

St. Stephen Protomartyr Ukrainian Church

VIEWS FROM THE PEWS | MAY 26, 2019

LIVING PEARL



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*"For you are all sons of
God by faith in
Christ Jesus."
Galatians 3:26*

I would like to introduce you to Family Home 'Living Pearl' [Детский Дом "Жива Перлина"] orphanage that helps orphans and boys from troubled families in Ukraine. The orphanage, located in Bortnyky (75 km south of Lviv), was started in 1998 and in the last 20 years more than 60 boys received living assistance, education and guidance. The primary objective was to have a place where abandoned, abused and emotionally wounded children will find a warm, peaceful and safe family environment in which they can be healed physically, emotionally, spiritually and become well prepared for an independent life. The home is grounded in Ukrainian Catholic based teachings.



See below a short video about Living Pearl

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kq1iAiEWx4E>

Ruslan Markiv, Director at Living Pearl, grew up in difficult times under the Soviet Union where he learned hard manual labour at an early age. He first helped his mother, and younger sister, then supported himself while studying in college and later working with a construction company. Ruslan joined the Catholic religious Order "Miles Jesu" in September 2000 and his relationship with hard manual work cooled down. He still had to work manually but it was not so frequent or intensive. In April 2004, Ruslan was sent to the orphanage in Bortnyky to help with certain tasks, 12 months later he became the Director with the main goal to change the environment among the children.

This is Br. Ruslan's story:

"There were 12 children back then in the orphanage and they were too individualistic and unfriendly to each other. The boys formed small groups (2-4 children) within the orphanage usually according to the age and interests and the groups did not get along with one another. Numerous techniques had been tried; various assistants and professionals were called, psychological specialists and special psychologists had been involved – little result was achieved.

In autumn 2004 the orphanage was visited by a Caritas group from the Czech town of Olomouc. Their director said: "You have many apple trees and apples here. We will donate you a juice machine that costs 6000 euro. It will be delivered here before the next fruit season." My first thought was that the 6000 euros could be put to much better use but did not want to discourage people from helping, so we accepted the machine. Having received detailed instructions and a demonstration of the machine's efficiency we picked a day and time to make juice. All 12 boys were involved. They worked for 2-3 hours and made over 500 litres of apple juice. The results were great and the machine was marvellous but my attention was struck by something else. I noticed the boys worked very well together, amazing team work with no arguments. The boys distributed the tasks between themselves. The smaller boys collected the apples and washed them in a big bath. The older boys took the apples and put them through the process. They also collected the juice and carried it into the kitchen. The small boys easily accepted the fact that only the older boys can work near the machine since there were electricity and an engine involved. The older boys in turn did not despise the younger ones and thanked them for collecting the apples and encouraged them to bring more. They all enjoyed the apple juice throughout the following winter.

After that juice making event I began involving the children more in various activities where they had to work together. The environment among the children was changing more and more in a positive direction. Gradually they became a family working and playing together. It is a rare case in the orphanage nowadays when a boy is crying and complaining about injustice he suffered from other boys. Of course there are challenging moments as in any family but the boys try sorting out these difficulties between themselves, my involvement in these situations is needed very rarely. A big change considering 14 years earlier it was my main concern. This change is a great consolation for me and continues to encourage me.

Manual work is not the only common activity in the orphanage. If it was, the place would look like a labour camp and the boys would protest and rebel against it. The healthy balance should be: prayer, study, work, recreation and free time. Also, work is not the only thing that can unite children in a family; the orphanage has sports, music and time spent singing together."

Brother Ruslan is a man whom God sent on a mission and with the assistance of people from Ireland, Czech Republic and Canada he will continue to change lives for the 30 boys currently living in the Family Home 'Living Pearl' and for future boys to come.

Please join us after morning liturgies on June 16th as we greet Br. Ruslan Markiv – Living Pearl Director, Roman (20), Sviatoslav (8), Zakhar (8), and sponsor Swade Holowatuk (from Airdrie). You will hear more about their 'Blueberry' project that is raising funds to help the orphanage become self-sufficient. Refreshments will be supplied by the UCWLC. Anyone wishing to support the Blueberry project will find envelopes in the Knights Room or if you choose to donate on-line go to: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/Enterprise4good/#donate-now-pane>

Your donation will go directly to the Bortnyky Ukraine Project (Blueberry Project). Mary Chudyk