



## Mission Without Borders' Family to Family Programme and the Caldara family

Mission Without Borders' Family to Family sponsorship scheme aims to help families stay together and become self sufficient. The Caldaras live in a remote village in Romania. For Ioan (38), Cristina (32) and their three children, Nicoleta (11), Ioan (4) and Constatin (2), each day is a struggle to survive. They were recently selected to receive support from the Family to Family programme.

### Operation Christmas Love 2010

Over 30,000 needy families and individuals will receive a Christmas parcel from Mission Without Borders. These packages contain basic food items, as well as small treats and sweets for children. However, for the poor, knowing that someone cares for them is just as important as the parcel contents itself.

When you give to Operation Christmas Love you're giving a helping hand to the Caldara family, and others like them, in their fight against poverty. The items in each box are purchased and packed locally. This supports the local economy. It is also very cost effective.

### When Christmas is over...

..the Caldara family will still face their daily challenges. They're in great need, but now that they are a part of Mission Without Borders' family sponsorship program, their future looks brighter. Your support will enable us to bring material help to this family – and others like them. They'll receive food, clothing and medical care, as well as pastoral support. Our ultimate aim is for the Caldaras to be united with their baby Marius and for the family to become self-reliant.



### The Caldaras at home

The Caldara family lives in a two-room house. It belongs to Cristina's brother who



move in during the summer when they had to leave their other house, and to prevent them sleeping on the streets. Otherwise, they have little contact with the extended family.

The house is small, and in bad condition: There are holes in the walls and roof, and even during summer the house feels cold.

It's damp and empty – there are no beds, table or chairs, except for an old sofa. At night the family only has blankets to lie on. There is a bed, but it's outside and falling to pieces. During the summer the family often sleeps there.

Although the house does have electricity, there is no running water. It has no bathroom and only an outdoor toilet. The Caldaras fetch fresh water in plastic bottles from a stand pipe at the bottom of the hill, and from a well in the village.

Cristina cooks on a damaged brick stove, 'when we can get food, I'll cook potatoes, and use corn flour, soups and margarine.' During winter, she burns wood in the stove to warm the house, but frequently the family cannot afford to buy wood.

The family longs to improve the condition of the house. They want to repair the building first, and then get some basic pieces of furniture – beds, table, chairs. Cristina also longs for a new wood stove or even a gas cooker with gas tank. She dreams of having a non-automatic washing machine and a refrigerator.

'We live in a house which collapses a little every day. We are very worried because soon there won't be anything here to live in.'



### 14 Days without Food

When Cristina calls her children in for the night, they have rarely had an evening meal. Often the children go to bed hungry. On one occasion, they survived fourteen days without food.

'For two weeks, I only had water to give to my children,' Cristina tearfully recalls.

### Family tragedy

'Poverty took my child away,' Cristina utters. Marius Aleksandru, Cristina's youngest child, was premature. Cristina knew he wouldn't survive living in their basic home, and the Child Protection Department recommended that Marius be given to a 'maternal assistance family', who are able to raise the baby in better conditions. She had to give him away for adoption. Her greatest sorrow is not being able to see her son grow up.

### Cristina with her other children

Cristina came from a family of seven. 'I was raised in a poor family. It was hard. I remember going and looking for cardboard boxes to sell for money. I have a dream: for my children to go to school. I wasn't able to, so I encourage them to never quit studying. This way they have more chances in life to find a job and earn their own money.'

Ioan and Cristina have three other children. They're all healthy spend their time in and around the house with Cristina playing together.

The eldest is Nicoleta (11 years). Although Ioan and Cristina never had an education, Nicoleta has just started school. What she wants most is to be like other children, and have friends. But Nicoleta finds that she's not accepted at school, and she has few friends – principally



because she's so poor.

She says she wants to be a shop assistant when she grows up.

### Ioan

Ioan Caldara works as a shepherd. He does not have his own fold, but tends sheep for other farmers in the area. Ioan stays with the sheep most of the time, and sometimes his family comes out to keep him company. It's the only type of work that he can get without an education. The meager amount he earns, supplemented by social assistance, is what keeps his family from starvation. But often the money he does earn isn't enough for food for the whole month. His biggest burden as father of the family is seeing his wife and children suffer. 'My dream is to see my family living in better living conditions, all together and healthy.'



The family's monthly income comes from Ioan's shepherding (500ron/approx £70), social security (200ron/approx £30) and child benefit for two children as Cristina hasn't yet registered Constatin (126ron/approx £18).

### Village life

The Caldarars live in a remote mountain village. Most people work in sheep-herding, wood processing and other agriculture, or they travel to work in Sibiu.

There are few paved roads, and the Caldara's home is inaccessible by car. There is no water or sewage system, although local authorities have begun to build a water connection.

The village has a kindergarten and primary school for grades 1-8. Higher education is limited because parents (who poorly educated themselves) cannot afford all the equipment and books required by schools. Instead, teenagers help with chores around the home and in the fields. Most young people have only completed school to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Traditionally, most villagers are affiliated to the Orthodox Church. They'll attend church for festivals such as Christmas, Easter and Ascension.