

July 2012 Greece, African Refugee Brethren, Impressions of Riga

The *Bible Companion* readings for this Sunday include Matthew 9 and there's an MP3 on this chapter at <http://www.aletheiacollege.net/audio/mt9.mp3>

AFRICAN REFUGEE BRETHERN

There are hundreds if not thousands of our brethren and sisters in refugee camps in Africa. As mentioned previously, there's a real need for care and prayer for them now that food support is being reduced. The media report that in 2011, the European Union gave the poorer world about euro; 18 billion less than was originally planned. A sudden cut in 18 billion Euros from planned budgets is significant. With soup kitchens opening in the more crisis-struck areas of Western Europe, it's not surprising. We're hearing from brethren in refugee camps all over Africa about the serious practical impact this has upon them. They certainly need our prayers and support. Brother Isaac writes from a camp in Tanzania: "*We want you to help us how to get food because no food which is distributed in the camp and this decision is for all Reefuges in this camp. We require to helpe us in this periode where we are in difficulties. Because UNHCR AND WFP (World FOOD PROGRAM) Stopped to give us food*".

Food parcels have been sent out to this camp.

GREECE

We mentioned recently that we'd baptized brother Simon in Athens; we're pleased to report that another Iranian refugee brother, Farshid, is currently in Athens, and that br John & Sis Erica Galbraith from Australia took time out from their holiday in Greece to meet with and fellowship our two brethren, and baptized DAVOOD, another Iranian. Here's brother John baptizing our brother, receiving him into fellowship, and the Iranian brethren fellowshiping together around God's word. We give thanks for this providential development of the Lord's work in Athens, a city where He was of course mightily active 2000 years ago.

Riga June 2012

Many who know me know I struggle with a life long fear of flying. For many years anticipation of a flight was sure to produce some time in the Hospital. I have progressed somewhat from those days yet getting on the aircraft produces the most anxiety I experience. Flying over the Atlantic to Riga came with the usual anxiety an anxiety that was soon forgotten once introduced to the Ecclesia in Riga. I am humbled and exhilarated by the days I have spent here. Humbled because literally hundreds of believers in the Ecclesia get up each morning without any home or place to go during the day. In addition they are without any idea whether they will eat or if they will face sunshine, rain or cold as they approach each day. They live by faith and in the Blessed Hope alone.

In two of three days of lectures there were around 100 attentive baptized believers listening and then discussing God's word. The third day there were perhaps 60 as it becomes almost impossible to pay bus fare for three days running. The interest and understanding of scripture was enriching to behold. During my five days here I have seen four baptism. And its clear why this happens the Ecclesia has members of nearly 300 should all attend at once I am not sure the Hall would hold them! The reasons (as I see) for the baptisms is the strong attention to Bible instruction in every lecture.

Solid exposition gives people hope as they fully understand the message of Salvation, the tender mercy shown and acknowledgment of our common humanity provides the loving message Jesus left us to preach. "This is how you will know my disciples by their love for one another". In my observation the loving validation of the worth of these human beings and the consistent instruction in righteousness according to the scripture produces believers whose passion sends

them out preaching. Then they bring their friends and they get that instruction and are baptized and bring in their friends. The Riga Ecclesia in the hands of Duncan's pastoral care has flourished because it sees the reflection of Christ's whole mission namely: a right balance between the expression of God's loving care for his "little one's" through feeding and welfare programs, and the instruction in the plan of salvation for all men.

In Riga this has been offered freely to those whom the world considered worthless but who have been made to know their worth to God through Christ Jesus. It has been my privilege to be here and see these truly devoted disciples. It puts one's fear of flying in the air into perspective when visiting with those who routinely have to put aside their fear of dying on the streets.

Those baptized were SKAIDRITE, mother of sister Sandra, who was present at the baptism in the Baltic Sea at the very spot she was baptized previously. The family were all so very happy despite very tragic lives.

Photos: Sis. Sandra and Skaidrite; being greeted after baptism by sister Suzie and then by Skaidrite's son in law, bro. Andrej;



Photo: Our two sisters, mother and daughter, eating together at one of the feeding schemes after the meeting



Then there was NIKOLAY, an older man who at present is living literally on the street, sleeping where he can. You can only sleep in the night shelters in Riga for around 300 nights / year, the rest of the time you have to find your own shelter, and Nikolay counts himself lucky that his "free time" has come in the Summer when it's warm. Spectacles were distributed, and Nikolay was so thrilled with his. Whenever there was a chapter or passage to be read, he eagerly volunteered. He was just so happy to be able to read the Bible more easily.

Photo: Spectacle distribution before meeting



Finally NATALYA and TATYANA were baptized, these are two sisters in the flesh now both in their 70s and also living in the shelters. The baptism service was performed by reading Romans 6, an exposition of the chapter and of the Red Sea being a type of baptism, and then we all gave some words of encouragement to these two obviously very sincere and earnest ladies.

Photos: Baptismal group at Natalya & Tatyana's baptism; our two sisters about to leave the hall afterwards



Affectionate Greeting to you all

Susie

With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks