

## **ROMANIA TWINNAGE**

Our connection with Romania started in the mid 1990s when the SVP in England & Wales discovered the desperate situation in the country after the fall of the Ceaucescu Communist regime. Members from England & Wales visited Romania and found orphanages full of abandoned children, many infected with HIV, whose families had not been able to care for them. For forty years up to the revolution in 1989 the Catholic Church and its organisations had been suppressed. The SVP, which had been present in the country since the 1890s, was now able to re-form and Conferences spread rapidly. Members began to support individual families with food, clothing and medicines. This form of support is till the main work of the Conferences.

### **Support from England & Wales**

From the beginning the SVP in England & Wales supported the Society in Romania with grants and in 2002 Romania was incorporated into the Twinnage scheme. A special “double-twinning” arrangement was made so that each Romanian Conference could have two England & Wales twins. Currently there are 38 Conferences in Romania. 23 of these have twins in England & Wales. Of these 5 are double –twinned, so there are still 18 Romanian Conferences available for twinning.

### **Addressing local needs**

Many Conferences have set up an SVP office where people can register with the Society to have their needs assessed and addressed. Members organise soup kitchens for families and canteens for school-children. The SVP in Romania has a special concern for gypsies and people with handicaps.

### **Special projects**

The Conference in Campulung focuses on the needs of children who have been brought up in the local orphanage, but who leave at the age of 18. The Impreuna (“Together”) project provides accommodation and employment for over 50 young women. A small factory prepares clothing for export. Others are employed in a restaurant, a laundrette, an allotment and a gift shop. The project is managed by a team of SVP members, who also organise a daily soup kitchen for over 200 families and an after-school club for employees’ children.

In Slatina the SVP Conference supports a social centre for the profoundly deaf offering pastoral care and advocacy.

In Vita Conference members run 2 children’s homes for abandoned children. Each has just 10 children and the emphasis is on living together in a family community. Contact with the children’s families is maintained with regular updates on their social and academic progress and families are encouraged to take their children home during holidays.

### **Holiday schemes**

Many Conferences run children’s camps during the long summer holidays, enabling children from the inner cities to enjoy a break in the mountains or by the Black Sea. SVP members organise programmes of catechesis, outdoor activities, competitions and excursions. In 2007 a grant from the Society in England & Wales enabled thirteen of our twinned Conferences to provide children’s holidays.