

# OCMC

## ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN MISSION CENTER

Special Edition 2009 • Volume 25, Number 1

### OCMC BUILDING DEDICATION:

*Complete coverage inside.*

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The OCMC's *Mission Magazine* is published twice a year for members of the Saints Cyril and Methodios Orthodox Mission Society by the Orthodox Christian Mission Center.

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OCMC is the official international missions agency of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA), commissioned to help the Orthodox Christians of North America to respond to Christ's call to make disciples of all nations.

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STANDING CONFERENCE OF THE CANONICAL  
ORTHODOX BISHOPS IN THE AMERICAS

**On the cover:** From left to right: Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, Metropolitan Jonah Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, OCMC Executive Director Fr. Martin Ritsi, OCMC Board Member Helen Nicozisis, Archbishop Demetrios Primate of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, OCMC Board President Cliff Argue, and Archbishop Anastasios Primate of the Orthodox Church of Albania cut the ribbon at the Dedication of the new Archbishop Anastasios and Archbishop Demetrios Missionary Training and Administration Building.





**TOP:** Dedicated in May, 2009, the new Archbishop Anastasios and Archbishop Demetrios Missionary Training and Administration Building serves as a milestone in the growth of Orthodox Missions in North America, symbolizing the Church's deep commitment to this vital work. **ABOVE LEFT:** Ground for the new Archbishop Anastasios and Archbishop Demetrios Missionary Training and Administration Building was broken in 2006. The facility was completed in the Spring of 2009. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The new Archbishop Anastasios and Archbishop Demetrios Missionary Training and Administration Building has been designed for the needs of today with a vision for tomorrow. Over half of the building's 12,000 square feet is dedicated to training new mission workers. Here (from right to left) Louis Nicosis, OCMC Executive Director Fr. Martin Ritsi, David McDonald of DiMare Construction, and OCMC Board Member Helen Nicosis review the building plans during the new mission center's construction.

# A Milestone Along the Way.

Fr. Martin Ritsi, OCMC Executive Director

Seven years ago, OCMC issued a call to Orthodox Christians across America that, if answered, would lead to enabling a new dimension of missionary outreach. This call was presented in the appeal for the Gift of Life to All Nations Capital Campaign as an open door through which the Faithful were called to enter. By walking through this open doorway, they would help build a Center for Orthodox missions and position that Center to reach out more fervently to a world that hungers and thirsts for Christ.

*"These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name" (Rev. 3:7-8).*

Today, the Archbishop Anastasios and Archbishop Demetrios Missionary Training and Administration Building stands as a manifestation of the Faithful's overwhelming response to this call and as a sign of the Church's commitment to make disciples of all nations. This in itself marks a significant development in the consciousness of the Church in North America.

## Missions is a growing expression of faith for Orthodox Christians in North America

Not too many years ago, missions was almost a foreign concept within our Orthodox parishes. When speaking about missions one would often have to answer the question: "Do the Orthodox believe in and practice missionary work?" explaining that not only have the Orthodox practiced missionary work throughout the ages, but making Christ known to all peoples of the world is a central, fundamental aspect of our Orthodox Christian faith. It is Christ Himself who wants "all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1Tim 2:4); He has commissioned His disciples, and through them the entire Church, to "Go and make disciples of all nations..." (Matt. 28:19).

Today, missions is entering deeper into the daily consciousness of the Church, both here in North America and abroad. The Archbishop Anastasios and Archbishop Demetrios Missionary Training and Administration Building stands as a witness that missions is not a coming and going fad, nor is it something on the perimeter of the life of the Church - an addendum or optional activity - rather, missions is central to the life of the Church.

## SCOBA jurisdictions working together

Another reality that the newly built Mission Center reveals is the inter-jurisdictional cooperation between the churches of SCOBA. Sometimes we focus our attention on what could be, ignoring accomplishments of the past, and even having a feeling of anxiety because we have not yet reached the full potential that we can see. Much of this anxiety, though, is a result of losing sight of where we've come from. Who would have imagined, 15 or 20 years ago, that the Orthodox Church in the United States across all jurisdictions would pull together in a common pan-Orthodox effort to spread the Gospel beyond the boundaries of this nation? And yet today, united under SCOBA, this is taking place through the Orthodox Christian Mission Center. The Archbishop Anastasios and Archbishop Demetrios Missionary Training and Administration Building is a powerful witness to this.

## Components of the building reflect increased mission activity

There are other ways to learn about the missionary zeal of the Orthodox in America through this new building. One can look at the size and quality of the building. It is not extravagant, yet at the same time it is of noteworthy quality, reflecting



**The new Mission Center has already received a number of missionaries, missionary candidates, and Mission Team members for training and pre-field orientation. Here Fr. Thomas Hopko is pictured with Bishop Dimitrios Couchell, OCMC's first Executive Director and the OCMC staff prior to his service as a mid-term Missionary in Albania.**

that missions must engage the best of what we can offer. It is not a small two-room structure, but two floors and 12,000 square feet, already being put to full use and reflective of vibrant and substantial activity as revealed in the floor plan of the building. Offices and administrative space comprise half of the building. The offices are teaming with a well-trained and talented staff in a hub of focused mission activity throughout each day. The other half of the building is dedicated to training and education, showing that missionary work is not to be taken lightly, but involves preparation, study, and education.

#### **Based on need for today but with vision for tomorrow**

Built for the needs of today with a vision for tomorrow, the Archbishop Anastasios and Archbishop Demetrios Missionary Training and Administration Building is a window into the future. While fully utilized in its present configuration, the new building and location of OCMC unveils an expanded vision for the breadth of missionary work within the Orthodox Church of North America. The land purchased as the foundation upon which all of OCMC's present and future activity will be conducted comprises 20 acres. A master plan is designed for this site; the new building is only the first phase. The present building is designed as a microcosm of what the entire missionary complex can and will need to become as we move closer to our potential in this most critical dimension of our faith. There are components within the building for prayer, training, study, lodging, and administration. As more missionaries are deployed and programs are expanded, these activities will be re-located to their own dedicated facilities throughout the complex according to the master plan.

#### **Why we still need to expand**

In looking at this plan, just as the question sometimes surfaced about whether the Orthodox believe in and do missionary work, one might now ask, Is there really a need to grow further? Can and should the Orthodox of North America support an even greater outreach in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world?

The answer to these questions lies in a brief reflection of the commissioning of the Church by our Lord, the religious situation of the world today, and activities conducted by others around us.

#### **The Commission**

At His Ascension into heaven, Jesus instructed His disciples, and through them the entire Church, with what became known as the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19). The gates of Hades are shattered, the door to the Kingdom of Heaven is opened and now – having accomplished this – Jesus instructs His disciples that they, and the Church that will be established, are to spread the message of salvation to ALL people. This is to take place at home and extend to the uttermost regions of the inhabited world. This work is an essential and key component of the mission of the Church. In the words of Archbishop Anastasios (one of the two honorees of the new mission building):

“Just as there can be no church without a liturgical life, so too there can be no living church without a missionary life.”

#### **The World Situation**

But still, two millennia after this instruction by the Lord to His Church, over 2/3 of the world are not Christian. And even more alarming is that ¼ of the world's population has yet to hear the Gospel message presented so that they can accept (or reject) its life-saving message. The task given to us by our Lord is far from complete, and the responsibility to be actively engaged in the drama of a people estranged from God is upon us.

#### **Can we do more?**

While it is not unreasonable to pray for the miraculous, especially as it concerns the direct plan and will of God for the entire world, there are still reasonable boundaries. Is it beyond those boundaries and approaching the ridiculous to imagine that the Orthodox of North America could expand and multiply its current missionary activity ten-fold? One look at the activities of various non-Orthodox Churches and congregations within our own society should answer that question.

#### **Here are two examples:**

Some denominations in the United States consisting of not more than 100,000 members are training, sending, and supporting over 100 missionaries! What does this tell us about the potential of over 1,000,000 Orthodox believers in North America?

There are numerous individual non-Orthodox congregations in the United States which have foreign mission budgets that exceed that of our own Orthodox Christian Mission Center and of the entire Orthodox Church of North America.

If much smaller groups of people in our own society are engaged in and able to accomplish much greater levels of missionary activity, this can be taken as a sign not of what we are not doing, but for what we, as the bearers of the Orthodox Faith, could accomplish if we would commit ourselves to missions in prayer – if the longing that all people would have the opportunity to hear the Gospel were to go beyond sentimentality and anticipation and be expressed as an active participation in a living Call by our Lord Himself.

#### **Conclusion**

The construction of the Archbishop Anastasios and Archbishop Demetrios Missionary Training and Administration Building is a significant milestone for the Orthodox Church and the modern history of Orthodox missions. The new OCMC building reveals a growing consciousness and increased pan-Orthodox dedication to missionary work among the Faithful of North America. This momentous occasion is the culmination of the sacrificial offering of countless individuals. It was a dream for which many have selflessly labored that was wonderfully marked at the dedication ceremonies of May 21, 2009. Yet, the attainment of this dream is but a milestone on a much larger journey towards the proclamation of the Gospel to All Nations – A task which our Church as a whole, and each of us individually, has been entrusted with by the Lord in response to the world that is to once again be united with Him to the end of the ages.





Archbishop Demetrios (right), with Archbishop Anastasios (center) and OCMC Board President Cliff Argue (left), blesses the OCMC's new Missionary Training and Administration Building named in his honor.

## Remarks of Archbishop Demetrios of America at the Dedication of the Archbishop Anastasios and Archbishop Demetrios Missionary Training and Administration Building

**His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios**

*Your Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios of Albania,  
Your Eminences, Your Graces,  
Fr. Martin, Executive Director of OCMC,  
Mr. Argue, President of the Board of Trustees of OCMC,*

*Reverend Fathers, Brothers and Sisters,  
Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!*

*I am deeply thankful to God and to you for this great honor bestowed on me. I am thankful to the committee, to the personnel that works here, to Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta who offered today a beautiful service for us and is the hosting Hierarch, to the most reverend brothers from SCOBA who are graciously present, and to the people who spoke so kindly of me, namely, Fr. Martin Ritsi, Mr. Cliff Argue, Fr. Alexander Veronis, and especially Bishop Dimitrios of Xanthos for his very generous*

*introductory remarks. We all are grateful to the pioneers who have done so many wonderful things from the very beginning of this noble missionary effort up to the really remarkable point of having an inauguration of an impressive missionary center like the present one.*

*A few years ago, Fr. Martin Ritsi and Mrs. Helen Nicozisis came one day to my office in New York and said, "We have been talking of the need to create a building as a center for training related to missionary work. We believe that this is the time to start a fundraising campaign in order to proceed with such a project." They spoke eloquently and enthusiastically, even passionately, about the project for the creation of a missionary center. After listening to them, I replied: "You present a very inspiring idea for which we thank you. But I have to tell you that this is not an easy task and maybe*



**Early in his career, Archbishop Demetrios studied and wrote extensively about Orthodox missions. He would then go on to serve as Chairman of SCOBA and Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.**

*not we but the generation coming after us will be in a position to see the building in place and function." What an amazing surprise! Just a few years after the visit the building for missionary training is here in full view of our eyes.*

*His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios, a beloved and respected brother and friend for more than fifty*





**The new Archbishop Anastasios and Archbishop Demetrios Missionary Training and Administration Building is the first permanent structure ever built for an agency of SCOBA. Many SCOBA hierarchs and representatives gathered for the Dedication of this new facility in May, 2009.**

years, said earlier a few things in a very condensed way, and Fr. Veronis remembered some specific items related to the mission endeavor undertaken by the Orthodox Church in the 20th and 21st centuries. Allow me to say, however, that missionary activities connected with Archbishop Anastasios did not start with Africa. Already in our student years, which were following immediately after the Second World War, Archbishop Anastasios was thinking and talking about missionary initiatives that were desperately needed in Greece, a country ravaged from a German occupation and a civil war. So we were engaged in intense missionary work in the countryside of Greece, especially in the northern areas close to Albania and Yugoslavia. There were summer camps for children, catechetical meetings for adults, and offering of humanitarian services in many remote villages.

This whole effort has to be seen in a general spirit prevailing in Greece at that time among active members of the Church about the need for an internal mission. People of the Christian movement in the Universities, in the professional circles, and among the working young people thought that here is a call by God to reach out and speak to the people and try to gather them to the Kingdom of God, which is the Church. So, there was such a spirit, such a passion, that it became almost natural, when the proper circumstances occurred, to think and plan for developing an external missionary activity. This explains what happened later in Africa, in Korea,

and in Albania. Quite a number of young men and women who came in and out and helped in one way or another were people related to a mentality cultivated for many years.

But Archbishop Anastasios was not simply one of those people. Being an inventive person, a creative thinker and planner, with a deep sense that the missionary work had to be based on strong and deep missiological ideas and principles, he spent quite a time studying intensely in the field of missiology and producing remarkable books, becoming also a professor in this very field at the University of Athens. Therefore, today he is rightly honored by having his name attached to this center, all the more since some of the faithful workers related to OCMC are persons who have been with him in one way or another in Africa, in Albania, or in any other place.

The Missionary Center is here. It is a unique Orthodox Center for planning, assisting, and cultivating missionary work. It will create an even stronger sense of the necessity for that work. Also, it will stay as a witness to panorthodox unity. This is a terrific specimen of panorthodox unity, "in praxis, not in theory." Of course there is a difference, of which I am sure that Archbishop Anastasios is aware, between today and the time in the 1950s about which he was talking. The situation at that time of the late 40s and 50s differs radically from the situation today, because the tremendous proliferation of the communication means today the whole earth is just one neighborhood. There are other very significant changes as well. As an example, we could mention that today we have here in America 60 million of the so-called, "unchurched" or "disconnected" or "non-affiliated" people. Those people are not related to any Church and of course

not to the Orthodox Church. Let me add another extraordinary related phenomenon: according to a recent statistic, 44% of the population in the United States say that they have changed from their original cradle religion. They changed to what? They have left something for something else? What is our share in this changing portion? Clearly we are facing a tremendous challenge here. Practically the whole earth becomes an open missionary field. Therefore, OCMC could have a tremendous impact not only for activities in the so-called "external" missionary field but also for the internal mission as well. Allow me to say that we observe in this instance a very interesting phenomenon: in the 50s, work on the internal mission caused a tremendous activity on the external one. Today, the external mission embodied by OCMC could have a tremendous impact on the development of an internal mission here in America.

I would like to close by expressing again and again the feelings of a mixture of embarrassment and thankfulness for the great honor I received today. At the same time allow me to mention a passage from the book of Acts, where the Lord before His ascension said to His disciples: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). A central point here is the word "witness." A witness is someone who, by what he says, by what he is, and by what he does is a witness to the truth of the Gospel. Let me add that a step further is offered by a well-known passage from the end of the Gospel of Matthew. The Lord said: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to

observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20). The new step here is expressed by the word "teaching." Thus, universal mission includes both witnessing in a general sense and teaching in a specific sense. But perhaps one of the most astonishing relevant passages, which however, has not been used frequently, comes from the Gospel of John. In His appearance to the disciples after His resurrection, Christ declared to them, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (John 20:21). In this passage we do not have a reference of the type "go and teach." We have a statement of amazing content and proportions: "as the Father has sent me, even so I send you." Here the sending of the Disciples is absolutely parallel to the sending of the Son and Logos of God to earth by His Father. In that sense missionary work is a direct and substantive continuity of the presence and ministry of Christ on earth. This continuity is impossible to describe with human words.

**Archbishop Anastasios of Albania (left) and Archbishop Demetrios of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (right) stand before a hand painted icon of missionary saints Cyril and Methodios – a gift to the OCMC from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.**

*"The Missionary Center is here. It is a unique Orthodox Center for planning, assisting, and cultivating missionary work."*

*I would like to stop here but I cannot resist mentioning one more passage which has a far reaching significance. It comes from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, specifically from his long passage covering chapters 9-11 in which he deals with the question of the salvation of Israel. He says, "Brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant of the mystery of faith... a hardening has come upon part of Israel until the full number of the Gentiles come in, and so all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:25-26). This is a superb perspective for mission: gathering the fullness of nations and Israel in God's home.*

*In the Gospel of Luke (Luke 18:8), when the Lord Jesus Christ was facing some questions coming from His disciples He answered them with a startling question of His own: "When the*

*Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?" Is there such a horrific possibility? Probably the Lord said what He said in order to have us be aware of the need to work incessantly and intensely to keep faith alive and to promote it to all nations. There is the perspective of the fullness of nations entering the kingdom but also the horrifying picture of a total disappearance of faith from the face of the earth. It is a good thing to keep both passages, i.e. Romans 11:25-26 and Luke 18:8, constantly in our mind. They both urge for action in the name of Christ for the salvation of the world and the glory of God. And may God bless abundantly this new Center of OCMC so that it will be able to serve in the best possible way the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the coming of the Kingdom of God.*





# Archbishop Anastasios' Remarks at the Dedication of the New OCMC Missionary Training & Administration Building

## His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios

**B**less the Lord, o my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name!" (Psalm 102:2). As we celebrate today the great blessing of the inauguration of this new missionary Centre of Orthodoxy, my thoughts go back to the beginning of the new Orthodox "external" mission that took place in the midst of the 20th century. It sprang out as a problem, as a longing on the part of young people who had already dedicated themselves to "internal" mission. I remember that in the evenings during the Christian Student Camps, biographies of outstanding personalities, such as David Livingstone, Albert Schweitzer, and other missionaries moved us and unfailingly kept our interest.

Toward the end of 1958, in an Assembly of the Inter-Orthodox Organization of Orthodox Youth "Syndesmos" in Thessaloniki, chaired by the lay theologian John Myenford, there was a discussion about the missionary silence of contemporary Orthodoxy. This silence was more noticeable in the birthplace of the great Byzantine missionaries, Cyril and Methodius—up until those years there did not exist even one church dedicated to their memory. Being at that time a lay theologian, I had the opportunity to present more vividly the theme of the need for an Orthodox external mission. This Assembly approved our proposal for the formation of an "Executive Committee for External Mission" and elected the present speaker as its General Secretary.

We started the study of the issue with enthusiasm and decided to proceed to the

edition of the periodical "Porefthenes—Go Ye" in Greek and English. There followed several activities and informative speeches, for the most part addressed to the University students, having as a main theme "the forgotten commandment: Go and teach all nations."

During the next General Assembly of "Syndesmos" in Lebanon yet another important step was realized by the establishment of the "Inter-Orthodox Missionary Centre Porefthenes," which undertook further promoting the missionary efforts. The articles that were published in the above-mentioned magazine were a surprise for many people, both in Greece and within the circles of the ecumenical movement; all had heard from officials that Orthodoxy was not interested in external mission. Now they were suddenly seeing a new missionary flame within the circles of Orthodox Youth. The vision of those of us who had begun the effort of rekindling an external mission awareness was to develop inter-Orthodox cooperation. Of course, this has presented in practice many difficulties; nevertheless, it has remained a standing orientation and persevering prayer.

Also in those years an analogous flame was lit here in America. The students of Theology who came to Athens, among them Alexander Veronis, joined in those first steps. It was with great satisfaction that we saw later the work of external mission consolidated within official ecclesiastical structures here in America, through the OCMC (Orthodox Christian Mission Center) in which all the Orthodox canonical jurisdictions under SCOBA (Standing Conference of Orthodox



**His Beatitude Anastasios, Archbishop of Durres, Tirana, and all Albania has dedicated his life to the service of the Church through missions.**

Bishops of the Americas) take part. It is with particular joy, and all the while "blessing the Lord," that we reflect on the work that the OCMC has offered to multiple missionary fields. The present inauguration of this Administration and Training Center surely forms a very important landmark.

Personally, I would like to express my wholehearted thanks for the decision of OCMC to mention as well the name of my modest person together with the beloved Brother, Archbishop Demetrios of America. As you are already aware, during more than sixty years (specifically, from our time of studying in the University in 1947), we have been on this journey and experienced together the theological search of youth (as after we left the "Zoe" movement around 1954), as we have served in different missionary frontiers. With emotion I always think over our precious friendship and brotherly solidarity as much when I was starting out for Africa as also later, in difficult phases and, more recently, during my missionary efforts in Albania. Undoubtedly, this fraternal friendship was one of the great gifts that God has given to me. And I am grateful to Him, as well as to my precious Brother.

By God's grace, during the last fifty years very important steps have been realized for the resurgence of the Orthodox Mission, in theoretical world-wide sectors as well as in the realization of concrete works. The continuous development of missionary nuclei in various areas of Africa, Asia, and even in Europe, is a blessed reality. The commandment of the Lord, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Mt. 28:19) "to the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts 1:8), touches more and more members of the Orthodox Church, who are already struggling to give witness of Jesus in new frontiers; "to the uttermost parts of the earth"; the eschaton with all its meaning: geographical, cultural, social. Every day we realize more and more that, finally, we deny love and justice when we remain indifferent before their catholicity, their universal human dimension and consequences.

From the early years it was stressed that the problem was not simply to create some missionary groups. The quest was how the Orthodox Church as a whole will be mobilized with this worldwide missionary vision; and, moreover, that in this new missionary effort the cooperation of all the Orthodox Churches must be sought. The decisive step that the OCMC has realized in America through the working together of all the Orthodox jurisdictions is of significant value.

The culminating point of this new missionary

**Archbishop Anastasios (right) and his long-time friend Archbishop Demetrios (left) reunited for the dedication of the new Missionary Training and Administration Building that bears their names. These two men have played a significant role in the development of modern Orthodox missions.**





self-awareness is found in the 3rd paragraph of the recent Message of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches, made on October 2008 in Constantinople. I remind you that it stated:

*"Inspired by the teaching and the work of the Apostle Paul, we underscore first and foremost the importance of the duty of mission for the life of the Church and in particular for the ministry of us all in accordance of the final commandment of the Lord: "You will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem, but throughout Judea and Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The evangelization of God's people, but also of those who don't believe in Christ, constitutes the supreme duty of the Church. This duty must not be fulfilled in an aggressive manner, or by various forms of proselytism, but with love, humility and respect for the identity of each individual and the cultural particularity of each people. All Orthodox Churches must contribute to this missionary effort, respecting the canonical order"* (MESSAGE OF THE PRIMATES OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES—12.10.2008).

I believe that this declaration, so clear and unanimous, really forms a milestone in the history of the Orthodox Church. As I was looking at His Eminence, the Archbishop of America, my Brother Demetrios, my thoughts returned to the year 1958 in Thessalonica, when both of us agreed that something must be done for the external mission. And now, from responsible bastions of the Church, under the presidency of His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, together with all the other Brothers Hierarchs (from all over the world), we have had the opportunity to officially stress this apostolic duty.

Since we are celebrating the inauguration of this missionary centre during the Paschal season, I would like to finish by recalling a personal experience, in an out-of-the-way region of Western Kenya. We arrived at night at a house that was in mourning. The little girl, stricken mortally by malaria, was lying on a big bed, as if sleeping peacefully. "She was such a good child. She was always the first to greet me," whispered the afflicted father in perplexity. We read a short funeral prayer, and I said a few words of consolation, based on the reality of the Resurrection.

In the evening alone in the room of the school house where we were staying, by the light of the oil lamp, with the sound of rain on the banana leaves and zinc roof, I remembered the events of the day. Away in the darkness a drum was beating. It was from the house of mourning. In my tiredness I wondered. Why are you here? There came confusedly to my mind the various things that are spoken about in connection with mission: preaching, love, education, civilization, peace, development. Suddenly a light flashed



**TOP:** His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios (center) celebrated the blessing of the new Archbishop Anastasios and Archbishop Demetrios Missionary Training and Administration Building with Archbishop Demetrios of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (left) and several hierarchs of SCOBA including Metropolitan Jonah of the Orthodox Church in America (right). **BELOW:** Orthodox Christians from across North America have been blessed to witness and contribute to the resurrection of the Church in Albania under the guidance and care of His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios. Many of these mission workers gathered together for the Dedication of the new Archbishop Anastasios and Archbishop Demetrios Missionary Training and Administration Building.



and lit up the mist of my tired brain with the essence of the matter: You bring the message, the hope of Resurrection. Every human person has a unique worth. They will rise again. Herein lays human dignity, value, and hope. Christ is Risen! You teach them to celebrate the Resurrection in the mystery of the Church, to have a foretaste of it. As if in a fleeting vision, I saw the little African girl hurrying up to greet me first, as was her habit; helping me to determine more precisely the kernel of the Orthodox Christian mission: That is, to infuse all with the truth and hope of the Resurrection, to teach them to celebrate it. And this we do in the Church.

It is multifold and symbolic that the event of the inauguration of the new Missionary Center of OCMC is taking place during the period of the Resurrection. The last

commandment for mission is related directly with the triumph of Christ's Resurrection. The fact that "all authority in heaven and earth" has been given to Him (Mt 28:19) had to be proclaimed "to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15). Even as it is unthinkable to imagine an Orthodoxy without the Resurrection of Christ, it is impossible to think of an Orthodoxy that is indifferent to worldwide mission. The Resurrection and the mission to the whole world are interconnected.

Finally, I would like to express my wholehearted thanks for the great honour given to me, asking you to continue to support us by your love and prayers. I wish de profundis all of us to walk in Christ's way, by the power of His Cross, in the light of His Resurrection, with the flame of the Holy Spirit.

# Fr. Chad Hatfield's Keynote Address at the Dedication of the OCMC Missionary Training & Administration Building

Fr. Chad Hatfield



**OCMC Board Member and Vice President Fr. Chad Hatfield served as Dean of St. Herman's Seminary in Kodiak, Alaska from 2002 to 2007 before becoming chancellor of St Vladimir's Seminary.**

**A**laska is the starting point for American Orthodox Missiology. I often find that few of us know and appreciate the foundations of our American Orthodox Missiological heritage, and it is important that we hear of them as we prepare to dedicate our new OCMC Missiological Center. It is true that Greeks were present here in St. Augustine earlier than the September 1794 landing of the first Orthodox Missionaries in Kodiak, Alaska. In fact, there were also Orthodox Christians already living in Alaska when these first missionaries arrived. What we might call frontiersmen from Siberia were living in Alaska, and local women had given birth to their children whom they had already baptized in most cases. Eventually with the expansion of the Russian/American Company, in what was then Russian America, petitions were sent to Russia asking for priests and missionaries to be sent to the new world.

Among those making petition was Gregori Shelikov, who is honored in Irkutsk with a statue erected by family members, proclaiming him as the "Apostle to Alaska." It should be noted that Alaskan Natives regard him as a murdering tyrant who in 1784 brutally brought the resistant Kodiak Island people into submission with the use of four large canons. There is little doubt that the nearly 200 men counted among his crew contributed to the rapid rise of the creole or mix-race population of Kodiak Island. These bi-lingual and bi-cultural children would be an important part of the establishment of Orthodoxy in Alaska once the 10 missionaries arrived from far away Valaam Monastery in 1794.

The Czarina, Catherine, obviously recognized that Shelikov was highly ambitious and greedy to corner the market on Alaskan resources. He claimed to have a church, schools, and supplies waiting for the arrival of missionaries. He claimed to have secured some 10,000 new subjects for the Russian Empire.

His request for missionaries was answered with the selection of monks from Valaam and Konevitsa Monasteries in Karelia. The head of this Mission to America was Archimandrite Ioasaph. Eventually he would be sent back to

Russian to be consecrated Bishop of Kodiak. After his consecration he set sail for Kodiak never to set foot in his See City, as his vessel would sink at sea. It would then be another forty years before another bishop would be consecrated to serve in America.

Bishop Ioasaph is an example of our American Missiological heritage that reminds us that we must always be prepared to take the risk that is required to accomplish the Great Commission. This is our first foundation stone.

We can all thank our sixth grade geography teachers tonight as I ask you to imagine the journey from Valaam Monastery to Kodiak. The monastery, located on the Finnish/Russian border, stills holds the record for the number of miles traveled to achieve their goal of bringing Holy Orthodoxy to the Americans. This, by the way, is exactly how the Missionaries saw their mission. They came not to make Russians out of the Americans, but to introduce Orthodoxy to the Americans within their own culture.

None of Shelikov's promises were true. There was no church, school, or supplies. There was also great resistance to their very presence by members of the Russian/American Company. Our missionaries today often find the exact same circumstances. What was promised before arrival in field does not exist and local agencies often oppose them.

So, how bad was it when they arrived in Kodiak to begin their work? Let me read to you from a letter dated 25 May 1795 from the hand of Archimandrite Ioasaph to a benefactor in Siberia:

"We as yet have no church. We asked for a tent from the manager, Alexander Baranov, but so far without result... Since my arrival at the harbor I find nothing whatsoever that should have been done in accordance with your good intentions accomplished. My only delight is in the Americans who are coming from everywhere to be baptized. The Russians not only do not aid them in this but on the contrary employ all possible means to scare them off. The reason for this is their dissolute life, which is put to shame by the good conduct of the Americans. I was barely

able to convince some of the promyshlenniki to get married. The rest do not want to hear of it, but openly keep women even more than one each, which constitutes a great insult to the Americans....

In terms of economics, nothing good can be noted. Since our arrival there was hunger all winter. We ate rotten three-year old dried fish, to the last bit, although when we arrived here, fish were still running but not harvested. The herring run was also there later, but the catch was conducted only two or three times. The Aleuts were not ordered to take halibut and ... seines lay on the shore all winter long. The cows which were brought by the ships are only skins now, and most have died ... only two goats remain.

Under our parkas, we are always half naked, and those parkas get very dirty. In the daytime, we feed the people. At night, we collect wood and bring it out of the forest ourselves...

Of all of the books you sent for us, I received only a few, not more than twenty. Ten of these were service books, and they have all rotted and cannot be used."<sup>1</sup>

He continues to describe the decadent lifestyle enjoyed by Baronov and others while, as Hieromonk Markarii wrote: "The newly illumined people, that is the Alaskan Natives, cry blood, not tears."<sup>2</sup>

For Missionaries, even today, this is not all that surprising. Things are often not as they are promised. We need to keep this in mind when we think that our efforts today, both foreign and domestic, are too great to merit our full support and sacrifice. We must never forget these lessons given to us by the Saints as we celebrate the dedication of our new Missionary Training Center.

Faced with great hostilities, the Missionaries moved out from Kodiak. Hieromonk Makarii would venture to the Aleutian Chain, and the first Martyr Juvenaly would travel with great risk to the Kenai on the mainland and eventually to his death in Quenahook. Our American missiological heritage has the blood of martyrs in the foundation stones, as seen in the life of both Fr. Juvenaly and the young Kodiak Native Peter the Aleut, who was martyred in California.

In time, a pious monk named Herman was eventually to be banished from Kodiak by Gov. Baranof, who had been intercepting his letters being sent back to Russia with complaints about the abuse that was being inflicted upon the local Native people. It should be noted that from the very beginning the Orthodox priests and missionaries were the advocates for and the defender of the Alaskan Natives.

When Father Herman was banished, the local tradition holds that he left the governor's home, which is now a museum, and he climbed Pillar Mountain where we was able to see Spruce Island and what is now known as Monk's Lagoon. He was to spend the rest of his days living an ascetic



life serving a large group of orphans and assisted by two disciples: Sophia Vlasov, a Creole who oversaw the work with the girls, and Gerasim Zyrianov, who assisted with the boys.

Many of these orphans, educated by Father Herman, would become leaders in the Church, in Education, and in Civil government. Father Herman made a lasting and effective missionary impact on Alaska by the example of the life of holiness for which he is best remembered by those who still call him “our Father Herman.” His “style” as a Missionary was not that of an activist, though he produced them, and not that of an organizer, though he produced them. His steadfast example of living out the Beatitudes in his own life gave the foundation to the Missionary Vision to “Bring Orthodoxy to the Americans” which stands today. He did not have finances, power, or mass communications. He did not own a BlackBerry nor have access to the Internet, but he did have a hesychism, a prayer life, that kept him anchored in times of terrible storms, both physical and spiritual, and his example gave that same strength to generations that followed him. This is our second lesson today as we seek to build our own missiology to serve Christ and His Church in our own day: Maintain a stable, focused prayer life.

Sin and tragedy often distract us today because we spend more time on the Internet than we do saying our prayers. We spend more time exploring the sins of others than we do repenting of our own. When Father Herman was told of the bloody martyrdom of a young boy, possibly one of his own orphans, he did not seek revenge nor did he collapse into a spiritual paralysis, which seems to happen to most of us these days. No, he lifted his eyes to heaven and was the first to exclaim, “Holy New-Martyr Peter, pray unto God for us!” We must seek the prayers of the Saints as we seek to build a model for mission and evangelism in our own day.

St. Herman of Alaska, wonder-worker, contributes a missionary model that is an ascetical one.

The next missionary “style” or “model” for us today is found in the person of John Veniaminov. He is better known to us today as St. Innocent, Metropolitan of Moscow and Enlightener of North America. St. Innocent has been highlighted beautifully by Paul Garrett and Fr. Luke Veronis.<sup>3</sup> For our purpose tonight I want to focus on the missiological contributions of St. Innocent.

The calling to serve in Alaska did not come easily to Veniaminov. His own heart had to be turned to make the kind of sacrifice that volunteering for foreign mission often requires. He had to convince his bishop and his wife as well. Alaska was still Russian American when young John first heard the reports of the needs in that far away land. Up and down missionary efforts had continued in the Aleutian Chain, Kodiak,



**On a pilgrimage in Kodiak, Alaska. Orthodox Christians visit the adoptive home of St. Herman who, as a Russian missionary, participated in planting Orthodox Christianity within regions of North America.**

New Archangel (now Sitka) and the Nushagak. When priests were present there was growth and then decline when regions suffered from the lack of ministries. It should be noted that the Unangan and Suppiag people of the Chain, the Pribilof and Kodiak, were missionaries of their own efforts among the Yu'pik Eskimo Peoples. It was not a Russian effort but a local one that converted yet another portion of Alaska to Holy Orthodoxy. This is a clear example of the words spoken by His Beatitude, Archbishop Anastasios of Albania, when he visited Saint Vladimir's Seminary a few years ago: “A Church not actively engaged in Mission is not the Church.” Clearly the Church planted among the Unangan and Sugpiag was indeed, the Church!

St. Innocent had a foundation to build upon. The local people already were baptized and had learned to appreciate prayer, icons and the services of the Church. But, there was much room for improvement.

To plant and to grow Orthodoxy in a new land, St. Innocent believed that three things were absolutely necessary. They were as follows:

Teach and preach in the language of the people;

Serve them with local clergy;

Train those clergy in a local seminary.

These rules, or truths as we might call them, are as valid today as they were then. Oddly enough we are still battling over the use of English in our Orthodox churches in America. We have made great strides in very recent decades, but we still battle an instinct to ghettoize our Church and to build ethnic barriers that prevent us from being “the Church” as defined by Archbishop Anastasios. St. Innocent knew that to be a missionary Church you must follow these three principles.

St. Innocent was a highly gifted linguist and he learned the Unangan language and translated The Gospel of St. Matthew, parts of St. Luke's Gospel, the Book of Acts, Church History, and he developed a Catechism in the local language.

It was recorded that even the old men began to study the Catechism when they not only saw it in their own language but they were able to read. St. Yakov, who was then serving in Atka, took the work of St. Innocent and altered it to fit the local dialect of his own area. This is what happens when the Church recognizes the essential need to teach and preach in a way that is clearly understood. It was their language but not in an archaic form that was for the most part still incomprehensible. We are still learning this lesson today as well! In short, it was noted that the work of St. Innocent changed people from being identified as “Orthodox” to people who knew their Lord and what it means to be called a “Christian.” Proper teaching and preaching can do this today!

The importance of raising the visibility of the Orthodox Church was also important to the Missiology of St. Innocent. Churches were built, vestments and hangings of fine Chinese silk and lamps of Spanish silver were made. St. Innocent knew the truth that “matter matters,” and he understood the use of what we might call externals as instruments of proclaiming the beauty of holiness.

In 1839, Fr. John had been serving in Alaska for some 16 years. He returned to Russia to both give a report to the Holy Synod and also to find support for his work. During this time he received word of the death of his beloved wife Catherine. Metropolitan PHILARET wanted to consecrate Fr. John to the episcopacy as a missionary bishop, but he was concerned about his children. Through an imperial patronage the Veniaminov children were placed in outstanding boarding schools in St. Petersburg, and now the Metropolitan was able to convince the widowed priest to accept monastic tonsure, and he was given the name “Innocent.” Soon he would be elevated to the episcopacy, and in 1841 he returned to his diocese. By the end of his first decade as a bishop, he was able to claim that over 60 churches and chapels had been built, and there were some 23,100 Orthodox Christians in the diocese.

In 1868, one year after the sale of Alaska to the United States, St. Innocent, who was then the Metropolitan of Moscow, was asked if it was true that he very much opposed this sale. He responded with these words:

"I see in this event one of the providential ways by which our Orthodoxy can penetrate into the United States, where it already has started to attract serious attention. If asked, I would recommend the following measures...A new bishop who knows the English language should be appointed to America. His staff should be manned by people who also know the English language...ordain to the holy priesthood American citizens who had converted to Orthodoxy; the bishop and the clergy of all our parishes should be permitted to celebrate the Divine Liturgy and other church services in the English language. It is self-evident that the service books should be translated into the English language for this purpose."<sup>4</sup>

St. Innocent also organized in 1868 a Missionary Society of the Russian Orthodox Church. This society would pray for missions, support them financially, and promote the cause of Missions and the need to evangelize. He spoke these words at the first meeting of this Mission Society:

"In comparison with the number of unchurched people we have very few missions, and the ones which have already been established need funds in order to maintain and expand their activities. The holiness of this work and its great importance...are obvious, and our chief source of funds for this development must be the concern and zeal of all Orthodox Christians. The Missionary Society is open to all – rich and poor alike. The comfort of service this great work provides is given to anyone who wishes and is able to do so according to his abilities."<sup>5</sup>

It should also be noted that he insisted that the first priority of this society was to be prayer.

This missionary agency served Orthodoxy well in Russia, Alaska, Japan, China and Korea right up until the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.

From St Innocent we clearly learn the need for vision, planning, and funding. Let me repeat the last one – funding – as an essential foundation stone for building our missiological goals.

The third great era of American Mission and Evangelism is found in the person of Vasily Belavin who was born in 1865 into a priestly family in a village near Pskov. We know him better as St. Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow, New Martyr and Evangelizer of North America.

After attending the pastoral school in Pskov, he graduated from the St. Petersburg Academy in 1888. He taught moral and dogmatic theology in the seminary as a layman. In 1892 he took monastic vows, receiving the name Tikhon, and was ordained to the priesthood. Transferred to the seminary in Kholm, Father Tikhon served five years, during which time he

was made rector of the seminary and raised to the rank of archimandrite. His successes at that seminary and throughout his life were always in the pastoral role. According to accepted practice, a candidate for the episcopacy must be 33 years old. The Holy Synod in Russia made an exception in authorizing the consecration of Tikhon, at the age of 32, to become Bishop of Lublin in 1897.

At his consecration, he spoke these words, and these are words which I think are quite worthy of being republished and circulated in our own day. The young, newly-consecrated bishop said:

"In my youth, the office of a bishop seemed to me to be dignity, power, might, and honor. When I was a child, I had childish conceptions, now I know it means work, striving and sacrifice. It is not easy to be weak with those who are weak, nor is it easy to be an example to the faithful in word, in one's bearing, in love, faith and chastity, and it is certainly not easy to admonish, to threaten, and to punish in all patience. The life of a true bishop is daily dying in cares and concerns for others. Therefore the success of a bishop's activities depends not so much on human qualities and facilities, but much more on the power of God which is given to those who are conscious of their weaknesses."<sup>6</sup>

These words give us a most powerful insight into this Saint, who used them not only as a model of his own episcopacy, as he shepherded Orthodox Christians, but also as he reached out and was a shepherd and pastor to those beyond his canonical boundaries.

It is appropriate that we acknowledge tonight our own episcopal shepherds and guides who lead us to greatness in our own day. I would ask Your Beatitudes, Your Eminences, and Your Graces to please stand that we may thank you for pastoral care and vision.

St. Tikhon was transferred to America only one year later. The See City was now San Francisco. Unlike previous bishops in that See, he was a visible figure who travelled widely. He was not interested in a ghettoized American Orthodoxy. He knew his power and authority as the Archbishop of North America. His Orthodox flock was polyglot and ethnically diverse. He had the plan to meet the pastoral needs of each group, and he knew how to meet them where they were and to challenge them to grow deeper in their Orthodox Faith.<sup>7</sup>

St. Tikhon was bold to reach out to the non-Orthodox and to invite them to "come and see." When he was awarded an honorary doctor of divinity degree by Nashotah House, a seminary of the Episcopal Church, in 1905, it is reported that St. Tikhon thanked the Episcopalians for providing the Orthodox with physical hospitality by providing us with worship space. But, he also predicted that in 100 years the Orthodox would return the favor by providing the Episcopalians

with a spiritual home. His prophecy is now a living reality.

Orthodoxy has become the home for a multitude of Episcopalians and many others who often have to climb through the windows of our churches, because the front door is still closed to them! We have come far in very recent years in learning to be the Church described by Archbishop Anastasios, but we forget quickly and we need a renewal once again as we move to close to the end of the first decade of the 21st century.

We learn from Tikhon the need to have confidence and not to be ashamed of being different. Most importantly we learn to offer hospitality to the stranger.

His Eminence, Archbishop Iakovos, of blessed memory, in the 1960s once again, sought to restore "the Church" as defined by Archbishop Anastasios. With his blessing and full support a missions committee of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese was born. I believe that three living members of that original committee, which has evolved into the OCMC, are with us tonight. Please acknowledge Fr. Alexander Veronis, Teresa Polychronis, and Dr. George Christakis. We should also note the early presence of our current Board President, Cliff Argue.

This brings us to this very moment. As we prepare to dedicate the Archbishop Anastasios and Archbishop Demetrios Missionary Center, we need to find our way to begin building once again upon our unique American Missiological heritage. How will we find our way, you may ask? We have the road map from the hands of the Saints themselves!

We must pray and not falter in the face of fierce opposition.

We must capture our vision, organize our efforts, and be bold enough to act.

We must finance our efforts.

We must be confident and not ashamed of Christ in this perverse and shameless generation.

We must open our hearts to Christ and to all of those who are created in His image and likeness.

May God give each of us the vision to see what must be done in our day and the courage to pursue it for the glory of God and the building up of his Church in our time and in our generations.

#### END NOTES

1. ALASKAN MISSIONARY SPIRITUALITY, ED. MICHAEL OLEKSA (PAULIST PRESS, NEW YORK, 1987), PP. 58-59.

2. *IBID.* PP. 289

3. PAUL D. GARRETT, ST. INNOCENT APOSTLE TO AMERICA, ST. VLADIMIR'S SEMINARY PRESS, CRESTWOOD, NY: 1978.

4. LUKE ALEXANDER VERONIS, MISSIONARIES, MONKS AND MARTYRS: MAKING DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS, LIGHT AND LIFE PUBLISHING, MINNEAPOLIS, MN, 1994.

5. VERONIS, PP. 104

6. *IBID.* PP. 105

7. ST. TIKHON OF MOSCOW: AN AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP, PETER HASKELL, PP. 13



# AGAPE IN THE BALKANS

Theodore Theodorou, OCMC Agape/SAMP Program Coordinator

**S**itting in his Land Rover under the shade of a tree at the Hilmi Hoti School in Kosovo, Nathan Hoppe was surrounded by the bustle of some 200 children. It was the second of five camps that he and his wife Gabriela led during the summer months of June and July. He watched as the twenty-five youth counselors and volunteers from the Orthodox Church of Albania engaged the children with music, song, and dance. Though they did not know it, Nathan was attuned to the social formation that was taking place in the children's hearts.

With support of a generous grant from the Orthodox Christian Mission Center's (OCMC) Agape Canister Program, the Kosovo Day Camps are teaching citizenship skills and basic human values that children need to be productive members of their society. Every year there is a theme, which the camp staff discusses and teaches through use of the fine arts. At the closing day of the camp, there is a festival in which the children present songs, poems and skits that they have prepared often reflecting the theme of the camp. Agape funds are used to purchase supplies, compensate the staff, and offset the cost of travel between camp sites.

Local government officials have affirmed that the Kosovo Day Camps have a tremendously positive impact on the whole emotional environment of the area. "It was like everyone started off the academic year with fully charged batteries ready to go and ready to learn after the stimulating experience of the camp," said Idriz Hoti, who now directs a village school in the town of Caralluk.

During their time in Kosovo, Nathan and Gabriela are also able to visit many Serbian and Albanian friends. This spring marks ten years since the end of the war in Kosovo and the Hoppe's have seen many positive changes. Perhaps the most visible is the opening of a new road between Tirana and Prishtina, which cuts the travel time in half and dramatically reduces wear and tear on both people and automobiles.

The Agape Canister Program truly allows God's love to shine forth and helps to heal the wounds and brokenness in this part of the world. Currently Agape funds are supporting nine projects in eight countries around the world. If you would like to become an Agape partner, send an email to [agape@ocmc.org](mailto:agape@ocmc.org) or call 1-877-GO-FORTH



**ABOVE:** At the close of the Kosovo Day Camp, there is a festival in which the children present songs, poems, and skits that they have prepared; these presentations often reflect the theme of the camp. **BELOW:** Gabriela Hoppe listens attentively to one of the children who attended the Kosovo Day Camp. The Hoppes participate in these camps every year for the children of Kosovo.



**Gabriela Hoppe works with children at the Kosovo Day Camps along with her husband, Nathan. Children who attend these camps "start off the academic year with fully charged batteries ready to go."**



**Hundreds of children attend the Kosovo Day Camps coordinated by Nathan and Gabriela Hoppe. With a grant from the OCMC Agape Canister Program, these Camps are teaching citizenship skills and basic human values that children need to be productive members of their society.**



OCMC Missionary Candidate to Tanzania  
Katie Wilcoxson.



OCMC Missionary Candidate to Tanzania  
Charita Stavrou.



OCMC Missionary Candidate to Tanzania  
James Hargrave.



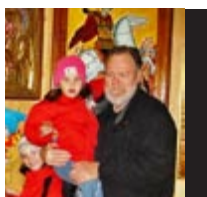
OCMC Missionary Candidate to Tanzania  
Michael Pagedas.



OCMC Missionary Candidate to Tanzania  
Felice Stewart.



His Beatitude prays for Dcn. Anastasios during  
the ordination service.



OCMC Missionary to Romania Floyd Frantz.



OCMC Mid-term Missionary to Albania  
Maggie Downham.



OCMC Missionary to Albania Anastasia  
Pamela Barksdale with His Beatitude  
Archbishop Anastasios.



OCMC Missionary to Albania Nathan Hoppe and  
his family attended the Dedication of the new  
Archbishop Anastasios and Archbishop Demetrios  
Missionary Training and Administration Building.



OCMC Missionary Pauline Russell sits with His  
Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios after the blessing  
of the new school building in Tirana, Albania.



OCMC Missionary to Romania  
Christina Semon.

## ALBANIA

### MAGGIE DOWNHAM

The semester I have spent teaching English at The Protagonist School in Albania has quickly come to a close. Nathan Hoppe asked me recently to describe my time here with one word. Almost immediately and without hesitation I responded: full! Life has been full of teaching and preparing to teach, full of joy and struggle, full of laughter and tears. In teaching, the children have taught me so much about God's love and forgiveness. I pray God uses my time here in their lives as much as He has used it for my own salvation. I must thank you for being a part of this work with me. Your prayers and generosity have given me great strength—I could not have done it alone. Please continue to pray as I discern how God will use this experience to direct my future.

### NATHAN AND GABRIELA HOPPE

Following 11 years of ministry in Albania we will be returning to the US in August for one year of home assignment before returning to the field. During this time we will be headquartered in Minnesota, where the children will be attending the same school they went to during Lynette's illness. Our time will be divided between a variety of responsibilities. I will be in regular contact with Albanian coworkers and OCMC missionaries to ensure continuity in our ministries. I will be returning to the Mediterranean for most of October in order to participate in the meeting of the Faith and Order Plenary Commission, followed by the meeting of The Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and Roman Catholic Church. I will also make a brief visit to Albania. I will be working together with the staff of OCMC to develop a series of mission events in metropolitan areas around the US in order to promote the work of missions and reconnect with our support team. Please let us know if you would be interested in helping to arrange one of these events. Gabriela is planning to begin work on a Masters degree in Children and Family Ministry. In addition, we hope to find some time for prayer, study, rest, and reflection in order to reinvigorate us for continuing ministry in Albania. We also hope to spend some special time with Tristan and Katherine to compensate for the absences mandated by our ministry schedule. We are joyfully expecting a new addition to our family

with the birth of a child in January. Please pray for a good pregnancy and safe delivery for Gabriela. Please pray that this would be a productive time and that we would be renewed spiritually and physically for our return to Albania.

### GEORGIA GILMAN BENDO

Our big news is that Todi became a deacon! His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios ordained him and gave him the new name Anastasios during the Divine Liturgy on St. George Day (April 23rd). This is a blessing and the fulfillment of a desire that Deacon Anastasios has had for a long time. Axios!

I spend my days caring for baby Vasili. We are thankful for his happy and healthy first eight months. He enjoys bath time, music, and stroller rides in the park. At church he "sings" along with the choir and has helped me to get to know a lot of other new mothers.

I continue to translate news items for the Church website and am working on the school's English program for next year. I plan on teaching literature to our more advanced students and creating a curriculum for our catechism class. Meanwhile, Deacon Anastasios continues his work in translations, and he edits the Church's new journal Kerkim (Research/Searching).

### GEORGE AND PAULINE RUSSELL AND MELANIE LINDERMAN

This last year has been most eventful for us, the greatest being the long awaited opening of the new Protagonist School building this past May. It is a beautiful facility creating a myriad of possibilities for spreading God's word. We will be working both overtly and covertly to instill character-building themes in daily activities, with after-school "spiritual food" events with the school location adjacent to the cathedral.

George is now a "well-oiled machine" in the operation of the soup kitchen, still feeding the poor 3 times a week. He could not ask for more committed staff, and the poor have come to depend on and look forward to their time of fellowship. George is also doing a great job creating websites for Albanian companies, opening opportunities for worldwide e-commerce.

Melanie continues to be an asset where there is a need both in and out of her home. She has been teaching English at the Resurrection of Christ Theological Academy, as well as at Protagonist School, and she has a group for priests and lay people who wish to improve their English-speaking skills.



As for Christopher and Madeline, who are our pure joy, and continually make us happy that we made the choice to come to Albania, they have finished another fruitful year in school. Maddie completed first grade and Christopher completed the third grade.

## TANZANIA

### FELICE STEWART

**I**n January I was recovering from pneumonia that had me in intensive care in November and December. I started doing a little part time work in February and received my first payment from Social Security. At the end of March, I attended the OCMC's New Missionary Candidate Orientation in St. Augustine. In April and May I was focused on doing two part-time jobs that helped me toward getting out of debt from having no income while I was sick. In June I was finally able to focus on starting to build my support team for the mission to Tanzania. This is very exciting. I also began to realize that I will be leaving church and friends for at least two years. Before this I had been focused only on going, which is the exciting part! I have also been working my way through the Missions 101 class.

### CHARITA STAVROU

**C**harita Stavrou is excited about the prospect of returning to Tanzania to serve—this time as a long term missionary. The opportunity to work again under the direction of His Eminence Jeronimos brings great joy to this faithful woman of God who is still in her prime at eighty years old. Charita has experience in both short and mid-term service in Tanzania, Ghana, Cameroon, and Guatemala. Her greatest desire is to share the Gospel with those who have never heard of Jesus. She will also be using her professional skills as a seamstress to teach sewing and help administer sewing programs through which church vestments, children's clothing, and other needful articles will be produced.

### KATIE WILCOXSON

**T**hings have been really busy since I completed my week of training in Florida—in fact, just a week after I got home I was able to give my first presentation at my home parish! I got a lot of encouragement and a lot of support from those folks. Over the next several weeks, I sent out letters to friends and family letting them know about my future plans and asking for their prayers and financial support. I was then able to set up

some additional speaking engagements: For example, in May I traveled to Houston and had a wonderful time at St. Joseph's parish; the people there were very generous. In June, our diocese had its annual Parish Life Conference. I was honored to speak briefly at the Clergy Dinner hosted by His Grace Bishop Basil, and I received an overwhelming amount of support and encouragement from the clergy and also from our diocese. Please keep me in your prayers as I continue to work full-time as an emergency room nurse, in addition to arranging more speaking engagements. This fall, I am planning trips to Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Maryland, so please let me know if you would like me to speak to your parish or organization. I would love to tell you about the work we will be doing in Tanzania!

### MICHEAL PAGEDAS

**I**enjoyed attending the Dedication of the OCMC Missionary Training and Administration Building. I met several fascinating people who gave me a lot of encouragement. One of the highlights was meeting both Archbishop Anastasios and Archbishop Demetrios, for whom the new building was named. After the dedication, I went to southern Florida to visit a few parishes. I also had the honor of being interviewed by Fr. Chris Metropulos for the OCN (Orthodox Christian Network). The process of building my support team has been going very well, and I am confident things will get even better. Thank you for your continued prayers and support!

### JAMES HARGRAVE

**P**reparation for long-term service has been ongoing since New Candidate Orientation at the end of March, when we five Tanzania candidates spent a week at OCMC bonding and laying the groundwork for the first phase of our new lives. Since then I have begun spreading the word via newsletters, phone calls, and parish visits. Most recently I spoke at the GOYA Olympics at St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in Tampa, FL. It was a real encouragement to share the vision of worldwide Christian witness with so many enthusiastic young people. Over the summer I am teaching full-time and also visiting parishes locally in Florida. Come autumn, God willing, I will be able to devote all of my time and energy to spreading the word in preparation for the move to Africa. The prayers and financial support that I have begun to receive are a great blessing and encouragement.

## ROMANIA

### FLOYD AND ANCUTA FRANTZ

**E**ach year in Romania more than 7,000 children are given up by their families to foster care simply because the family cannot afford to care for them. OCMC missionary Ancuta Frantz, through the Protection of the Theotokos Family Center, continues to give love and to care for the children of the poorest families by providing spiritual, emotional, and physical support for young mothers through her counseling program, which encourages keeping the child in the family.

OCMC missionary Floyd Frantz continues his work of supporting the Romanian Orthodox Church by training the leadership of the Church in how to combat the very serious epidemic of alcoholism and addiction, which plagues the Romanian society. This work has now expanded into the Republic of Moldova, where he is helping the Orthodox church to develop similar training programs in their archdioceses.

Floyd and Ancuta wanted to also thank the people who support them in their work of assisting the Romanian Church to serve God's children who are most in need.

### CHRISTINA SEMON

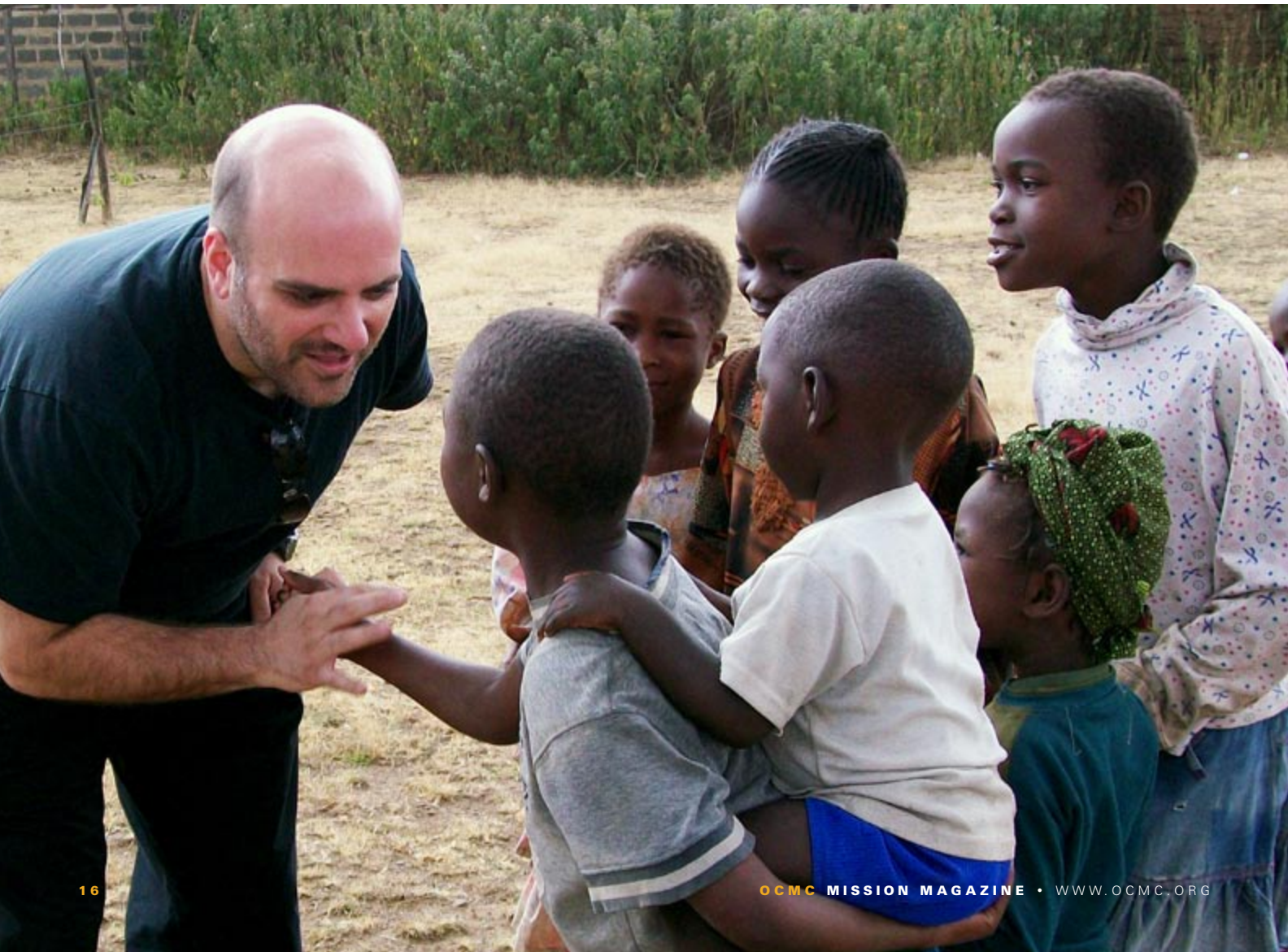
**G**reetings to all of you from Romania! Since I arrived in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, I have immersed myself as much as I can in the language, culture, and relationships. Through the grace of God I have daily interactions with my Romanian friends such as buying food and asking directions from locals, and I attend church with them to gather spiritual strength.

In addition to my daily interactions with Romanians, I am contributing some of my time to the St. Dimitrie Program and the Protection of the Theotokos Family Center. From changing diapers and playing with babies to serving food to the homeless and washing dishes, I am actively working with Romanians. Also, by traveling in Romania I have developed a better picture and knowledge of the people. There have been some tough times, but the struggles continue to educate me.

I am grateful to God that we have our partnership with each other. I know that your prayers and support are helping this mission in Romania.

# *Preparing for* **Cross-Cultural** *Ministry on an* *Orthodox Mission Team*

Andrew Lekos • Teams Director





**T**he idea of participating on a short-term Mission Team seems simple enough: have a strong desire to help others, take some time off from work, raise funds, and off you go. In reality, preparing to serve on a short-term mission takes careful and arduous training. This training pays off when faced with the unexpected challenges of cross cultural ministry.

OCMC Mission Team efforts began in the summer of 1987, when a 26-member team went to construct a church in a remote area of Kenya. A stone church was built in a region where the Orthodox faithful did not have a church building in which to worship. Since then, over 1,400 short-term Orthodox Mission Team members have served on over 125 projects in 24 countries around the world to build churches and homes, participate in youth ministries, offer healthcare, visit orphanages and teach about the Faith. We have learned many lessons along the way.

### Learn, Serve and Share

Since the 1980s, Team members have begun their journey of faith with training which presently includes a highly developed pre-field orientation that is conducted at the new Archbishop Anastasios and Archbishop Demetrios Missionary Training and Administration Building in St. Augustine, Florida. This pre-field experience has been designed to prepare individuals who are entering the real classroom of the mission field. It also equips them to share their experience when they return home – a vital aspect of any short-term Mission Team.

The development of this pre-field training has become especially relevant as more and more Orthodox Christians in North America are responding to the opportunity to serve on a short-term Team. This phenomenon is not unique among Orthodox Christians. Short-term trips, lasting two weeks or less, draw about 1.6 million Americans to foreign

**OPPOSITE:** Fr. Mark Leondis, Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) Board Chairman, greets a group of children during his Mission Team experience in Kenya. During pre-field orientation, Team members prepare for cross-cultural ministry by being instilled with a sense of openness and a deeper appreciation for the work of missions. This training helps Team members serve as witnesses to the Faith even without the common bonds of language and culture.



**ABOVE:** Since 1987, over 1,400 short-term Orthodox Mission Team members have served on over 125 projects in 24 countries. Each of them is prepared for their service during an intensive pre-field orientation.



**LEFT:** Prayer is vital in preparing for service on a short-term Mission Team. At the completion of pre-field orientation, all OCMC Team members are prayed for at a commissioning service to be witnesses of Christ. Team members learn to trust in God and allow Him to use them to do His will.

mission fields each year, according to a survey by Princeton University.

The pre-field orientation process prepares Team members for their “plunge” into a cross-cultural situation by informing participants about language and culture, and training them to enter the experience with a posture of openness, acceptance and trust. The purpose of this experience is to provide an environment where God can touch the hearts of participants with a new awareness of the ways they can serve Him. Traveling abroad, and immersing oneself into a world where language, food, customs and economic opportunity are vastly different from our own can result in frustration and tension as well as excitement and joy.

Many broad Mission concepts are covered in pre-field orientation, including; understanding the biblical foundation of missions; seeing how God uses ordinary people to do His work; and accepting personal involvement in the work of making disciples. As Team members come to a deeper appreciation for the work that they aim to do and face the inevitable challenges of culture shock they are invited to draw strength from their faith and from one another. Team members forge bonds of friendship and cooperation

between themselves and those they have gone to serve as they share in the joys and challenges of their experience together.

Pre-field orientation also encourages short-term Team members to view themselves as stewards of their Mission Team experiences. These experiences are given not only for personal edification or as a one-time contribution to missions. They are given to individuals, by God, to be used for the good of the Church. Team members are taught how to share their experiences with others to broaden an awareness of the need for Christ in the world, introduce people at home to their Orthodox brothers and sister abroad and to help their local communities become more actively involved in missions.

OCMC takes great care in preparing Team members to learn, serve and share before they arrive in the mission field. As learners, Team members are equipped to function as a team in their new cultural setting. As servants, they are encouraged to be obedient to God’s will and to love others to the best of their abilities. Once they have returned, Team members are encouraged to share what God has done in their lives and to invite others to continue the vital work of witnessing for Christ in the world.

### A Deep Commitment

The ideal location to hold an orientation is a place where Team members can escape the distractions of home and work, and a place that has access to the tools and personnel needed to train them in missions. Such a facility now exists for Orthodox Christians in North America. In May, 2009 the new Archbishop Anastasios and Archbishop Demetrios Missionary Training and Administration Building was dedicated. The construction of this new Mission Center reflects a deep commitment to raising up and training people who are called to serve our Church across cultural boundaries. With guest rooms and training resources, this new facility is a place where Team members can not only gather for orientation, but can also be a part of the Church's efforts to "reach all nations."

The OCMC is confident in the fact that God brings together those He has called to serve Him. For those He has called to serve on a Mission Team, preparation is a crucial aspect of the experience. Pre-field orientation and OCMC's new building have been designed to facilitate this preparation. Our prayer remains that God directs those whom He calls to make the deep commitment to continue following Jesus Christ out into the world; and that those called will be instilled with a deep appreciation for the work of missions, a true servant's heart, and a willingness to share their journey of faith with others.

**BELOW:** *Simulated experiences and interactive exercises help establish a bond among Team members. This team building is a vital pre-field orientation objective that helps Team members with their mission work and prepares them to process their experience.*



## What is an OCMC Ambassador?

OCMC Ambassadors work toward the spread of Christianity around the world by letting others know how they can answer the call to missions through the programs of OCMC. Ambassadors are able to serve and contribute to the work of international missions by helping to engage and involve the faithful at home by:

- Distributing and posting OCMC materials to the parish as they are sent.
- Providing OCMC announcements for the Church Bulletin.
- Hosting OCMC fundraising/awareness events or inviting an OCMC representative to speak.
- Praying for the work of missions and OCMC missionaries serving abroad.

OCMC Ambassadors are needed in every parish. Whether your community is large or small, currently involved in missions or just beginning to explore this vital aspect of the Christian walk, *please prayerfully consider representing OCMC within your church.* Becoming an OCMC Ambassador is easy.

Please contact OCMC Communications Director Alex Goodwin by phone at 1-877-463-6784, or by e-mail at [communications@ocmc.org](mailto:communications@ocmc.org), if you would like to help your Orthodox brothers and sisters to *make disciples of all nations.*



## SAMP Program Expands into Central Africa *with the Help of the National Philoptochos Society*

**Theodore Theodorou**, OCMC Agape/SAMP Program Coordinator

**T**he Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) is excited to announce the expansion of the Support a Mission Priest (SAMP) program into a new country: the Democratic Republic of the Congo. With the blessing of His Grace Bishop Meletios of Kolwezi, who graciously received OCMC Executive Director Fr. Martin Ritsi in July, forty-five Congolese clergymen are now receiving SAMP support. Congo's addition to the SAMP program was made possible by a generous gift from the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society. With this addition, the SAMP program is now supporting 400 priests in 19 countries!

The history of Orthodoxy in the Congo (formerly Zaire) is a fascinating one that can be traced back to the 1970's, when Greek settlers

traveled to the city of Kolwezi. One of the most remembered of these settlers was Fr. Cosmas Gregoriatis, who has been called "The Apostle to Zaire." He was a Greek man who first came to the Congo as a layman. He built many churches in the villages and was loved by the Congolese people. In 1977 he returned to Greece, was ordained a hieromonk, and came back to Africa as head of the local mission. According to Fr. Theotimos Tsalas, one of Fr. Cosmas' Congolese spiritual sons, Fr. Cosmas' plans for the mission bore much fruit:

"Fr. Cosmas was practical, he made no rash promises, but he never wasted time...When he started a construction project, he intended it to be finished in two months. He wasn't stopped by the times, the hour, the seasons, war, obstacles, or needs. He was as free as a prophet. If there were roadblocks because of political or civil conflicts, he didn't care – he just made his way through."

Fr. Cosmas' ministry came to a tragic end in 1988 while he was driving from Kolwezi to another city 300 kilometers away. In the car with Fr. Cosmas was Greek Consul Dionysios Kivetos and a Congolese passenger. While they were driving on an open road, a truck unexpectedly came from the other direction and hit the side of their car, flipping it over many times. Miraculously, the other passengers suffered only minor injuries; Fr. Cosmas,

however, died instantly. A church is being built in the village where the accident occurred and will be named for the Martyr Kosmas of Aitolos in his memory.

Fr. Cosmas' legacy continues. Today, there are 34 stone church buildings, 51 mud brick churches, and 21 straw huts where the Orthodox Congolese hold services. Near every church there is also a house for the priest and a baptistry that can be used to welcome the newly illumined into the Body of Christ. In the district of Katanga, there are two large farms where the students receive agricultural training, and in the village of Manika a medical facility named for St. Anargyron serves the Congolese people.

In regards to religious education, the Diocese of Kolwezi holds monthly seminars for priests, Sunday school teachers, chanters, and priests' wives. In these seminars there are large contributions from visiting clergy and laymen, as well as from indigenous clergy. The Diocese has also started a philanthropic outreach program that sends Orthodox Christians to visit those in prison, and distributes food, clothing, and medicines to the needy.

The 45 new clergymen who will begin receiving SAMP funds are truly a part of an Orthodox movement that is flourishing in the Congo. If you would like to support a SAMP priest or deacon in their ministries, please e-mail Ted Theodorou at [samp@ocmc.org](mailto:samp@ocmc.org) or call 1-877-GO-FORTH.



**ABOVE:** OCMC's Support a Mission Priest (SAMP) Program offers financial support to men in developing countries allowing them to answer the call to the priesthood and dedicate themselves to their ministry. Through this program young men, like these Congolese Altar Boys, are shown that service as a priest is a viable option for their lives.

**TOP LEFT:** His Grace, Bishop Meletios of Kolwezi (center) prepares the Eucharist with a Congolese priest (left) during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Orthodoxy is growing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which now has 45 priests receiving support from OCMC's SAMP program.

**LEFT:** Following a recent visit by OCMC Executive Director Fr. Martin Ritsi, pictured here with His Grace Bishop Meletios of Kolwezi (center), the Democratic Republic of the Congo enrolled 45 new clergy in the Support a Mission Priest (SAMP) Program.





*Moved by a desire to help the people of Uganda, Dr. William White helped sponsor a 2009 OCMC Orthodox Mission Team that provided healthcare and distributed medicines to scores of people in Gulu.*

# DR. WILLIAM WHITE

## *Team Uganda Sponsor*

*Answering Christ's Call to Missions through a Deeper Understanding of Stewardship*

KENNETH KIDD, OCMC Annual Gifts Officer

On June 23, 2009, With the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Jonah of Uganda, a medical team of 10 individuals left for a two week medical ministry to the Archdiocese of Uganda. Armed with medicines, medical equipment, and icons, this Team also traveled with the prayers of one very special individual who, with a very generous gift that supplemented the funds raised by Team members, helped offset the costs needed to field this medical team. The OCMC and

all of the members of this Tanzania team are pleased to thank and recognize Dr. Bill White as the sponsor of the 2009 Medical Team to Uganda.

Dr. White is a retired physician who started and oversaw the operations of Emergency Medicine Physicians until his retirement just a few years ago. Raised Roman Catholic, he began his active spiritual journey in college. Guided by the Holy Spirit, and with help and support of his cousin Fr. Luke Palumbos in

Stockton, California, Dr. White began exploring Orthodox Christianity about three years ago. Dr. White was Chrismated in June 2007 by Fr. Lou Christopoulos at St. Catherine's Greek Orthodox parish in Greenwood Village, Colorado. Upon

*ABOVE: Medical Mission Team Members Ben Stumpf, Issac Truelson, and Angela Arrow-smith (from left to right) prepare to distribute medicines at one of the 9 clinics that served over 4,000 people in the Gulu region of Uganda.*





*LEFT: Dr. Sanda Constantinidi and Leah Apalodimas examine a Ugandan family during their service on the OCMC Health Care Mission Team to Uganda in 2009.*

coming into the Orthodox Church, he shares, "I knew that I was finally home."

Over these past three years, Dr. White has been inspired by reading many of the desert Fathers. He shares that he has come to appreciate that "everything I have is not really mine, but God's," which instilled in him a deep desire to "give it all back to God." As a result,

*BELOW: Large groups of people would travel for many miles and wait for long periods of time for the opportunity to see one of the medical professionals who operated several clinics as part of the OCMC Health Care Mission Team to Uganda in 2009.*

Orthodox ministries and the people they serve have found a place deep in his heart.

In the autumn of 2008, Dr. White met Fr. Martin Ritsi, and he began to learn about some of the medical needs that exist in Africa - especially in the Archdiocese of Uganda. "It is amazing how far just a little bit of money can go there," he commented following the meeting. The severity of the need for medical assistance in Uganda specifically weighed on his heart, and he immediately felt called to go as part of the 2009 Medical Team. Dr. White, however, was getting married in February when the Team was slated to depart; instead he found another way to be a part of this vital effort - by underwriting the costs associated with sending a Team to offer a medical witness to the Ugandan people. This was just a beginning for Dr. White, as he hopes that one day very soon, accompanied by his new wife, he will be able to serve on an OCMC Medical Mission Team.

### **Becoming a Mission Team Sponsor**

There are many costs associated with each Mission Team, including housing, food, transportation, insurance, visas, materials, and training. These costs vary depending on the type of Team, its duration, and where it will be serving. The OCMC seeks to raise \$10,000 for each Team. This money, in addition to those funds raised by Team members, will help offset these Team costs. Gifts from Team sponsors help lower the participation cost for each team member and, in turn, make participation on Teams possible for many more people.

Yearly opportunities exist for individuals to become Team sponsors with a gift of \$10,000 toward underwriting the costs of a specific Mission Team. Sponsors are able to share in the Team's journey and will be provided with photographs and updates from the Team. Though not all of us are able to go on a Team, being a sponsor provides an opportunity to be a part of a Team by making the work possible. To find out more about becoming a Mission Team sponsor, please contact Kenneth Kidd, Annual Gifts Officer, or Andrew Lekos, Mission Teams Director, at 877-GO-FORTH.





# From the Field: Mission News



## MASS BAPTISMS IN TANZANIA METROPOLIS OF MWANZA

METROPOLIS OF MWANZA

**M**wanza, Tanzania - The whole situation of the Africans requires someone like the Apostle Paul to be near them "in order to open eyes, so that they will turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God" (Acts 26:18). The need for their spiritual orientation is something that one understands. The big question is: How do the Africans themselves see their own condition? What do they do? Indeed, they see it with uneasiness, pain, and desire. They are seeking the light of Christ. They want to be children by the grace of their Heavenly Father. Now they find themselves on the course of liberation.

Christ is the hope of the Africans.

He is "the King of Peace and Salvation." The Orthodox Church, in its missionary endeavor and its ministry, stands beside the Africans in their pain and desire. It strives to instruct them to the word of truth and to reveal to them the Gospel of justice. They are baptized and married in groups. New life is being created, a life of joy and peace, a life in the light of Christ. For as Christ tells us, "Whatever is born from the Spirit is spiritual" (John 3:6).

Recently, we experienced the sacrament of Baptism, of regeneration, in the village of KISHOGO, 43 km from the town of BUKOBA. On that splendid day 120 souls became reborn participants of the "death and resurrection of Christ our God." In other words, they acquired "the light of knowledge and devoutness."

**While one Tanzanian man emerges from the water, those yet to be baptized look on. The Orthodox Church in Tanzania continues to grow as it remains focused on missions.**

Inside the river that flows through the banana trees and under the sun of the equator, they received "the blessing of the Jordan" and from now on they will worship "the Son of Justice." And inside our Orthodox Church they will confess: "Your light, Lord, has been brought upon us who in knowledge praise thee."

## PASTORAL VISIT OF HIS GRACE DAMASKINOS, BISHOP OF GHANA TO IVORY COAST AND SIERRA LEONE

Daniel Ayeh

**H**is Grace Damaskinos, Bishop of Ghana, made a pastoral visit during the month of June to the Orthodox Churches on the Ivory Coast and the Orthodox Missionary Division of Sierra Leone, respectively, under his jurisdiction. The Bishop conveyed the paternal blessings of His Beatitude THEODOROS II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa; and he urged the Faithful of both countries to hold to the Orthodox faith and her teachings.

In the Ivory Coast, His Grace visited about five hundred Orthodox Faithful. He also inspected the Church building and Mission House, which contains three bedrooms and a big hall (for church activities), which is still under construction. Hopefully the Church will be inaugurated in September 2009. As you may be aware, there was a Civil War in the Ivory Coast for some time; for this reason we were not able to develop any projects, but by the grace of God the country is calm, and in the future we have plans to build a clinic and a school for educating the children.

With the Grace of God, the Orthodox Missionary Division of Sierra Leone is also growing; they have been able to baptize 130 people. On the 20th of June 2009, His Grace Damaskinos ordained Stephen Kamara to the Diaconate, and the next



day His Grace elevated him to the rank of Presbyter. On Monday, the 22nd of June, Deacon Siluanos Nkounkou was ordained to the Priesthood. These Ordinations took place at the Orthodox Church of St. Eleftherios, where His Grace urged the newly ordained priests to take up their pastoral duties as soldiers in Christ, soldiers who will serve the Heavenly King and will give witness to the world of His Orthodox Christian faith and love towards their fellow men.

In the compound at Freetown, they have built an Academy which is known as "Freetown Orthodox Christian School." The school consists of a Primary School and a Junior High School. The total number of pupils is presently 1,200. The compound is also home to St. Eleftherios chapel and a clinic. The Bishop also visited a five-acre compound in a village on the outskirts of the capital in an area around the town of Waterloo, where some projects are under construction. The compound has a temporary church building which is named after St. Moses the African, a mission house for the priest, and a guest house for visitors. At the moment, they have completed about three large houses, one is nearly ready, and there are two others halfway through completion. They have opened a Junior School for young children of the disabled and of the local community as well as a Tailoring School to train the disabled. When all the buildings are finished, they should be able to house one hundred people. During his visit, the Bishop blessed these projects. Most of the projects are near completion and will soon be used for the glory of God and for the people of Sierra Leone.

## **STUDENTS GRADUATE FROM THE ORTHODOX SEMINARY IN JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA**

FR. ATHANASIOS AKUNDA

**W**ith the Blessings of His Eminence, Archbishop Seraphim, we are able again to share the second Commencement of the Seminary at Yeoville, Johannesburg.

The graduation was attended by His Eminence, the clergy, and members of the Greek communities led by Mrs. Lemonia, the Greek Government Education coordinator in South Africa. The Student's families and friends were also there, as were several seminary alumni. One alumnus, Pascal, was the master of the program. Graduates received diplomas in Orthodox Theology.

Fr. Markos, another graduate of the

seminary, is now staying with his wife at our seminary and helping me at St. Raphael parish. The seminary now has a small library, which is in existence due to generous contributions of books.

On behalf of His Eminence, we thank the Mission Center (OCMC) and all who individually or collectively are part of this success and miracle.

## **HIS BEATITUDE THEODOROS II, POPE AND PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA VISITS NORTHERN CAMEROON AND RECEIVES RECOGNITION OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH FROM THE CAMEROONIAN PRESIDENT**

Metropolis of Cameroon

**H**is Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, celebrated his name day on 17th February 2009 with the children of Orthodox African families in Northern Cameroon on the border with Chad. At the Church of Ss. Raphael, Nicholas and Irene, in the village of Datseka, next to straw huts, the people sang hymns in their many dialects and danced. On a missionary journey to see for themselves the results of the missionary effort in the Cameroon, His Beatitude and those following him were warmly welcomed by the citizens, local leaders, and representatives of other faiths.

Addressing His Beatitude in the Church of St. Raphael in Datseka, built by Abbess Eugenia of the Monastery of the same name in Mytilene, His Eminence Gregory, Metropolitan of Cameroon, wished His Beatitude many years on his name day and asked for his continuing support for the mission. "Whatever is done is the work for which we are inspired by the zeal of the Primate of our Patriarchate, who did not hesitate to travel thousands of kilometers from his See in Alexandria, to reach the Northern Cameroon to celebrate his name day with the Orthodox Christians of the African Savanna," said the local Metropolitan, emphasizing the significance of the visit by His Beatitude - the first Patriarch of Alexandria to reach this border region of sub-Saharan Africa.

Addressing the local people and especially the youth, His Beatitude said: "I want you to keep your traditions in our churches. Keep your language, your tradition, and the way you express your thanks to God, with hymns sung in your language, your tones, drums, dance. And know that, in this manner, you are not outside of the tradition of our Church. Remember how many times in

the Old Testament the chosen people of Israel thanked and praised God with the drums, songs, shouts and dancing ..."

The traditional dances gave a particular hue to the welcome of the Patriarch of Alexandria, both within and outside of the churches, especially the war dance of the Cameroonians called the "Gourna," which is similar to one of the ancient "Fire Dances."

His Beatitude, who the previous week had met with His Excellency Dr. Paul Biya, the President of Cameroon, in Yaoundé, received the gift of official recognition of the Orthodox Church and the Holy Metropolis of Cameroon on February 12, 2009.

## **MASS BAPTISMS AND BLESSING OF THE WATERS IN ZIMBABWE**

Diocese of Zimbabwe

**O**n Saturday, January 3, 2009, with the Grace of God and the prayers and blessings of His Beatitude THEODOROS II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, mass baptisms took place at the new Missionary Centre in Warren Park, on the outskirts of Harare. The gatherings of the catechumens had been taking place over the past few months at the home of one of the faithful, who gladly offers his home for these meetings. They would gather on a Saturday and celebrate the Divine Liturgy in his yard once a month. His Eminence, Metropolitan George of Zimbabwe, celebrated the sacrament together with Father George Saganis and Father Augustine Moeketsi. 160 catechumens, most of whom were little children, were baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, becoming members of the Orthodox Church – and for the first time received the Divine Sacrament. Following the baptisms, food, clothing, and shoes were distributed to all the newly-illuminated as well as to all the faithful present.

On Wednesday, January 7, 2009, the Service of the Blessing of the Waters and the submerging of the Precious Cross took place at the Missionary Centre of St Nektarios in the Baptistery within the Missionary Centre. Many youth dived into the baptistery to bring out the Precious Cross. This year Yiannis Mutimhirakai (of the boys) and Athina Metemeri (of the girls) each received a gold cross and a prize. On the same day, prizes were given to those who had passed the catechism exams at the end of the school year, in which many youth had received distinctions.



220 Mason Manatee Way, St. Augustine, FL 32086

THIS NATIVITY SEASON MAKE A GIFT TO ORTHODOX  
MISSIONS AND HONOR SOMEONE YOU LOVE WITH AN  
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**P**ERFECT FOR GODPARENTS, SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS, FRIENDS, AND FAMILY, OCMC GIFT CARDS ALLOW YOU TO DONATE TO OCMC IN SOMEONE'S HONOR. WE WILL SEND YOU A GIFT CARD TO PRESENT TO YOUR LOVED ONE ACKNOWLEDGING THE WORK THAT HAS BEEN MADE POSSIBLE IN THEIR NAME. GIFT CARDS CAN BE PURCHASED IN \$10, \$25, AND \$50 DONATIONS. HOWEVER, THESE AMOUNTS WILL NOT APPEAR ON THE CARD.

PLEASE ORDER YOUR GIFT CARDS BY DECEMBER 10TH SO THAT WE CAN SEND THEM TO YOU BEFORE CHRISTMAS. FOR MORE INFORMATION, OR TO ORDER GIFT CARDS, PLEASE CONTACT PHYLLIS ALLAN BY TELEPHONE AT 877-GO-FORTH OR VISIT [WWW.OCMC.ORG](http://WWW.OCMC.ORG).