

Subj: **A little goes a long way...**
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Dear Praying Friends,

The e-mail below was written by one of our short-term teamies Anne Perdicaris (her second time serving with us). Thought you might enjoy a glimpse through the eyes of a short-termer...

Grateful for you,

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Web pages:

www.ITRefMin.org (click "Teams", then click "Athens")

www.iteams.org

<http://refminathens.blogspot.com> (some refugee stories)

www.geocities.com/scripturecalligraphy (purchase beautiful art and support our teammates)

www.helpinghands.gr/en/default.htm

Our ministry is striving to be a FULL-SERVICE station on this exit ramp of the Refugee Highway by partnering with churches to offer practical services which demonstrate the love of God for the refugee as a whole person, and which invite the refugee to be a part of advancing His kingdom among the nations.

April 19, 2006

Dear Friends,

It seems like just yesterday that I arrived in Athens, but time is quickly flying by. My prayer is that every day, I'll allow the Holy Spirit to keep me near to our Lord, and to work in and through me to show the many refugees at the Athens Refugee Center (ARC) how they can have that same nearness with Him.

There's so much to tell you about what God is doing at the ARC, so much evidence of Christ being shared and so many remarkable, touching incidents that occur here.

One of these happened a week or so ago during the ARC's "shower ministry." This ministry allows the refugee men—many of whom aren't privy to showers of their own—to clean off the grime of living, working, and often sleeping on Athens' very dirty streets.

To you and I, cleaning up is a given, a basic need, but for the refugees, the 8-minute stream of hot water that the ARC provides is nothing short of a luxury.

Of course, as a woman, I'm not out and about when the shower ministry is in gear. Instead, I'm in the

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ARC's office, getting ready to teach the new believers' class. But I can hear the whole process through the thin walls: the missionary guys warmly welcoming the refugee men, the refugees' grateful murmurs as they take a towel and soap, the *whoosh* of the shower jets, and the genuine glee and gratitude that the men express as they leave the ARC and step out onto the street clean, with renewed dignity.

One man who came to the shower ministry, perhaps an African from Somalia, seemed to glow with gratitude after his shower. "Very nice," I heard him gush to one of the male missionaries. "I'll *never* forget it! Yes, I'm *clean* now, very nice."

Last week, my roommate Susie told me that a Somali mother and her children (the same family that I told you about in my last letter) wanted to use the showers. I thought to myself, can you imagine the shame it must cause this woman to ask strangers—foreigners and folks whom your own religion considers to be "unclean" (as some Muslims believe non-Muslims to be) to use their shower?

But the woman came, looking world-weary, toting her garbage bag of possessions, trailed by her thin, solemn-eyed, very perceptive children. As Susie turned the showers on, I was surprised to hear something that I never thought I'd hear: children's laughter, and singing in the shower! These kids, so sad and serious, were laughing and singing in the shower, delighted at being clean again, and perhaps delighted at having this one element of their normal life restored, if even for 10 minutes one afternoon.

I stepped out of the office to see the kids getting dressed in the new clothes that Susie had given them. Iman, the little daughter, was thrilled with her new Halloween-themed socks. She leaned over, giggling, and looked at us from her upside-down position—the sort of playful gesture that any normal little girl might do, and suddenly little Iman and her family became much more human to me. I saw how giving a cup of cold water—or, in this case, a warm shower and clean clothes—in Jesus' name, can restore life to weary, hopeless people. The mother hugged us tightly as she left, reminding me again of how so little can mean so much to those in need. **Please, pray for Iman and her family.** Pray that she and her mother and siblings will find physical and emotional rest and security in Greece. And, that they will find ultimate peace and healing, and new life, in Christ.

Another remarkable incident occurred while I sat in on an English class at the ARC. Diana, the English teacher, asked her students (most of whom are Muslims from Iran, Afghanistan, or Iraq) to get into groups and to discuss their ideas about how *they* would run their countries, if given the chance. She asked them, "Would your country have a state religion?" Some of the students said, yes, they'd like Islam to be the state religion. Another said that he'd like freedom of religion. Then, a young Afghani told Diana that he'd like Christianity to be the state religion of his country.

His reply raised eyebrows. Another student from Afghanistan asked skeptically, "Why Christianity?" The first Afghani replied, "Because Jesus died to save *all* the people." "Are you *sure*?" asked the skeptic. "Yes," he said decisively. "I am *VERY* sure." This young man's faith could cost him dearly. **Please pray for physical provision for him and that that his faith and love for Christ will grow.**

I've also seen evidence of God at work in the hearts, minds, and lives of the refugees who come to the new believers' class every Tuesday evening. I've taught the class for the past two weeks, and am sobered by the realization that *this* class—and the words that *I* say—might be the only Christian teaching that these former Muslims are getting! I'm very humbled by this, and a bit worried ☺, yet ultimately thankful that God is the power in these classes. **Will you please pray that I have the wisdom, grace, and love needed to be used of the Lord in these classes?** In my next letter, I'll tell you more about the students. But for now, **will you also pray for each student in these classes,** that "Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith," and that they'd be "*rooted and grounded in love,*" and *be able to "comprehend, with all the saints, the breadth and length, and height and depth, and to know*

the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge, that they may be filled up to all the fullness of God.” (Eph. 3:17-19)

Finally, this weekend is the Eastern Orthodox celebration of Christ’s crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. In just a few minutes, I’ll leave for the bus station, where I’ll head off on along bus ride to Lefkada, the island where my grandfather was born, and where many cousins still live. I enjoy the Orthodox celebrations and am blessed by them, but I’m praying that the Lord will allow this weekend to be a special time of celebrating with my cousins that Christ’s resurrection means peace with God, forgiveness of sins, and a Christ-filled and fueled life.

Thank you so much, brothers and sisters in Christ, for being my partners in this short-term mission. God is using you to shed his light, the light of Christ, on people who desperately need him. Until next time, **please let me know how I can pray for you**, and please know valuable you are in this time in Athens.

In Christ, our hope, our anchor,
Anne Perdicaris