

IOCC CHILDREN'S LENTEN PROJECTS

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[These projects can be used during any Lenten period, whether it is before Pascha or the Nativity of our Lord.]

The new IOCC video is quite good and focuses quite a bit on children and on our inter-Orthodox unity. It can be used to kick-off Lenten awareness and stewardship programs among Church School children.

On the Sunday before Lent, show the IOCC video and speak to the children about how St. John Chrysostom would always admonish us to prepare a box during Lent and place it near our icons. Every time we go to pray, we are to put a coin in it for the poor. This ties in the Prayer, Charity and Fasting we are to do in a visible way.

To help in the gift giving, the following were purchased at a local Christian Bookstore:

- a. For K-3 - Lenten coin boxes or dime folders
- b. For 4-6 - coin folders for quarters
- c. For 7-12 - Lenten donation envelopes

WHAT THE CHILDREN ARE TO DO.

1. The elementary school pupils were asked to put in a dime or quarter for each day of Lent.
2. The Jr. and Sr. high students were asked to set aside \$2 (or more) to put it in their envelopes, one envelope for each Sunday of Lent.
3. Bring their boxes/folders/envelopes to Church on Palm Sunday and place them in the special collection taken during the Liturgy.

WHAT THE PROJECT DIRECTOR IS TO DO.

1. Buy the blank coin folders since the pre-designed are made for Western Lent and do not correspond to our Eastern Lent.
2. Put together several pages of thematic design choices from Fr. Matusiak's *Orthodox Clip Art*, including an IOCC logo, and have each child decorate his/her own box/folder/envelope.
3. Provide an instruction sheet for them and their parents on how to use the folders. Include an IOCC brochure.
4. The boxes, folders and envelopes are to be collected on Palm Sunday in a special offering plate, in Church.
5. Teachers may keep charts in their classes to accompany the gift-giving program or just remind their students on a weekly basis of their stewardship for the poor.
6. Each child is to be properly receipted for their donation by the Church School.
7. Send the total amount donated by the Church School to IOCC with a list of names only.
8. Post the thank you letter from IOCC on a bulletin board and publish in the parish newsletter/bulletin.

GIFTS-IN-KIND

In times past, when IOCC maintained a *Gifts-In-Kind* program, children would do shoe box projects, buy toothbrushes and toothpaste, bring toys and the like. Many times the children would add notes with their return addresses and even receive responses. This was wonderful. However, it became exceedingly cost-prohibitive, as it costs about \$5, 000 to ship a 40 foot container overseas. Other options for delivery are being looked into by IOCC.

If the children would like to choose something that is tangible, they can collect their money and apply it to the purchase of Children's Art Kits which are purchased in Europe and shipping is included in the price. For approximately \$10-12 each, a child receives a colorful backpack, adorned with cartoon characters, containing:

- wax crayons (package of 6)
- colored pencils (package of 10)
- modeling clay (package of 12)
- coloring book (288pages)
- a sketch pad
- pencils (package of 6)
- rubber eraser

The children can ship notes and even photos to the IOCC field office and those making the distribution can hand them out, one with each kit.

Truly these kits bring a lot of joy to a poor and/or orphaned child, especially those living in collective centers or orphanages. At times, it is their only sense of joy and source of happiness. What we give up, which is really very little is greatly manifest among the needy and destitute.

It is therefore never too early to begin teaching children the importance of sharing with their less fortunate brothers and sisters. If it were not for us, many of our Orthodox throughout the world would have w one to lend them a helping hand.

3/5/98

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