil and of the Resurrection.

What had become of Andrea and Nicoleta? Every day, the sisters had been coming to our social centre Casa Thomas in Nou to get a warm midday meal. They had been doing their homework with their teacher Minodora, who lives right in Nou's Roma settlement, and they had been eagerly learning to play a musical instrument. But now for quite a while they hadn't been coming any more. Minodora also discovered that they hadn't attended school for several days either. Had they been married off, as happens to so many of the young girls?

She knocked of the door of their little hut. There, their mother lay in bed and her two daughters were busy. One of them was doing the laundry in a small plastic bowl; her sister was cooking maize porridge on the stove. It had been a long time since their mother could leave the hut. During the last few years, she had become unbelievably obese, so much so that she could no longer walk. Minodora was appalled to see the sick woman and fell silent – she no longer needed an answer to the question she had been about to ask.

Nicoleta burst into tears. *"We don't go to school any more because the others laughed at us and our fat mother."* And where is your father? *"Mama sent him away because he was so disgusted by her. There is no space for him here any more."* That was doubly true.

We tried to call a doctor, but no city doctor will make house calls to the "gipsy" huts. So we had to bring Mama to the hospital. That wasn't easy: we had to hoist her into the body of our workshop truck, as she no longer fit into the passenger seat. In the hospital, they took blood samples and tried to weigh her, but the scales only went up to 200 kilos. She already weighed more than that. Then the doctor said he could operate on her to insert a ring into her stomach so that she

could no longer eat so much. However, she would first have to reduce her weight by 30 kilos. *"But I eat almost nothing!"* Mama cried despairingly. *"We three have to make do on 300 lei [66 euros] a month. We don't have too much, we have too little!"* Finally, we found a doctor who made the correct diagnosis: she was suffering from a metabolic disease.

Now Minodora visits the girls' Mama daily, brings healthy food and takes Andrea and Nicoleta along to school with her in the morning. And now that we are helping them to care for their mother, the sisters can again return to the social centre Casa Thomas.

Every day, our social centre is full of children. We can no longer even admit all of them, because our classrooms are out of seating space. We have to put off hopeful music students until autumn because none of the practice rooms are free. The house is bursting at the seams.

Luckily, the Protestant congregation is selling their parsonage which has been standing empty for the past 30 years. Hermann, a Saxon, is the last Protestant in Nou. We want to take over the building, renovate it and fill it with life! Then we could find space for the many village children who suffer hunger, who want to study, who need assistance. We intend to furnish a doctor's office for the sick to visit before it is too late for them, and a counselling centre for the parents. We need more staff to visit the families in the Roma settlement and to retrieve the children of families foundering in hardship and want and bring them back into life.

Dear friends! Please help us buy our new building and renovate it. Your contributions will be the building blocks of the Resurrection. Together with Ruth Zenkert and the whole Elijah family I wish you a joyous Easter!

With heartfelt thanks,

*Thank you for your confidence
Fr. Georg Sporschill SJ*