

**„Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones“**

Mathew 18, 10



Dear friends, dear brothers and sisters

Again and again new ghetto kids stand in front of our door. This verse from St. Mathew's Gospel challenges us but we don't close our door.

You haven't heard from us for quite a long time. During the last months our work has developed enormously. This bothered certain political and religious groups - so much so that they tried to prevent the enrolment of our kids at school on September 15<sup>th</sup> and the start of our secondary school programme at Michalowski School. We had burglars in our place who stole my lap-

top, documents and my Bible. There was an attack from hackers which destroyed all our data files. There was also action taken against our work in the quarter. Members of our Baptist Church parish received threats to intimidate me. Various political groups spread lies among the Roma so that Roma parents will take their children out of our projects. Thanks to GOD'S help we had a lot of support in this difficult situation and were able to carry on with our work.

### **The PAISIY HILENDARSKI association was founded**

We are known to many of you by the name LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS. The new association PAISIY HILENDARSKI is now added to this network. Up to know we were integrated into the social welfare work association of our church. As our work has greatly increased since 2009, it was necessary to found an independent association on the spot. Furthermore, we will very soon be buying a building site to build our own house. By law, the social welfare work association cannot own this house. This is why we had to found a public corporation which we called PAISIY HILENDARSKI. So we are now completely separate from the social welfare work association of our church, but we do not have to do without its expertise though and their expert knowledge will be available for us in future.

### **Who is PAISIY HILENDARSKI?**



Paisiy Hilendarski (1722-1773) was a Bulgarian clergyman, who encouraged the Bulgarian Christians under the Turkish occupation to pray, preach and sing in their mother tongue. For 500 years Bulgarians had to live under this occupation. About 100 years after the monk's death Bulgaria was free again from the Turkish occupation.

### **Not only for the Roma but also for all human beings in Bulgaria**

In the inaugural meeting of the PAISIY HILENDARSKI association more than 75% of the members were in favour of giving up the ethnic reference of our work. Particularly the Roma said that Christian work must not carry special 'skin colour' and should not stop at the borders of the

Roma settlement. In the long run we want to support children outside the ghetto - in particular socially disadvantaged or handicapped children.



### **More than 120 Roma attend school – the partnership with the school has been intensified**

About 120 of the children and youths take part in educational programmes or attend a public school, where we work closely with the local authorities. Our partnership with the Michalowski School has been very much intensified. Last year two classes were sent to school. Our children have developed very well, and there is now hardly any difference between them and the Bulgarian children. At the beginning of this school year we were able to send a further class to school. The headmistress of the school has offered to rent rooms to us for a reasonable price, in order that we can transfer part of our work there.

### **Homework supervision is as important as school itself**

Although it is expensive, all children requiring assistance with their homework now have free supervision by private teachers. As the parents are unable to cope with the material to be taught at school, we have employed two teachers who decide what is appropriate. Many more children are now asking for our help and we don't want to turn any away. In order to achieve this many more teachers are required.

### **School leaving certificate programme for older youths**

For the older youths who have never gone to school and who now can't be integrated into the normal school system, the authorities offer another solution. They are now able to achieve the school leaving certificate in 4 years which is around half of the normal time. In January, we started two new basic courses for Maths and Bulgarian. In September, the headmistress of the Michalowski School helped us prepare the boys for these courses. In Varna there is no organization offering support although the PAISIY HILENDARSKI association, together with the schools and the local authorities, are doing some kind of pioneering work.



### **Buildings and building site**

Along with the three living stations we rent a former internet room, a former casino room and a former pub room. The rental for this is very high - particularly as it is a long term agreement in order to avoid the need for any sudden moves. While we are very happy to be able to use the rooms in the school, we are planning to build our own association house soon where our work will continue to be carried out at a much lower cost.

Cordial greetings

Yours

Frank