

True Religion – Part 2

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True Religion: To care for the needy, the widows and the orphans



The words of Sandra were a powerful reminder of what young people are expecting from religion. Religion needs to be relevant, it needs to be driven by a desire to improve the lives of people and link them to both their God and their global family.

Serving in the Village of Orphans

As volunteers from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds we soon realized that we were in Hungary for more than doing construction and

repairs on buildings. The promise that our coming represented was recognized by the media and for three weeks our experiences in country were filmed and became a documentary that was shown on Hungarian national TV. Our teams were microcosms of the world and would serve as a model; an example of what the future could be in Hungary and elsewhere. People were looking for a new pathway.



In addition to the work for the Gypsy community we took on projects that had us improving several primary schools while one team worked in Fut in a village that was filled with Orphans. Our work with orphans proved to be a powerful way to rediscover the simple essence of what our responsibilities are as members of one universal family.

The Orphan Village where we worked was started shortly after a deadly uprising in 1956. People at that time took to the streets in hopes of finding greater freedom but before

long those hopes were crushed with the help of Soviet tanks. The fighting turned many children into orphans and these children were often without a home.

The Orphan Village was a humanitarian response to the need of that time. In its 'peak' years the village hosted over 200 young girls and boys. When our team arrived the orphanage was guided by a visionary man who believed that the children needed to have a 'sacred space'. A sacred place is an environmentally beautiful area, a setting where children could come to pray or sit quietly and reflect. The way they communed was according to their own needs. Creating such a place in the past would not be permitted but the time had come for changes.

Our volunteers happily took on the challenge and helped shape a Peace Garden with local donations of dozens of species of bamboo trees and a wide variety of flowers and greenery. The garden and pond belonged to all the children and staff who were free to use the beauty of the crafted environment as a way to find peace and renewal.



There was a rich satisfaction taken in landscaping, planting and shaping the picturesque Peace Garden and this was multiplied by the willingness of so many children to join in and help. As the project moved forward you could watch fair skinned Hungarian orphans on the shoulders of Uncle Kerim from Ghana and holding hands with Auntie Fazida from Singapore or playing soccer with Uncle Sergio from Spain.

The orphans were no longer isolated, their joyful faces expressed how they were realizing that the world was providing them with many Uncle's and Aunties. These experiences were a living proof to each of us that we are a global family. As religious people we realized the ancient wisdom that by working with the orphans we were fulfilling a basic religious obligation. Doing what was right was simply another way in which we would model the true spirit of freedom.

Quality of heart is the goal of true religion

Our time in Hungary helped us discover that young people are not impressed with a religious label or race and culture. What is of primary importance is the quality of a person's heart, which is demonstrated by

how we take care of those in need. Am I caring for the hungry, the lonely, those seeking help or am I self-absorbed, taking care of my own and shutting out others? When people of faith cross over barriers to create a deep level of cooperation it moves hearts and minds, and attracts those seeking to find a deeper meaning in life. The spirit moves.

This is the challenge that faces all the world's religions today and it is one that will decide if religion will be a driving force for positive change in the future. Loving the orphans, caring for the homeless, working together as one family, these are visible examples of God's spirit being visited on a community. This is something worth striving for.