



Hosman, Lent 2016

*Dear friends,*

Victor hurries to his hut with a bundle of wood on his back. A leaden winter lies on the village. All is quiet, only our steps crunch in the snow. Victor asks me inside and quickly lights a fire. „I bought the stove with my first earnings from the carpenter’s workshop“, he proudly explains, and pokes the fire. In the glow from the fire I can see the threadbare wall hangings: stags at the edge of a forest, Jesus the Good Shepherd, the Last Supper.

Victor lives here with his grandmother; his mother is seeking her fortune abroad. He has no longer attended school since she left. Thus the sixteen-year-old can read only with difficulty. At times he can earn a little money helping day labourers; no further opportunities exist in the village.

All the way to Sibiu Victor had travelled and tried hard to find a job, but he returned from the city deeply disappointed. Without a school-leaving certificate and without identity papers he was turned away from the factory gates. So he asked around again whether anyone could use his help in the village. This is how he came to our workshop. Here he got some pocket money as temporary worker.

One day he brought along some pieces of wood and asked whether our master carpenter could make them into what they once had formed: a door. Together, they planned, sanded, glued and clamped the parts successfully: now Victor's hut can be closed tightly again.

His grandmother is away when I come to visit. „Where has she gone to?“, I inquire. Victor explains that she has travelled to his mother in Greece, because she has to obtain something for him. He wants to get real work and a regular income, but first he needs his mother's signature in order to apply for an identity card. „And where do you want to find employment?“, I ask. Victor shrugs his shoulders: „In your workshop, maybe?“ Sunken deep in thought, I return home in the chill of the night.

Our house workshop has become a training workshop. Seven boys are learning with Andrei, the master carpenter. Victor has already almost become his assistant. When his grandmother returns, he will hopefully get his papers. Then he can fulfil his greatest wish and be officially apprenticed in the ELIJAH workshop.

This is my Easter story: that people are given a fair chance in their own homeland. That an abandoned boy learns a trade. Miserable huts with many children long for resurrection. Their need drives us in Lent, urges us to do more. Dear friends, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your support.

To you and to your homes, for the many tasks that lie ahead of you, I wish the dynamic of hope that guides us all toward a joyful Easter.

With grateful affection,

*Fr. Georg Sporschill SJ*