

ROMANIAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE
Eparchy of St. George in Canton



Office of the Bishop

September 15, 2008

Beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord,

As I am writing this, I am thinking about how lucky I am that my office at St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Louisville, Ohio, has electricity and that I am able to work here. My mother's home, where I live—only six miles away—is one of over a million homes in Ohio left without power by the remnants of Hurricane Ike that passed through the Midwest yesterday, and our governor says it could be days before power is restored. So far, three Ohioans have been killed by Ike, and Ohio is nowhere near the Gulf of Mexico. Think of what has happened to Galveston, Texas! Misery can have a very long reach.

I am a bit inconvenienced by the lack of electricity at home, but I do not have to go far or do much to be able to work and carry out a mostly normal existence, unlike our fellow Americans in Texas.

However, this time I am not writing about our fellow Americans.

We have brothers and sisters in Romania who have been touched by misery in their own way. Nearly 27,000 of them were affected as catastrophic floods in the northeast of the country damaged or destroyed nearly 6,000 homes and ravaged transportation and agricultural infrastructure this past July. The total damage is estimated at \$785 million. Many of us were able to see, via television or the internet, the terrible damage caused when, for instance, floodwaters caused the earthen homes common in the villages of this area to collapse. You know that this disaster affected the poorest communities the most.

Recently, I received an appeal from the Embassy of Romania in Washington, DC, to assist them in fundraising to address this catastrophe. At the same time, our spiritual head, Archbishop Lucian, circulated a letter on August 8 in which he asked our Greek-Catholic parishes in Romania to take up a collection during the month of August to be sent directly to Catholic Charities in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Iasi and the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Maramures (Baia Mare) for their work in flood relief. (His letter is enclosed, along with an English translation.)

In solidarity with the efforts of our Church in Romania, we are taking up the same collection during the months of September and October. Whatever we are able to raise from our members will be added to the sum contributed by our members in Romania to Maramures and Iasi. I am writing you now to ask you to consider making a contribution, however small, to our Church's efforts in Christ's name to relieve the suffering this flood has caused so many.

In his letter, Archbishop Lucian reminds us that we are obliged to take action to demonstrate, by our deeds of mercy, that we are sensitive to our fellow human beings in their troubles. Remember that even a small deed of mercy is mercy nonetheless, and mercy is what our God, in Jesus Christ, has shown himself to be. If you think that your \$5 or \$10 won't amount to much, consider this: the response of our government in Washington to Romania's appeal for help was a promise of \$50,000—that's all. Even so small a sum as \$5,000, if we are able to raise it through your generosity, would amount to ten per cent of what was pledged by the United States, and it would demonstrate that Romanian-Americans are aware of, and sensitive to, the tragedies that afflict the land of our families' origin.

I know that you are already struggling in your own families with the difficulties that have afflicted us in the US. We are living in a season of catastrophes: hurricanes, floods, and tsunamis—not to mention wars and economic collapse. The temptation to ignore the suffering of our own relatives in Romania is strong, but if we turn a deaf ear to their cries, who will hear them? Mercy, as well as misery, can have a long reach as well, but only if we take personal responsibility to be merciful wherever mercy is required.

Thanks for opening your ears—and your hearts.

Gratefully yours in Jesus, our Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Michael Botean". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Reverend John Michael Botean
Bishop
Romanian Catholic Diocese of Canton

†JMB/om