

PURE RELIGION

If He Were Not Warmed

For tens of thousands of Kosovar refugees, this winter will not be an ordinary one. Huddled inside tents and under makeshift shelters, mothers and fathers will bundle their children in an effort to shield them from the ice and chill of December and the cutting winds and deep snows of January.

On July 16, 1999, the Presiding Bishopric issued an invitation to individual members, families, and Relief Societies to make and donate quilts to the Latter-day Saint Humanitarian Center. This effort, coordinated by the Relief Society, had as its goal to ship 30,000 quilts to Kosovo.

The request struck a responsive chord in the hearts of thousands of Church members. Within days of the request, a trickle of cotton turned into a flood of multicolored compassion and comfort as quilts poured in from Huntington and Hawaii, Manti and Maine, Santaquin and Singapore.

Sisters of the Relief Society of the Salt Lake Utah Tongan Stake met together every night. “In the Islands,” stake Relief Society President Hiva Fiefia said, “the men leave to fish and farm and the women get together and talk, and sing, and weave. When we heard of the people in Kosovo, we thought we should do something to help.”

And so they did. They gathered at meetinghouses every evening where they mingled quilt making with a feast of food, song, and good cheer. Altogether, the sisters of the Tongan stake produced more than 700 quilts for Kosovar refugees.

As quilts cascaded into the LDS Humanitarian Center, many of them came with attached notes. One family wrote: “We went

without movie rentals and treats and put the money in a jar to send to Kosovo. When the news came that you needed quilts, we used that money to buy material.”

Another note read: “My children wanted to donate the polar bear fleece blankets off their beds. Please accept these three polar bear blankets for the relief effort in Kosovo.”

“Here is a quilt I made last winter for my bed,” one sister wrote. “I want it to go to a family in Kosovo. It is not perfect, as I thought I would be using it, but it is so warm and nice.”

“As a child in World War II,” another sister wrote, “I was cold. I hope some little youngster will enjoy one of these quilts.”

One note attached to a bundle of quilts simply said, “Two children sold their Nintendo 64 and used the money to buy the material for these quilts.”

At latest count, more than 77,000 quilts have been made and given as an offering of love. From families to groups of less-active members to prison inmates, the call to help relieve the suffering of Kosovar refugees has touched people in a way that encourages and even compels them to service.

Any ordinary blanket can keep a body warm, but these quilts—made with such care and, in many cases, with such sacrifice—will send an unmistakable and personal message of love and caring from members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As the cold winds howl this winter, tens of thousands in Kosovo will find comfort inside the warmth of a quilt made by loving hands from half a world away.

