

NEWS RELEASE

For more information, contact:

Rev. Fr. Justin Mathews
Executive Director, CEO
FOCUS North America
816.399.0909
FrJustin@focusna.org

FOCUS NORTH AMERICA LAUNCHES ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN DOMESTIC SOCIAL ACTION NETWORK

FOCUS North America established to support and build up domestic Orthodox social action ministries.

KANSAS CITY—April 7, 2009—In early 2009, FOCUS North America (Fellowship of Orthodox Christians United to Serve) launched as a network of Orthodox Christian social action ministries that express Christ's love in North America for those who are hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick or in prison (Matt. 25:35-5). In its first 60 days of operation, FOCUS North America has partnered with dozens of Orthodox agencies and parish initiatives and awarded more than \$30,000 in grants.

FOCUS grew out of the need for an Orthodox Christian effort to address the persistent and pervasive needs of the suffering, impoverished or vulnerable in North America. It is a staggering reality that over 40 million people live below the poverty line and the unemployed rate exceeds 11 million people in North America and is increasing. While there are a variety of Orthodox Christian agencies within all jurisdictions effectively engaged in addressing these needs, a coordinated effort with national support and encouragement could be much more effective.

In January 2009, an historic meeting of twenty leaders, staff, academics and patrons of leading Orthodox Christian domestic social action agencies, with members representing a variety of Orthodox jurisdictions in North America, was sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Charles and Marilee Ajalat and the Orthodox Vision Foundation. That meeting was the catalyst for the creation of FOCUS North America and the refining of its vision, which is to make a significant and sustainable impact through Orthodox Christian social action initiatives in the lives of suffering, impoverished or vulnerable persons of any age, race, creed or color in North America, especially in, but not limited to, ministries providing immediate relief in the areas of Food, Occupation, Clothing, Understanding and Shelter.

FOCUS is compelled by Christ's mandate to serve those in need through:

- **Education** in faith communities of the Scriptural mandate, historical precedence and urgency for living out the Christian faith and witness through personal involvement in social service
- **Support** of existing social action agencies through training, coordination and funding from significant private and public sources
- **Initiating** the creation, and nurturing the healthy growth and funding, of new locally-based social outreaches and their leaders
- **Collaboration** with individuals who want to support social ministry through volunteerism or funding of these initiatives

Orthodox agencies and parishes with social service initiatives or plans for future projects are encouraged to become part of the FOCUS North America network. For more information about FOCUS North America, go to www.FocusNorthAmerica.org or contact Fr. Justin Mathews at 816.399.0909 or via email at FrJustin@focusna.org.