

Marpod, Advent 2023

Dear friends,

Many years ago, we had taken in Silvia from the street, and now she came to visit with her husband and two children. „Moschu, Moschu!“ the children called me. Moschu means Grandpa, and so I unexpectedly became a grandfather. I'm always happy when former protégés cross my path. They now have children of their own and their work often includes caring for others. Some young people who were street children themselves work at Elijah as empathetic social workers. The doors and hearts of the poorest Roma families open to them. Where I lack understanding, where I have no more strength, they go further. With Bogdan, for example, the little knifer we were able to get out of prison. He worked in the carpentry shop, but gave up because he would rather go to the sheep. They bring Elvis, who had broken into our house, to the chapel; they ask me to forgive him. They are young Roma who widen my heart and help when we are at our wits' end.

Moise has been living in our house again since the summer. He survived for thirty years - most of the time at the train station. Angels protected him in prison, all through violence, drug use and illness. He proudly calls himself the „king of the highwaymen“. Everyone at the station knows him, the police greet him, he does business with the guards and often stands up for the little ones and wounded souls.

He has never endured in a house as long as he has now. He has found his place in the art workshop. Highly focussed, he paints pictures of what he has experienced. Children in the sewers, his fat mother Argentina, whom he has only seen once. The hungry children in the canteen, the joyful atmosphere in the chapel, the „gypsy life“ at the market, with horses, by an open fire. Moise's room is in the corner of the yard. In the evenings, the young people, volunteers and guests prefer to sit where Moise holds court. He explains his paintings, plays theatre and makes the heavy-hearted laugh. Only he is allowed to smoke, and he likes to earn himself a beer. Moise is a „servant of joy“ like no other. For thirty years we have struggled together. Now he sustains me with his special talent and gratitude.

It is a joy to be Moschu, Grandpa, and to see how the young ones carry on the work and can reach difficult hearts more easily than we older ones are able to. I admire their ideas, their nerve and unselfconsciousness and dispel my anxieties and excessive caution.

At Christmas, parents, children, grandchildren and everyone else get together. How wonderful it is when we can look at several generations, the children at the parents, the parents at the children. The child at the centre of Christmas permits us to gaze into the distance. It allows us to look back and be grateful. The children give us courage for the future. They remain our task, they are our joy - just as they are and challenge us. Let them be wild!

With Moise and the young people who gather around him, with Ruth Zenkert and her fellow campaigners, I wish you confidence for all that is to come and great joy when you look at the baby Jesus, your children and your protégés.

In deep solidarity I remain

Fr. Georg Sporschill SJ



Moise paints. He says of the picture:
„The street children in the underground sewers in Bucharest. The candles they stole from a church. Moise opens the manhole cover.“