

Tichindeal/Ziegental, Christmas 2014

Dear friends,

Aurica is pulling an old wooden cart, filled with dirty clothes, behind her. Two little children are sitting on top of the heap and a third child stumbles along beside her and grumbles. It is difficult going along the stony village road. Aurica stops and takes a deep breath. Her big stomach announces a fourth child. "Where are you going", I asked. She replies, "To my mother's, but we can't stay there." I ask, "What is happening?" We sit down together on a bench in front of a village shop. She tells me that her husband has beaten her and she is not going back to him. She has brought family documents with her and she shows them to me in a wrinkled plastic bag. Paper and more paper, all wrinkled and messy. I took out a leaf and asked her, "What are you going to do with this?" She shrugged her shoulders and said, "I can't read!"

It was getting cold and I accompany her to the cottage of her mother. They all crowd into the one small room: children, women, a stranger, cats and two dogs. I recognize what they had to eat yesterday from the menu on the floor: onion peelings and potatoes. The house hen picks at them. Aurica has nine younger siblings. None of them has ever gone to school. The boys are with their father tending the sheep and sometimes bring home wood. The girls take care of the younger ones. At the age of fifteen Aurica had to leave home, because there wasn't enough room and not enough money for food. She was given to a man, whom she did not select, who lived on the other end of the village. Now she is standing here in this over-crowded room.

When the mother sees the cart, she guesses what is going on. She cries out, "Here we have no more room! We are now sleeping like cabbage rolls!" I ask how many sleep on the two tattered mattresses. They give the names rather than a number and it comes to thirteen people! It's clear that Aurica cannot stay with her children. She needs a room in the village where she can stay.

As I have to leave, I come to a clear decision: we must do everything we can to insure Aurica and other young girls can escape this misery. If we help the women and girls, the need in the Roma ghettos will not continue. We will create a place for them where they can find refuge, where they can learn and receive training to make them independent. Their children will get something to eat in the Social Center and they will make friends and enjoy music. And we want to get them into a school.

Dear friends, please help us to take care of Aurica and her children. She and many girls in Hosman, Nou and Ziegental are waiting for a chance to take care of their own lives.

Mary was still a girl when she brought forth a child in Bethlehem. They found refuge in a stable. Dear friends, together with you we want to offer also the girls in our villages a refuge. Rejoice with your and our children about our salvation.

P. Georg Sporschill SJ