“My little children, let us love not in word or in speech, but in truth and in action.”

— 1 John 3:18

To the Most Reverend Clergy, Venerable Monastics, and Devout Faithful of the Holy Orthodox Churches in the Americas:

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This Sunday before Thanksgiving, Orthodox faithful in the United States give thanks to God for His many blessings and for the privilege of serving Christ by serving others. The Assembly of Bishops has designated this A Day of Sharing, set aside to focus on the work of International Orthodox Christian Charities, or IOCC, whose mission is to help people facing hardship, wherever and whoever they are.

As the humanitarian and development agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America, IOCC is a way for Orthodox Christians to extend to others the great mercy that Christ shows each of us. Since it began in 1992, IOCC has served people facing war, famine, natural disasters, and economic hardship so that they may have the means to live with dignity, respect, and hope.

Through your faithfulness and generosity, IOCC extends hope to families, refugees, people displaced in their own country, the elderly, schoolchildren, orphans, people with disabilities, and those facing natural or manmade disasters. Amid crisis, IOCC offers practical assistance: food, water, and shelter for refugees across Europe and the Middle East; equipment for Syrians returning home and beginning to farm again; mentoring and training to help small businesses in Greece flourish; school buildings in rural Uganda; repairing and expanding water networks in Lebanon; responding to extreme flooding across Romania, Serbia, and right here in the United States. All this assistance—and these are only a few examples—is offered in the spirit of Christ’s love.

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As an agency of the Assembly, IOCC is an organization of all our Orthodox jurisdictions, echoing our unity in Christ as His body. St. John’s epistle admonishes us to “love not in word or in speech, but in truth and in action.” With IOCC we have the opportunity to give in practical, tangible ways—considering not our differences with our neighbors but our shared humanity, and remembering always the incarnate Lord’s request that we feed, clothe, and serve one another. As we thank God for His goodness, let us recommit to serving those facing great hardship, whoever and wherever they may be!

During this holy season, may the Lord shine His mercy upon you and your families and bring His peace into your homes and your hearts!

With paternal blessings and love in Christ,

+Metropolitan NICOLAE of the
Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas
Liaison for IOCC from the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America