

*Dear friends,*

„Look at the blind boy!“ the children shouted as I entered the dining room, and they pulled me over to the table where the boy was sitting. „His name is Alex,“ they introduced me to their „attraction“. We ate the hot vegetable soup together. The children watched closely what Alex was doing. They tried to eat with their eyes closed. That resulted in a few mishaps. Then we got up for prayer and everyone hurried to the various rooms in the Casa Martin social centre to do their homework. Alex also ran up the stairs - just as if he could see.

Alex was born prematurely. The doctor gave him no chance of survival and barely cared for him. The newborn had a damaged retina, so they simply glued his eyes shut. Alex lay in the incubator with seven other babies, all of whom were blind. His father did not want to acknowledge the disabled child. When they met in the village, he would cross to the other side of the road. His mother did everything for him. She saved up to give him a computer. But her greatest wish was for him to make friends. She took him to the church choir because he had a beautiful voice. But the fact that she accompanied him everywhere made him increasingly uncomfortable and he protested. A teacher reprimanded him, but he objected: „What will I do when my mother dies? I want to work and earn my own living.“

Alex had one friend who understood him. He took him to our social centre. Alex asked if he could work here in the kitchen. The young chef looked at him, helpless but touched. Together with the blind boy, he folded napkins and had him wipe the tables. Alex felt his way around the dining room and quickly found his bearings. Then he wanted to know what was happening in the rooms on the upper floor. He heard voices and went up the stairs along the banister. The children immediately took him by the hand and pulled him through the classrooms, into the music rooms and to karate class. A whole cluster of curious children swarmed round him. Alex came back the next day. He had quickly completed the small tasks in the kitchen and wanted to join the children. He had brought his computer with a learning programme for the blind. He easily kept up with the other pupils; in fact, he was quite a bit ahead of them.

That day we still had to rehearse a song for the upcoming Easter celebrations. There Alex could shine with his voice. The children marvelled at him and dared to ask their secret questions: What is it like when you can't see anything? Will your mum pick you up or should we go with you? Alex, who had been in need of help, became a leader for the other youngsters. They were very heedful with him and were fond of him. When I came to the social centre, I was always happy to see Alex and his little friends.

Years later – suddenly Alex was gone. Where is our friend, I asked the manager anxiously. She blurted out the surprise: he had found a job! Young people from the village had taken him to Sibiu on the daily workers' bus. And there he got a job in customer service at a software company.

With his first salary, Alex went straight to the social centre. He brought the children advertising material from his company, funny paper napkins, and showed them how he folded boats out of them. And he sang the song of a „young vagabond“ with them. It was a joyful occasion; then the blind man said seriously: „In this house I began to see - my profession.“

Dear friends! Thanks to you we were able to invite this young person to our table when he was unable to cope. Today he gives courage to many children who are going through hard times.

Together with Alex and the children, I call out to you: Cristos a înviat - Christ is risen!

*Ruth Reuber*



During the home visits we encounter joy and need.