

World Medical Relief: A Three Day Miracle

Contributor: Greg Baise

St. John Armenia Church (SJAC) has partnered with our Southfield neighbor, World Medical Relief (WMR) for many years. SJAC has a regular WMR Volunteer scheduled on Saturdays, every two months throughout the year. On these WMR Volunteer Days, folks from our community gather to sort, medical goods and supplies that will be shipped to needy people in countries throughout the world. Last year over 60 shipments were made to help needy people in so many ways, we will never know the full extent. Today I'd like to share a very personal example of what WMR does.

My story begins with our own Fr. Aren Jebejian. Recently, Fr. Aren was planning a trip to our Mother See in Armenia, Holy Etchmiadzin Cathedral. The purpose of his trip was to meet with 70 other special Armenian Orthodox priests in a sacred organization called the Brotherhood of Etchmiadzin. While there, one of their missions will be to go to individual households of the victims of Artsakh War to help the needy families financially. Also, Fr. Aren has a close relationship with Dr. Garen Koloyan, a pediatric surgeon at Wigmore Clinic, in Yerevan, Armenia, and he wants to do something that might help his pediatric patients.

With this information, volunteering at WMR on a Saturday, Greg and Edith Baise spoke with Dr. Samson, CEO of WMR, about helping Fr. Aren. Dr. Samson, thinking about this, suggested that as WMR had just received a pallet of ibuprofen drops a medication for pain and inflammation in pediatric and infant patients, that this medication might be useful to help children Armenia. Given this information, Fr. Aren contacted Dr. Koloyan to see if such a thing might be useful to him. Indeed, Dr. Koloyan felt it would be! Furthermore, with the quantity of the donations anticipated, Dr. Koloyan also felt that this donation could help children in several other Armenian hospitals too.

The next day, Sunday, Dr. Samson, on his own time, prepared and packed the shipment as well as prepared all the necessary paperwork. The result was two shipping boxes containing over 700 one-ounce vials of ibuprofen pediatric drops. This had a retail value of \$3000-\$5000 but was donated by Dr. Samson and WMR free of charge. To further

support Fr. Aren on this medical mission, Greg and Edith Baise, representing the SJAC Men's Society and Women's Guild, respectfully agreed to cover the shipping costs.

After listening to Fr. Aren and understanding the humanitarian nature of this shipment, the clerk waved the shipment charges, which would have been over \$500! This Three-Day Miracle could help hundreds of Armenian children through both the Grace of God and our strong bond between St. John Armenian Church and World Medical Relief.

Postscript: It is with tremendous sadness I bring the following update. Unfortunately, our story does not have a happy ending. Although Fr. Aren did arrive safely in Armenia with his humanitarian medical shipment, but the Armenian Government Customs Agency would not allow him to take the medication to the hospitals where it is needed to help so many children. Instead, it appears our shipment may never get beyond Armenian Customs at Zvartnots International Airport. I am sorry to report to you; such is the current state of affairs in Armenia with an ongoing antagonism and persecution of the Armenian Orthodox Faith by the hostile Armenian government. We can only pray to God, for the sake of all, these hostilities will somehow end, and hopefully soon.

In closing: God has a simple but important message, for all of us. He commands us to understand and live by this rule. ***Love thy neighbor.***