

# PERSONAL TESTIMONY

by Christmas McGaughey

## Nannette Gonzales: Romania Outreach to Christ's Kids

Nannette Gonzalez walked into the state-run children's hospital in Romania and couldn't believe her eyes. Toddlers were tied to their cribs. Tiny expressionless faces were covered with strange bites. Each child had only a sheet wrapped around its waist as a diaper. Then the smell hit her—the overpowering, acrid smell of stale urine and feces.

Nanette and the small team with her asked for the soiled mattresses to be removed. The hospital staff took them outside and set them on fire. They stared in disbelief as dozens of cockroaches began to fly out of the smoking mattresses.

“The children were not held, so they had conditioned themselves not to cry,” the petite 46-year-old from Bakersfield, CA, remembers. “I wept over these children.”

God began speaking to Nannette specifically of ministry and compassion in May of 1994. Her heart was first moved by the Scripture He gave her: “If you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday: The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail” (Isaiah 58:10–11).

She moved to Romania later that year, not knowing how long she would be there or what she could do. Supported by her family and church back in the States, Nannette volunteered at a state-run orphanage.

Now, more than a decade later, over 5,000 Romanian children have been helped by the Calvary Chapel-backed organization, Romania Outreach to Christ's Kids (ROCK), founded by Nannette in 1998.

Supported largely by Calvary Chapel churches in the U.S., the ministry in Bucharest has grown to include 22 Romanian workers as well as local foster families. About twice a month, mission teams come, bringing baby clothes and

offering individual attention and affection for the children.

On average, ROCK cares for approximately 25 to 30 children at a state-run hospital. Twenty-four children who were once in the hospital have been relocated to ROCK's private foster care program. Also, ROCK has a family assistance program that includes 50 children and their parents. “We help keep these families together by providing food and clothing to 15 impoverished families,” Nannette said. The group also provides food and clothing at a local state-run orphanage. ROCK workers visit the orphanage once a week, teaching Bible stories and doing crafts with the orphans.



*Nannette Gonzales and a happy Romanian child.*

**“I can say without a doubt, the Lord's grace is sufficient and His strength is made perfect in weakness.”**

*Nannette Gonzales*

ROCK helped place many children in permanent homes in the United States until a government ban on international adoptions went into effect in May 2004. “We pray international adoptions will be opened again. There are so many children who need to be in permanent homes,” she said. In the meantime, ROCK works to place children with Romanian families. This also presents challenges. There are several Christian Romanian families who could be foster families, but they must own homes.

To facilitate more children being placed in a family setting, ROCK hopes to establish BedROCK Falls Ranch—a place where foster families and children could live. Estimates for the 10-acre facility run between \$500,000 and \$1 million, and supporters have given \$80,000 thus far. Nannette knows when it's God's appointed time, everything will fall into place. “I know that if it's God's will, it's God's bill.”

ROCK workers have also mourned the death of some of the babies they nurtured and loved. Through those trials, Nannette has said, “I can say without a doubt, the Lord's grace is sufficient and His strength is made perfect in weakness.”

Nannette encourages others whom God is calling to step out in faith, even if it means leaving their comfort zones.

“Before I moved to Romania, I was a Christian, going to church; I lived across the street from a big Calvary. I worked at a bank, shopped at Nordstrom.” Moreover, Nannette was involved in ministry to the poor. “But it was selfish in a sense. Most of my money was spent on me. It's easy to get comfortable in the family of God.

“Faith is like a muscle—the more you use it, the stronger it gets.” She's seen God do the impossible. He's provided for the ministry and has changed children's lives.

“Jesus says in Matthew 25:40, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’

“I have kissed the face of God through these babies in Romania,” she said. “I will never be the same.”

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