

Mission to Romania

By Deacon Zoltán Kunszabó

IT IS ALWAYS A GREAT HONOR to receive an invitation for mission from Fr. Bőjte Csaba, a Hungarian Franciscan priest in Transylvania, who cares for 3000 orphans in 60 houses. He is very popular in the media and his books are bestsellers. Without a doubt, he is the number one moral authority among the Hungarian speaking community of Transylvania and also in Hungary. Fr. Bőjte planned a special kind of retreat in Nagyszalonta, very close to the Hungarian border. He had restored five large buildings there, former barrack-rooms of the communist army and he announced that between the meditations everybody was invited to work—digging, planting, and carrying water on the huge territory. The audience was really mixed: older children from the orphanage, some of their nurses and a lot of people from Transylvania and Hungary who support Fr. Csaba's work. They were also very mixed in terms of their beliefs: believers and non-believers, various teachers groups, and a crew of a politically "right wing guard" with a very Hungarian nationalist ideology, many of them wearing a type of uniform. Our priority from the first moment was to evangelize the group.

We began the retreat on Friday with an opening Mass in the parish church of the city. The theme of the retreat was peace—with God, with ourselves, with our family. Laci and I had the opportunity to share our stories of reconciliation with God. We spoke about the importance of repentance and faith in the Redeemer, as the way of reconciliation with God and the way of justification.

The following day we continued our spiritual program in the main dining room of Fr. Csaba's place. After our common worship and prayers, Fr. Csaba spoke about the Father's plan for every creature's life and harmony with God's will as the source of our inner peace. He also talked about peace with the created world and in the spirit of St. Francis he reminded us of our God-given call "to cultivate and care for the earth." After the meditations we went to work. It was really touching to labor together with the orphaned children. They wanted to work with us whole heartedly, and they needed our love and presence every moment. The time with them was also part of the mission. We took a break for a quick lunch and continued working until it was almost dark.

We then began our evening session with worship and more talks for about 120 in at-

tendance. Laci and I, as two family men, spoke about the "secret" of peace in the family and the necessary and strong foundation of faith in the living God. I also made it clear in front of the "guard members" that the best way to love their country is to love their wives and children and to be faithful in their marriages, something only possible with the grace of the living God. Laci emphasized the importance of common prayer in the family. Both of us were very serious about proclaiming the basic Gospel in front of this mixed audience. While preaching I felt the walls of some hard hearts, but I also felt the Lord's power and mercy to break them. After some worship songs we finished the day and on the way back we prayed for the sowed seeds to grow! We were also happy because our connection with Fr. Csaba was strengthened. I believe the Lord will use us together in the great work of the new evangelization. +



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A "team" of eager helpers worked beside Zoli and Laci throughout the afternoon. They are some of the 3,000 orphans cared for by Fr. Casaba in Transylvania.