



Father to the fatherless

Bohdan's story



It was a pleasant evening in Southern Italy. The working day had been a long, hot one for Marina, and as she entered the city park, she was delighted to spot an empty bench in the shade of some beautiful trees. She settled in and was thoroughly enjoying the cool breeze, chirping birds and the rustling of leaves in the wind.

Before long a man joined her on the bench. They exchanged pleasantries and, to their mutual surprise, they discovered they were both from Ukraine. Not only that—they were from the same city (Borislav) in Western Ukraine.

Mykola was a recent immigrant, while Marina had been in Italy for 10 years. Excited to meet a fellow compatriot in a foreign country, they began sharing stories and memories of the old days in Borislav.

After a lighthearted discussion of events and people in their hometown, Marina's face suddenly became serious. "Let me tell you the one reason I would like to go back to Borislav," Marina declared. "I pray that God would give me a chance to have a glimpse into the life of one orphan, Bohdan, who used to live next door to me and for whom I have prayed all these years."

As she started to unpack Bohdan's story, Mykola became transfixed by what he was hearing.

ORPHANED AT 11 MONTHS

Twenty years earlier, when Bohdan's mother was two months pregnant, she was diagnosed with gangrene in one of her legs. The doctors insisted that she abort the fetus so they could amputate and save her life.

Despite the fact her husband left her as soon as he heard about the disease, she refused to have an abortion no matter what it cost her.

After delivering the baby, the doctors amputated her infected leg, however, several months later, the gangrene came back and the doctors weren't able to save her.

Bohdan's only relative was a grandmother, who agreed to take care of the little boy. She lived alone in a single room

of a dilapidated old building, divided into eight small apartments and given to the poorest citizens in the region.

PRAYERS FOR BOHDAN

"I was one of their neighbours and helped when I could. I watched this child grow up," Marina continued. "I also know about his Uncle who would beat him on occasion. I left Ukraine when Bohdan was about five or six years old, and since then, my everyday prayer was for Bohdan to have a better future and life. I would give anything to find out how he's doing right now..."

Mykola was awestruck as he realized God was about to miraculously use him to be His messenger. With tears welling up in his eyes, he said to her, "Our meeting today is not a coincidence, Marina. I can assure you - your prayers were answered!"

BOHDAN AND THE CHILD SPONSOR PROGRAM

Despite living in extreme poverty, Bohdan was a joyful, happy, active boy. The whole neighbourhood loved his cute freckles, humble spirit, ruffled red hair, and kind heart.

God had already heard the prayers of His people and was busy preparing a great plan for Bohdan's life. The cycle of poverty he was born into would be broken in one life-changing event.

One day, a woman from a local Baptist church invited Bohdan and his grandmother to a Sunday service. They were impressed with the welcoming atmosphere and the friendly, helpful people, and started attending regularly. Bohdan, however, was ashamed that compared to others at church, his clothes were so old and tattered.

At this very same juncture, HART was partnering with this church to begin a Child Sponsor Project. HART's caseworker and member of the church, Serhiy, recognized the new family's financial plight and immediately accepted Bohdan into the program.

"He's always been a lovely boy with a playful smile," Serhiy remembers. "When they started receiving monthly

food packages, Bohdan's grandmother would always meet me with tears of gratitude, asking me to pass her thankfulness to the sponsors in Canada."

"Bohdan was very mature and realized the blessing this support was for him and his grandmother. He diligently attended Sunday school classes. Often during severe winter weather, no one expected Bohdan at church knowing the long and difficult journey it was for a child," Serhiy recalls. "Surprisingly, Bohdan would always show up, wet and tired, but smiling proudly that he'd made it to church."

"I remember when he received his first birthday gift funds from his sponsors," Serhiy continues. "Instead of asking me to buy him a toy or soccer ball as most children would, he approached me and asked politely, 'Uncle Serhiy, would you be so kind as to use this money to buy me a pair of pants so I can come to church in nice, clean clothes?' At that moment, I realized with such attitude and humble heart, this boy was going to succeed one day."

UNCLE MYKOLA

Close to Bohdan's home was a Baptist seminary with a big yard. Bohdan would often play there, so over time everybody at the seminary knew the little red-haired boy.

The man on the bench in Italy, Mykola, was a teacher at this seminary. He had his own family, however there was something intriguing about this freckle-faced, smiling orphan.

One evening as he was about to leave work, he walked over to where Bohdan was playing and started a conversation with him. It was then he learned that Bohdan was an orphan and that he was attending a Baptist church.

From that day on, the two of them became very close. Bohdan had never met his real father, but the wisdom, love and care Mykola poured into this boy made him feel like he truly had a father. In the ensuing years, Mykola taught Bohdan everything he needed to know about becoming a strong, independent, and responsible young Christian man.

TALENT, HARD WORK AND CHARACTER

With Mykola's encouragement, at age 16, Bohdan entered a culinary college, followed by practical training in restaurants and hotels in Poland. His talent and hard work soon paid off. By the following summer, he'd been invited to work in Poland's capital city of Warsaw. After a few short years of experience, he's become more qualified than his teachers in college. **His dream is to one day open a restaurant of his own in Ukraine.**

Today, Bohdan gives praise to God for everything that's happened to him. "When we first came to church, I found it interesting, but it was through the Child Sponsor Project that I came to know the Lord," he explains. "At first, I would attend Sunday school only out of gratitude for the food packages we received, but I later realized that there was something much bigger behind the nice singing and amazing church fellowship. I met Jesus. Getting to know Him more was my only desire."

When Bohdan finished the culinary college, God had prepared another surprise for him. A lady from the city administration called to inform him that he, as an orphan, was being given a one-bedroom apartment. Bohdan couldn't believe his ears. He began weeping and praising the Lord for His mercy.



"I know that my life could have been completely different," Bohdan admits. "If I hadn't been invited to church and later sponsored by amazing people from Canada through HART, most likely I would have gone into drugs, joined gangs, become an alcoholic, and ended up in jail as most of the orphans in Borislav did. I would never get a degree, or a job. The city administration would never call me offering an apartment. And what is the most important, I wouldn't get to know the Lord..."

"I owe my life and everything I have to God. **I thank HART and my dear sponsors for giving me a priceless chance for better future,**" Bohdan says. "HART's help is immense, for you are an instrument in God's hand to change the lives of thousands of orphans and children as myself."

The life of one orphaned child was completely transformed thanks to a selfless grandmother; the faithful prayers of a compassionate neighbour; a caring woman who invited them to church; Uncle Mykola, who became a father and mentor; and HART's Child Sponsor Project with sponsors who were willing to support Bohdan and his grandmother for years. All these elements brought Bohdan into a relationship with Jesus and demonstrated the love that God (**Father to the fatherless**) has for each of his precious children.

Recently, when asked what was the most important take-away from the experience of meeting Bohdan, the sponsors' reply was: **"For us, just being faithful and obedient has shown us in a very tangible way the impact that our small, consistent actions can have on others' lives today and for the future."** ...Peter & Juliana

Thank **YOU** for working **together** with us... **changing the world - one heart at a time.**

Lloyd Cenaiko
President/Founder





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USA - 7340 E Main St. #200, Scottsdale, AZ 85251
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the world is too BIG,
and GOD'S LOVE is
too great - to live an
ORDINARY LIFE**

hartbeat
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DEFEND the cause
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