



ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY CENTER

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The background of the cover features a photograph of a priest in traditional Ethiopian Orthodox vestments, including a yellow and red robe with gold embroidery. He is holding a golden icon of the Virgin Mary and Child Jesus above his head. In the background, a group of people, including women wearing traditional beaded necklaces, are visible.

With God,
All Things
Are Possible

M A K E D I S C I P L E S O F A L L N A T I O N S

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OCMC's Vision is that all people may come to know the saving love of our Lord: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And it's Mission is to partner with the worldwide Orthodox Church to bring people into vibrant, self-supporting Eucharistic communities.

For more information about OCMC visit our website at www.ocmc.org

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On the cover: Fr. Zachariah, an Orthodox priest from Turkana in Northern Kenya holds the Gospel up during the Liturgy. Many Turkana are coming to Christ through the Orthodox Church through the witness of men like Fr. Zachariah. OCMC has been assisting these efforts by send sending mission teams to the region with the blessing of His Eminence Markarios, Metropolitan of Kenya.



STANDING CONFERENCE OF THE CANONICAL
ORTHODOX BISHOPS IN THE AMERICAS



With God, All Things Are Possible

ABOVE: In February 2010, an OCMC Mission Team lead by OCMC Executive Director Fr. Martin Ritsi traveled to northern Kenya to share the light of Christ with the Turkana people. Many Turkana have never heard the message of the Gospel. This mission team was able to share Orthodoxy with hundreds of people in some extremely remote villages and even bring the faith to a place where it had never before been proclaimed.

*"Do not pray for easy lives; pray to be stronger people.
Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers; pray for
powers equal to your tasks. Then the doing of your work
shall be no miracle, but you shall be a miracle." - PHILLIPS*

Fr. Martin Ritsi, OCMC Executive Director • **Photography:** Petros Thorp

Salawe was Turkana. A tall, thin and wiry man, dressed in a traditional colorful cloth that draped over his shoulder, he held an aura of authority and power. He was strong, in his sixties, and not only the leader of the remote Africa desert village, but also its Shaman. His influence was evident and seen in the respect and deference given to him by the people who turned to him for healing and prophecy.

On one hot February day, Salawe sat across from a group of nine Americans and three African Orthodox clergy. Locked in a powerful and magnetic gaze with the group's leader, they discussed Orthodox Christianity and bringing this new religion to his village, which still adhered to traditional beliefs.

The sun beat down mercilessly on the group who sat on the dry, sandy ground. Even in the shade of the Acacia tree the temperatures were above 100 degrees, and sweat trickled down their bodies. The air was still but charged with an electric presence. Something powerful and otherworldly was taking place. I was the group leader who was locked in this gaze with the shaman.

Looking back with amazement, I've asked myself: "How did this come to be? How did a group of people, so foreign and far removed from this isolated desert region, travel across the globe to sit in front of the local religious leader and engage in the deepest of conversations to introduce Jesus Christ and the Orthodox Church?"

At one level, the birth of this encounter began

when Jesus Christ entrusted His followers and the Church to carry on His mission. At another level, the encounter was a product of OCMC's striving to reach for the most pertinent goals of this mission. At yet another level, it was the result of people allowing themselves to be stretched for God.

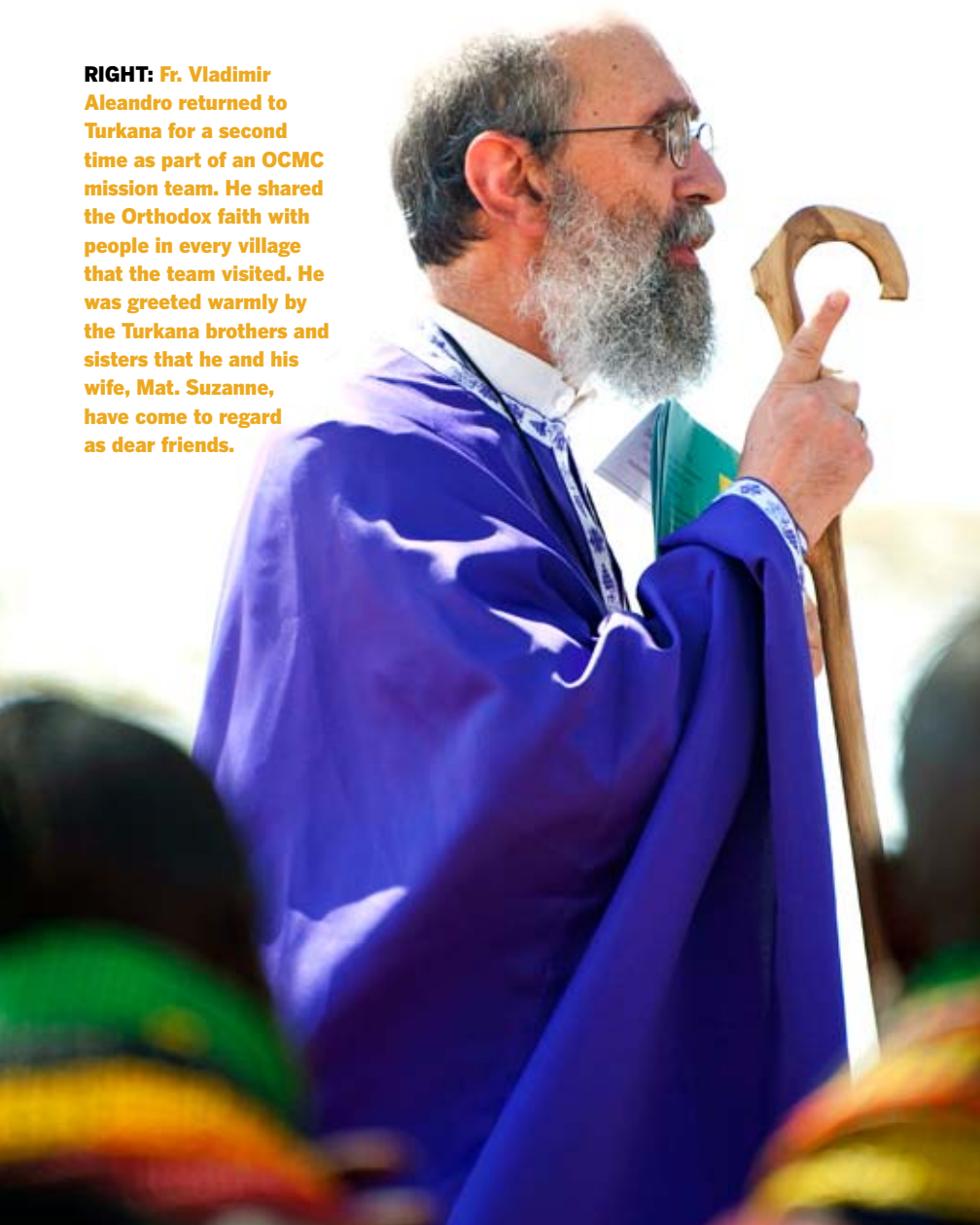
Jesus, as He ascended into heaven, gave the marching orders for the Church: "Go therefore and make disciples of all Nations..." (Matt 28:19-20). This was not presented as an option or an aside, but rather as the final message delivered to the Apostles prior to His ascending into heaven.

Today, 1/4 of the world's population (over 1 billion people) still have not heard the Gospel message, nor have they had the opportunity to accept Jesus Christ or to join the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. The Turkana desert region of northern Kenya is one of those places. OCMC, as it strives to move forward and answer the call to missions in finding and reaching those who have never heard, had been guided to this special moment.

At the same time, being with the Turkana and meeting Salawe involved a willingness to stretch ourselves for God on the part of OCMC, myself, the Team that was there with me, the local Orthodox clergy, and maybe Salawe too!

The plan evolved after an exploratory visit to the area in 2009, when I sat with the local clergy from

RIGHT: Fr. Vladimir Aleandro returned to Turkana for a second time as part of an OCMC mission team. He shared the Orthodox faith with people in every village that the team visited. He was greeted warmly by the Turkana brothers and sisters that he and his wife, Mat. Suzanne, have come to regard as dear friends.



Lodwar and we began to dream about the growth of Orthodoxy among the Turkana. What could OCMC do in this area? Of course we could build a church or dig a well, or help with a school or address medical needs. But, we wanted to go further and dream about how we could stretch ourselves to get involved in a way that would directly help to spread the Gospel (in addition to these other methods) to the many people who had not yet been introduced to Christianity.

What resulted from our meeting was the idea to assemble a team of seminarians that would return

What resulted...was the idea of living as close to them as possible, sleeping in their remote villages and teaching under the local trees.

to this area to interact with the newly illumined Christians, living as close to them as possible, sleeping in their remote villages and teaching under the local trees. In addition to reaching those who have newly joined the Church, somehow, the group would be brought to a village where Christianity had not yet been presented. Somehow...we didn't know how...but somehow we would pray and stretch ourselves to make this happen.

The Team developed and was comprised of a priest and his wife, four seminarians, a professional photographer and graphic designer, OCMC's Communications Director, and myself. Together, we traveled to the Turkana region of Kenya and conducted retreats with the men, women, and children of four different villages. There was time of worship, teaching, and celebration.

Our trip had been so packed from moment to moment that we had little opportunity to think each day of what we would do next. Toward the end of the trip, this goal of reaching out to a village that had not heard about Christianity was approached. The night before, we sat outside under the stars beside a traditional grass hut. I asked Fr. Zachariah, our Turkana Orthodox priest from the area, "Father, you've said everything is lined up for the group to present Christianity in a new village tomorrow. Tell me, now, a little more of what you are thinking."

Fr. Zachariah proceeded to explain how the next day the Team would all travel to a village deeper in the desert. There, we would be introduced to the local "magic" man. This man was a key to being able to preach Orthodoxy there. If we could get his approval to allow the Church in his village, then Fr. Zachariah believed he could return later and have great success. If, on the other hand, the Shaman didn't give permission, it would be extremely difficult to try and work there. Fr. Zachariah then added, "What I am hoping is that you, Fr. Martin, will approach him on behalf of all and get this



LEFT: The OCMC mission team to the Turkana region of Kenya saw many opportunities to bare witness to the Orthodox faith and it provided team members with many opportunities to join their Turkana brothers and sisters in fellowship and love. Here, team member Christopher Zaferes (center) listens to the story of a blind man who relies on his Orthodox faith for strength in spite of the many struggles imposed by his condition.



TOP: OCMC Executive Director Fr. Martin Ritsi (center) and OCMC Mission Team Member Fr. Vladimir Aleandro (right), join Fr. Makarios (left) and Fr. Zachariah (right) during the procession of the Holy Gifts. The Liturgy was celebrated wherever the OCMC mission team to Turkana, Kenya traveled. Many of the people that the team visited do not get to receive the Eucharist often because of the remoteness of their villages.

BOTTOM: Through translators Fr. Zachariah (fore) and Fr. Vladimir (right), OCMC Executive Director Fr. Martin Ritsi (center) shares Orthodox Christianity with the shaman, named Salawe, of a remote village of the Turkana region in northern Kenya. This interaction reflects OCMC's intent to share the message of the Gospel with people who may have never before heard it.



permission for us.”

“Wait a second, Fr. Zachariah! That’s not quite what we had been thinking!!! What kind of ‘magic man’ is this? Does he do ‘good’ magic or does he also send curses on people? I thought we would be doing some sort of Team skit or presentation to a group of people who would come out to listen to us.” Fr. Zachariah reaffirmed the importance of reaching the Shaman, and as he pondered on the type of ‘magic’ he did, he said that Salawe was well respected and involved in things like healing or prophecy, but not in cursing or harmful things.

All I could think at the moment was, “Oh, no, what have we gotten ourselves into!”. But this was where the Lord had led us. Bringing His message to the world is not an option, or something to be done only when it is safe, or sure, or comfortable. And most importantly, He has promised that we are not alone when we give ourselves to serving Him.

When Jesus directed the Apostles, and through them the Church, that they were to go make disciples of all nations, He concluded that commission by assuring them: “And lo, I will be with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). In fact, they were instructed to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit had come upon them to empower them for this task. At another time, when they were questioning whether salvation was possible, Jesus again assured them: “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26). Left to our own power, that which is possible is very limited, but with God all things can be accomplished, as can be seen with what followed in our meeting with Salawe.

The next morning we woke up early, packed our things, and jumped into the four wheel drive vehicles we had rented to bring us across the sands of this forgotten corner of the world. Ten minutes later, we sat looking across a quarter mile of flowing river that blocked our way. The night before, and for the last year, the river had been completely dry. The Turkana region had been in a time of serious drought, and the waters that seasonally flowed through this riverbed had ceased long ago, so that the people were suffering from a lack of water. As one would expect, in a dry desert region the coming of water is acknowledged as a blessing from God. Overnight, distant rains had caused the riverbed to fill, which was a great relief to the Turkana people. But now, this blessing stood between us and the only way to reach Salawe’s village!

We were determined to carry our mission through, and it wasn’t long before a testing of the waters with a long stick revealed that the water was not too deep, and that the current was not more than anyone could wade through. If the river didn’t rise any further, we would be OK to cross and then strike out on foot to find the village. Making the crossing was actually refreshing, and our wet clothes helped to keep us cooler as we hiked through the scorching desert. An hour later, after a few stops to pull long acacia thorns from our shoes and sandals or to get our



RIGHT: During their recent visit to Kenya OCMC mission team members, led by OCMC Executive Director Fr. Martin Ritsi, ministered to hundreds of people from the Turkana tribe. The team held seminars in several villages in the region where they shared the Orthodox Faith, worshiped, and enjoyed the fellowship of a common meal.

bearings, we arrived at the outskirts of the village.

Again, however, it seemed our plans would be thwarted. Salawe was not there. When he heard that the river was flowing, he assumed we would not be able to cross and he had left early that morning with his herd of animals to care for them. A messenger was sent to try and find him, and we all sat down on the dusty ground to wait, hoping he would arrive before we had to begin our return journey to Lodwar town.

Another hour later, as we sat chatting under a tree, a lone man strolled up to our group. It was Salawe! He greeted us warmly, and then we all sat back down on the ground together before him, as if we were in a formal reception hall being hosted by a dignitary for a special meeting.

As Fr. Zachariah began the discussion, though, something began to happen. I can only explain it as the presence of the Holy Spirit descending and connecting our souls. The conversation continued, and because we didn’t speak each other’s language,

Fr. Zachariah and Fr. Vladimir (another Turkana Orthodox priest from Lodwar) were translating. But somehow, there was a presence that held us together; there was a communication taking place so much deeper and more intense than words could ever express. Our eyes were intently locked together, peacefully, as the conversation and words came from and around us.

I was moved to tell Salawe that God had brought him a message today and that it was God who wanted us to meet. The old man answered, “I know,” with a smile of joy on his face. “I was tending my herd,” he continued, “and didn’t think you would be coming, when suddenly, God spoke to me and told me that you were here. I started back immediately and halfway back I met the messenger you sent. But I didn’t need the messenger, because I was already on my way!”

We continued our conversation, and I discussed, in brief, the Faith and our Church and finally said that we had come to seek his permission to bring

...we sat looking across a quarter mile of flowing river that blocked our way. The night before, and for the last year, the river had been completely dry.

this religion to his village through Fr. Zachariah, who would return later. But not only did we want to bring this to the people in his village, we wanted him to consider becoming Christian. Immediately and without hesitation he replied, "Of course. I can feel that what you have is good. Yes, my answer is yes." At that moment I realized that the intensity of how we had been engaged was mutual. Just as I had been feeling a powerful connection to Salawe and could see into him beyond the words we were speaking, he too was being granted something special during our communication.

To have set a goal to hold a meeting in a remote desert with the religious leader of a traditional tribe of people who have had little connection with the Western world and to hope that this meeting would result in that leader warmly embracing the invitation to receive Christianity into his village was daunting in itself. If all we could see was this task and what

could be accomplished by our own talents and ability, it might seem impossible, and we could be tempted to shy away from it. But in our lives we are not alone, especially when we step forward and stretch ourselves in the Lord's name to do His will. Our God can fill a river that has been dry with water overnight. Our God can speak to people and send them divine messages. Our God can come upon us and help us to see, to understand and discern in miraculous ways.

We have been entrusted by our Lord to carry the Gospel and make disciples of all peoples. So many have yet to believe, and over a billion people have yet to even hear the message for the first time. How can we hope to make a difference? Can we, coming from our particular backgrounds and with all the struggles and limitations around us, dare to hope, dream, or strive to be messengers of He who is, who was, and who is to come?

This task is something that OCMC is

striving to apply itself to more fervently. As we review all that has been accomplished throughout the past 25 years of missions by the Orthodox in North America, we can see that a foundation has been laid, but the needs remain great. We are looking ahead and stretching ourselves to go forward and to go deeper, not only in ways according to the abilities that we know we have, but in ways that may seem beyond what we are capable of.

Likewise, in our own personal lives there is a lesson to be learned from how God intervened in reaching Salawe. Not only is it OK, but we all need to be willing to dream and to stretch ourselves for God as we reach out in mission to the far corners of the world in our nation, in our cities, in our parishes and even within our families and in our daily lives. *Alone we are weak, but with God all things are possible.*

>> To see more pictures and to read accounts from team members about what they experienced during the 2010 OCMC Mission Team to Turkana, Kenya, visit www.myocn.net/index.php/OCMC-Kenya-Travel-Blog.

BELOW: Team members were made to feel like members of the Turkana community wherever they went. Here OCMC Executive Director, Fr. Martin Ritsi, looks on as his son Stephanos (a Holy Cross Seminarian) along with his now daughter-in-law and Hellenic College student Alexandria are adorned with traditional dress for Turkana couples. Stephanos and Alexandria were joined by two other Holy Cross seminary students on the team as they taught the Orthodox faith to men, women, and children in villages around Lodwar in the Turkana region of northern Kenya.



A Look Inside LONG-TERM MISSIONARY SERVICE

Nathan Hoppe, OCMC Missionary to Albania

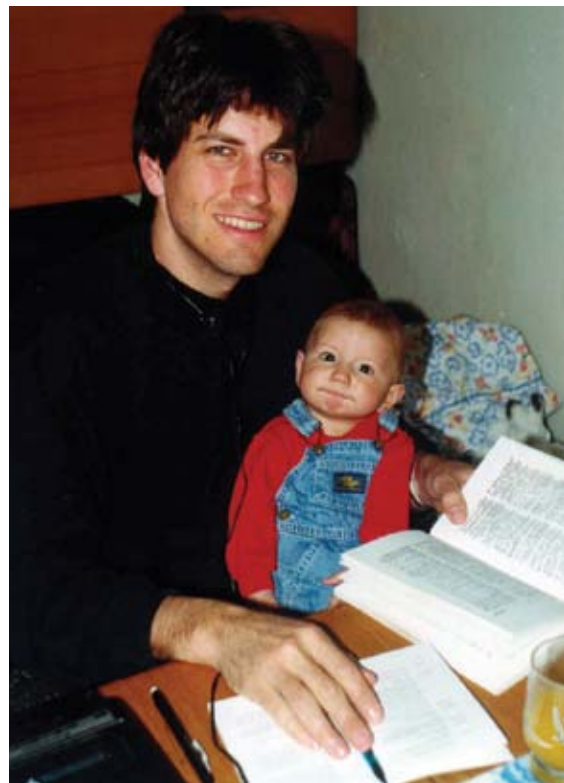
"If you want to live here you must eat our food, live in our houses, wear our clothes and speak our language." With these words, spoken to my father about 40 years ago, the chief of a remote valley in Colombia was sure that he had discouraged us from ever coming to live in the mountains with his people.

A few months later our family made the treacherous 30-mile journey by foot and mule on winding trails through the mountains which led us to our new home. There was no electricity or running water, no grocery store or doctor. Our home measured 12 x 20 feet; its walls and floor were made of mud and the roof was thatched. The language of the native people we hoped to serve had never been written down. No dictionary or grammar existed. In order to reach these people, we chose to be incarnated into their culture. As St. Paul says, "I have become all things to all men that by all means I might save some." (1 COR. 9:22) This process of incarnation is essential to all missionary work.

The heart of the word 'missionary' is the word mission. A missionary is a person who is dedicated to fulfilling a mission. In the case of Christian missionaries, it is a person who dedicates himself to fulfilling our Lord's last great command before His

ascension: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." (MATT 28:19) This command is also the first Gospel which is read to every new Christian at their baptism. This means that every baptized Orthodox Christian has been commanded by our Lord to make disciples of all nations. It was this command that compelled my family to go to Colombia when I was a boy, and what inspired me to serve as a missionary with my family in Albania in adulthood.

All Orthodox Christians must be engaged in the process of disciple-making. For this to be successful, we must work together as members of the Body of Christ. There are many different ways in which each member can participate in the process of taking the Gospel to those who have not yet heard it. All missionaries are not theologically trained clergy. The essential thing is that each missionary is working in a strategic way to make it possible for the Church



ABOVE: Long-term missionaries spend a great deal of time learning the language and culture of the people they hope to serve. This is an ongoing process that is vital to the missionary's ability to share the Word of God. This photo taken soon after his arrival in Albania shows OCMC Missionary Nathan Hoppe learning the language and culture of the Albanian people. Work that he continues now more than 10-years later.

to reach out to and incorporate those who have not previously been joined to Christ and to the life of His Body the Church. Many, who themselves do not go to faraway places as missionaries, participate in the ministry of missionaries by supporting them.

The process of disciple-making occurs in a relationship between persons. It is not primarily a transfer of knowledge and it is not recruiting fellow adherents of an ideology. Disciple-making is introducing others to Christ and helping them to be formed in His image. For this reason, one of the primary tools which the Church has used throughout the ages for making disciples of all nations is long-term cross-cultural missionaries who travel from their native land to a place where the Gospel has not yet been preached.

The Importance of Self-Emptying

The primary model for missions is the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. St. Paul describes this process in his letter to the Philippians. "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became

obedient unto death, even death on a cross.” (PHILIPPIANS 2:5-8)

We are told to have the same mind in ourselves which Christ Jesus had when he became man for the salvation of the world. As missionaries, we must be willing to empty ourselves of everything that is an obstacle to the proclamation of the Gospel in the place where we are called to witness. We do not set aside our fundamental identity as persons just as Christ did not set aside his fundamental identity as the Son of God and the second person of the Trinity. Rather, He emptied Himself of those things which would have hindered His coming to live among us as man (John 1:14). As missionaries this means setting aside the comfort and familiarity of our homes in order to go to the place that God is calling us. At times these are things related to the fact that the standard of life in the United States is higher than in most other parts of the world; but often there are things which are simply different. For the sake of this emptying, the missionary must choose not to take all of his life in the United States with him into the mission field.

Perhaps the most difficult thing to leave behind in the self-emptying process required when becoming missionaries is our family. As missionaries we live in countries far from home and return to the United States only at long intervals. This means that we do not see our families for many months and sometimes years at a time. This separation is often very difficult both for those who go and for family members who are left behind. This painful reality has been alleviated somewhat by e-mail, inexpensive phone calls and even video-conferencing on the Internet. Still the missionary must choose a road of self emptying in regard to his family. A missionary who lives overseas but is always looking over his shoulder at the homeland he left behind can not be fully incarnate and effective. I have been blessed with a family that is

fully supportive of my missionary calling. They have never opposed us being overseas. Nevertheless, it is still hard to be so far away so much of the time. We are deeply comforted by the fact that we can look forward to spending eternity together where there will be no separation.

Paradoxically, this painful separation from our families opens a door for God to bless us with a new family. As our Lord said, "Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life." (Matt 19:29) We have seen the truth of this statement many times over. We have been blessed with a network of wonderful friends which stretches across North America and around the world. These are people who have adopted us into their families because of their love for Christ and their support of our work as missionaries. We experienced this in a special way during my former wife Lynette's battle with cancer. We were overwhelmed by the fact that thousands of people around the world, many of whom we had never met, were praying for us. We truly had a family many hundredfold.

The mission of our Lord to this earth for our salvation did not end with His becoming man. He went on and "humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross", as St. Paul says. As missionaries in the 21st century, we are not often called to die physically for the sake of Christ but many missionaries throughout the

centuries have been martyred. Nevertheless if we are to be effective witnesses for Christ, we must be prepared to lay down our lives for him if it is necessary. If the missionary only stays at his post as long as it is safe and comfortable, his hypocrisy will become evident to those to whom he is striving to witness. We cannot call others to commit themselves fully to Christ unless we ourselves have done so.

My former wife Lynette gave an eloquent witness of this principle. When she was diagnosed with cancer in December of 2004 we returned to the United States in the hope that she could be

BELOW: Long-term missionary service can be a life long calling. Here OCMC Missionary Nathan Hoppe is seen riding atop a mule as a young boy on his way to his family's new home with native peoples in Colombia. His parents dedicated their lives to making disciples among the indigenous tribes of the Colombian mountains in response to the Lord's last great command before His Ascension.



BELOW: Long-term missionary service takes many different forms. OCMC Missionary Nathan Hoppe has lived among the people of Albania for more than 10-years. In addition to training future clergy of the Albanian Church, Nathan and his wife Gabriela organize day camps for children in Kosovo that teach citizenship skills and basic human values that children need to be productive members of their society.





ABOVE: Here, OCMC Missionary Nathan Hoppe addresses youth gathered for a day camp that he and his wife Gabriela organize in Kosovo. OCMC missionaries rely on the prayer and financial support of Orthodox Christians in North America to ensure the continued growth of the ministries to which they have dedicated their lives.

successfully treated and continue missionary service in Albania. By the spring of 2006, it was clear that her cancer was terminal. She chose at that point to return to Albania and continue serving for as many months as God would grant her. She also chose to die and be buried in Albania.

Being Incarnate for Those We Serve

One of the most important aspects of the incarnation that the missionary strives to achieve on behalf of the people they are called to serve, is learning the language of the people to whom they minister. It is significant that Christ is called the Logos. The Logos is not easily translated into English. It is normally rendered as "Word". The concept of the Logos is closely connected with human language. Therefore the incarnation of the Logos, the Word of God, requires that we speak to people in their native language.

Speaking in the native language of those with whom we are trying to communicate has an importance which goes beyond the simple transfer of intellectual knowledge. The native language of each person is closely connected with his identity. By speaking directly in their language, we can reach them on a much deeper level than if we were to solely rely on translators. Understanding the language is also important. Through a translator, there is always a filter between the missionary and the local people. Whoever translates for the missionary inevitably shapes what is said whether they intend to or not. It is only when the missionary is able to effectively communicate with people in their own language that they can become fully effective.

Learning languages is difficult and is one of the major obstacles to those who consider becoming missionaries. For most people it takes six months to two years to achieve a basic level of fluency. A real deep knowledge of the language can take many more years. I began studying Albanian before our arrival in the country. I had about five months of regular lessons after our arrival but then I began teaching at the seminary so I had to discontinue the language

lessons. I continued to study Albanian on my own and gradually transitioned to functioning without a translator over the next two years. I am still learning Albanian and struggling to increase my vocabulary and knowledge of grammar. It is important not only that we make ourselves understood but that we speak as clearly and eloquently as possible. If we do not know how to say what we mean, we will never mean what we say. Additionally, speaking the language well communicates love and respect to the people we are trying to reach.

Other aspects of incarnation may be less tangible but still very important. As missionaries we must adapt to the way of life of the people that we are ministering to. Sometimes these differences are dramatic and obvious; at others they are subtle and much harder to spot. The people that my family lived with when I was a child in Colombia wore traditional non-Western clothes, they lived in mud and thatch houses, they ate unusual food. These differences were easy to see although not always so easy to adapt to. Albania is a modern European country. In many ways dress, food and other customs are deceptively similar to our own. However, there are many subtle differences which are important to understand and adapt to. If we are not able to do this, it is much more difficult to build bridges and communicate the Gospel. Often we unknowingly create misunderstandings and confusion. We offend people and hurt their feelings simply because we do not know how to adapt to their culture. Like a language, this process of incarnation in the culture can take months or even years.

Missionary as Apostle

Leaving one's home to learn the language and culture of another in the name of Christ is what it means to be an apostle – a role and concept necessary for the mission of the Church. Each time

we say the Creed we affirm that we believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. We often think of apostolic in connection with the apostolic succession connecting us to the apostles. In reality, the primary sense in which the Church must be apostolic is in its missionary witness. The primary meaning of the word apostle is "one who is sent, an envoy."

The fact that an apostle/missionary is sent implies that there is someone who sends him. All missionaries are, of course ambassadors of the Lord, but missionaries are also sent by the members of His Body, the Church. As missionaries, we cannot go unless we are sent. The fact that we are sent creates a reciprocal responsibility. The church that sends us is responsible for supporting us with prayer and sacrificial offerings. They are also responsible to oversee our ministry. As missionaries, we are responsible to report on our ministry to the churches that have sent us. This close connection between the missionary and the sending church is essential for the success of the missionary enterprise.

As missionaries, we spend a significant portion of our time fostering this relationship. Before a missionary goes overseas he must build a strong support team which will join him in the ministry that he is undertaking. Support team members commit to pray for the missionary regularly and make pledges towards his financial support. OCMC long-term missionaries are completely dependent on gifts of financial support designated to the name of the missionary. Through this partnership, members of the sending church become fellow ministers with the missionary and share in God's grace. Please consider becoming part of the support team of one of the OCMC long-term missionaries by praying for them and supporting them financially.

As a long-term missionary, I am deeply aware of the awesome privilege which we have as we become the incarnate face of Christ to those who do not yet know Him. This is a terrifying responsibility and I am deeply aware of how unworthy I am for this task. I would not have the courage to attempt it if He had not commanded it. We must always remember that whatever we accomplish in His service is by His grace. As Paul says a few verses after the passage quoted from Philippians above, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." (PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13)



LEFT: The process of disciple-making occurs in a relationship between persons. Missionaries are called to empty themselves so that they may serve as a living witness to Christ's love. Though missionaries spend long periods of time away from friends and family back home, they forge lasting relationships among the people they minister to. Here OCMC Missionary Nathan Hoppe enjoys a snack with his friend Kristo.

GO FORTH:

STORIES OF MISSION AND RESURRECTION IN ALBANIA

Fr. Luke Veronis, OCMC Board Member

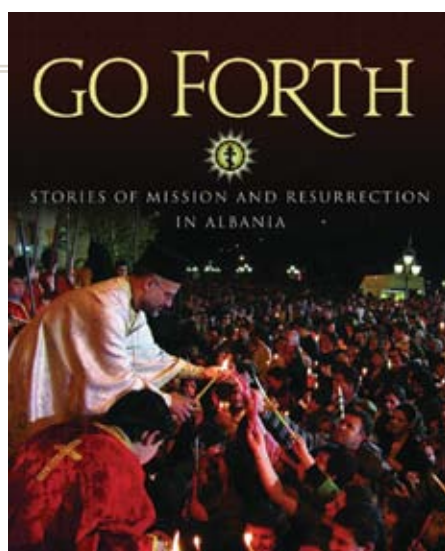
Of all the stories of the resurrection of the Orthodox Church in formerly communist lands, Albania's may be the most dramatic. Having been almost exterminated by the atheistic government, the Church of Albania has arisen, under the leadership of Archbishop Anastasios, to become a vibrant and growing member of the world Orthodox community.

Fr. Luke A. Veronis and his family served as OCMC missionaries to Albania for more than 10 years, during some of the most crucial years of this resurrection. Following are excerpts from his book Go Forth which shares stories of those years – stories of desperate poverty and heroism, of setbacks and triumphs, of heartbreak and miracles – and call us all to answer the Lord's Great Commission: Go Forth!

"The heroism of missionaries and their spirit of sacrifice and love always tend to give back to the old churches a new vigor of life," notes Archbishop Anastasios of Albania. These words summarize why I want to share stories from a decade-long journal of cross-cultural missionary work. The amazing miracle that has occurred in Albania since 1991, inspired by the Holy Spirit and under the vision and direction of Archbishop Anastasios, offers a glimpse of vitality, renewal, and vigor that will motivate and encourage our contemporary Church.

How does one proclaim the Good News of our Lord in the only country in recent history that absolutely forbade and persecuted any and every expression of religion for 24 years? The lands of Albania claim Christian heritage from the first century, yet endured the advance of Islam from the fourteenth century onward, followed by the most extreme totalitarian form of communism. Militant atheists crucified the Church and thought they had abolished it.

With the fall of communism in 1991, Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos arrived in Albania to see what, if anything, remained of this ancient Christian community. He faced the daunting task of proclaiming the Gospel and reviving a historic church while confronting the many challenges of a post-communist setting: an enduring atheistic mentality, a broken societal infrastructure, rampant poverty, prevalent corruption, and ongoing religious



LEFT: OCMC Board Member Fr. Luke Veronis and his family served as OCMC missionaries for more than 10 years during some of the most crucial years of the Church's resurrection in Albania. In his new book "Go Forth" he shares stories of those years – stories of desperate poverty and heroism, of setbacks and triumphs, of heartbreak and miracles.

News implies revealing the love of God's Kingdom in word and deed, and inviting others to join the community of faith on a journey of salvation.

This missionary journal will help all Christians understand their role in the overall drama of sacred history, and draw each person into a deeper relationship with God along the way. I believe the stories and anecdotes found here will inspire you. You may find gems of wisdom offered by "living saints" whose faith survived the horrors of communism. New believers discovering the pearl of great price will share their spiritual journeys. You will see the struggles and successes of the servants who have tried to offer a witness of God's love under difficult conditions.

For example, there are stories about the three holy sisters from Korca—Marika, Demetra and Elizabeta—who described their house during communism as "a little underground church. Even during the most dangerous years, we would invite Fr. Kosma to come several times a year and celebrate the Divine Liturgy in a back room during the middle of the night," explained Demetra. "We would cover the windows with thick blankets, so no one could see light from outside. We spoke in whispered voices, so as not to awaken the children.

BELOW: His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios, seen here with Albanian children on Palm Sunday, helped shepherd the Albanian people as they resurrected the Church there following decades of oppression under communism. Under communism all religion was totally outlawed in Albania.

prejudice. Go Forth offers glimpses of how God has resurrected this Church, granting new hope to so many living in despair.

In my years in Albania, I learned that love and freedom exemplify the path of Orthodox Christian missions. We incarnate the Gospel of love, while respecting the freedom and dignity of every listener to respond as he or she feels touched by God. Authentic mission has nothing to do with coercion, trickery, or superficiality but doing all things "in love, for love, and by love." Proclaiming the Good



We never celebrated a liturgy with the children around, because we didn't know if they might slip up and say something at school. One person would keep watch at the front door of the house, to warn us if anyone was coming. We felt like the early Christians worshipping in the catacombs."

"Several times the police took us into their office and questioned us, but thank God, they never imprisoned us or physically hurt us. They weren't sure of what we were doing, so they just tried to intimidate us. But this did not hinder our devotion to God. Even when Fr. Kosma couldn't come, and we didn't have a priest to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, we would do something else. I would bake the prosphoro [the holy bread used in the Eucharist], and place the bread and wine on top of our radio. Since we live so close to Greece, we could pick up a Greek station and listen to a live broadcast of the Divine Liturgy. Hoxha strictly forbade anyone to listen to foreign radio, so we realized the great risk we were taking. We would keep the volume very low and pray to God with the radio. At the end, we would eat the bread and wine as our Holy Communion."

Resurrecting faith in post-communist Albania entails many fascinating stories, including humorous accounts about "Monasteries, Snakes and Christ's Resurrection," "Lobsters, Termites or Lamb's Brain," and "Cigarettes, Chaos and Christ is Risen." The book describes the Church's heroic outreach during the 1997 anarchy of Albania and the 1999 Kosovo War. One story narrates the journey of a Muslim girl's reaction to a Church camp, where

BELOW: Over the years many Orthodox Christians from North America have served Albania and other countries with the blessing of His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios. Long-term missionaries, team members, and generous donors worked through the OCMC with His Beatitude to bring the light of Orthodoxy back to

she goes from the negative attitude of "I can't stay anywhere where they make the sign of the cross. Where I come from, the cross is associated with violence and death." to the point of saying, "I have never experienced such love as I did at this camp. I will never forget this experience! It has given me an entirely new understanding of Christianity."

Archbishop Anastasios of Albania, of course, represents a unique voice in the contemporary missionary movement of the Orthodox Church, as well as in worldwide Christianity. He describes himself as a candle before the icon of Christ, but he represents one of the brightest lights leading people to our Lord.

Throughout the book, we hear his charismatic personality witnessed in the midst of persecution, slander and struggle. "We have to be thankful for life and all that life brings, whether good or bad. Gratitude is a primary virtue in the Christian life," the Archbishop shared. "We have to sacrifice and be ready to risk our lives for Christ. We don't want to be people who simply keep the status quo. An authentic Christian is one who will give his life to Christ with selfless abandonment! A life without persecution means that the devil doesn't take you too seriously. We also need to understand what it means to share in the life of Christ—in His Cross as well as His Resurrection. Walking with Christ means to joyfully accept the sufferings, persecutions, and struggles of life. By doing this, we not only participate in Christ's own passion, but we unite with Him in His glorious resurrection... Despite all these struggles, I can say that I am experiencing the 'freedom of the cross.' One can find amazing freedom when we learn to say, 'Your will be done.'"

Along with his words, *Go Forth* shares stories from throughout the life of the Archbishop. For example when the Archbishop was a young deacon back in the 1960s, he faced the serious dilemma of whether to become a missionary, or stay in his

home country. Archbishop Anastasios describes this critical moment: "I remember a young cleric who was on a prolonged retreat on the island of Patmos. Sitting in front of the open sea, he faced a challenging dilemma—to stay in his beautiful European country, within an environment he loved, and in which he was loved, or to obey the final command of the Lord, 'Go ye,' and to depart for Africa. No guarantee was offered for this latter course and its future. Gazing from his simple, ascetic cell, the horizon of the open sea called within him, seeking a satisfactory response for this major decision in relation to the will of God."

The answer finally came in the form of a critical question: 'Is God enough for you? If so, then go. If not, then stay where you are.' A follow-up question, however, reinforced the first. 'But if God is not enough for you, in which God do you believe?' A peaceful decision followed, directing him on an innovative course into new missionary frontiers."

The same night of his ordination, the newly ordained Fr. Anastasios flew to Africa and celebrated his first Divine Liturgy at the St. Nicholas Cathedral in Kampala, Uganda. His cross-cultural missionary journey had begun.



ABOVE: Training future clergy was one focus of Fr. Luke's missionary service to Albania. His efforts were guided by the vision of His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios who helped many young Albanian men receive the theological training they needed to answer their call to the priesthood. The ranks of these clergy continue to grow as does the Orthodox Church, welcoming more people into the Body of Christ.



These are only a few of the captivating stories that will inspire all. The ultimate purpose of *Go Forth* is to help each reader see the wonders of God's miracle in the mission field and be ready to say, "Here I am Lord. Send me."

A PLACE TO CALL HOME: ST. THOMAS HOUSE IN BALI, INDONESIA

Michelle DeAngelis, OCMC Staff Member



St. Thomas House is an Orthodox boarding house located in the old Dutch colonial capital of Singaraja, Bali. While many of the charms of this historic and picturesque town remain, poverty and hardship are an inescapable reality; thanks to the St. Thomas House, though, 29 children have a place that they can call home.

The Indonesian archipelago comprises more than 17,000 islands – 6,000 of which are inhabited. It is generally believed that the earliest inhabitants of Indonesia came from India or Burma. The islands fell to the Portuguese in 1511. Following centuries of colonial rule, and a period of Japanese occupation during WWII, Indonesian independence was recognized in 1949. Though Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world, with a population of nearly 250 million people (almost 90% of them Muslim), Bali is predominantly Hindu.

Orthodoxy came to the people of Indonesia when a young Indonesian man was studying at a Protestant Theological Seminary in Korea and came across the book *The Orthodox Church* by Bishop Kallistos Ware. This man converted to the Orthodox Church and, with help from the OCMC he received a theological education. He was eventually ordained to the priesthood and returned to his homeland to undertake the immense job of bringing Orthodoxy to Indonesia.

With the support of a grant from the Orthodox Christian Mission Center's (OCMC) Agape Canister Program, the St. Thomas



House is assisting children with shelter, food, and clothing, as well as scholarships to local schools. Led by Fr. Stephanos Boik Nino, St. Thomas House provides for the spiritual needs of the children as well. He says, "Our hope is that these children will become living witnesses to the people of Bali."

Kyriaki Abi, a student at St. Thomas House writes, "This is my second year at St. Thomas Orphanage. I am very happy because I can go to school and continue

my studies. I want to be a teacher. Since living at St. Thomas House I've learned to live a disciplined life and I also know about and have been baptized into the Orthodox Church."

Thanks to the support of the Agape Canister Program and Agape Partners across the U.S., Fr. Stephanos is able to provide these children with a place to call home and the opportunity to receive an education. Currently, Agape funds are supporting eight projects in six countries. If you would like to find out how to become an Agape Partner and help as we continue to minister to the physical and spiritual needs of those around the world, send an email to agape@ocmc.org or call us at 1-877-GO-FORTH.

TOP: Kyriaki Abi has called the St. Thomas House home for two-years. Through this ministry she enjoys shelter, food, clothing, and an opportunity for education. The St. Thomas House receives financial support from Orthodox Christians in North America through the Agape Canister program.

ABOVE: Fr. Stephanos Boik Nino serves as an Orthodox priest in Bali, Indonesia where he runs the St. Thomas House which is now home to 29 Indonesian children. With support from OCMC's Agape Canister Program, the St. Thomas House provides a witness to the Orthodox faith in Bali, which is predominantly Hindu.

OCMC MISSIONARIES HELP WATER THE SEEDS OF THE GOSPEL IN TANZANIA

Dcn. James Nicholas, Assistant Missionary Director



will produce a large volume of church linens and vestments for the fast growing ranks of clergy and parishes. At 80 years “young”, Charita is a pillar of strength; and she is devoting the remaining years of her life to serving the Church abroad to, “reach those who have never heard about Jesus”.

In April, OCMC Missionary James Hargrave also arrived in Tanzania to begin his work there. Following a period of intensive language learning in Kiswahili, James will be serving at the Archdiocesan office in Mwanza as a special assistant to His Eminence Jeronymos. Using his graduate education in linguistics, James also hopes to be able to assist with the translation of Church documents into native languages in the future. James grew up as a missionary kid in Africa (Kenya) and has also served in Russia and Korea. He has embarked on his own mission and with the hopes of carrying forth the legacy of his family.

July was a very busy month as well as OCMC deployed three additional missionaries to provide healthcare services to the Resurrection Hospital in Bukoba, and possibly beyond, as the program expands.

Katie Wilcoxson, an ER nurse with additional training in Advanced Life Support and Emergency

LEFT: His Eminence Jeronymos, Metropolitan of Mwanza (left) looks on as OCMC missionaries and OCMC mission team members share the Orthodox faith with their Tanzanian brothers and sisters. OCMC serves in Tanzania with the blessing of His Eminence to help bring more people into the saving Body of Christ.

Agriculture is the cornerstone of the Tanzanian economy representing about half of its national income. In a land well acquainted with periodic droughts, its cultivation nevertheless depends on rain. Irrigation holds the key to stabilizing agricultural production in this beautiful country. Without it, adequate food production could be uncertain. As with agriculture, the spiritual harvest also needs to be fed and watered in order that it may grow.

The Church in Tanzania has experienced tremendous growth over recent years as the land continues to be tilled spiritually by an increasing number of clergy, and the seed of the Gospel continues to be planted. But in order to produce the maximum harvest possible, Metropolitan Jeronymos Archbishop of Mwanza has sought support from the Church in North America through the OCMC.

In response, OCMC has been working diligently over the last several years to recruit and train missionaries to serve in Tanzania so that the seeds which have been so faithfully sown can be watered by more hands to produce an even greater yield. The preparation and training for these missionaries has been lengthy and rigorous, and has included studies in missionary history, enculturation training, contextualization of the Gospel, world religions, evangelism and discipleship, team dynamics, communications, linguistics, support team development, and task assignment.

In less than a year, OCMC has deployed five missionaries to Tanzania to support the Church in this great effort. After serving a number of times



ABOVE: James Hargrave teaches the Orthodox Faith in Tanzania. James is serving as a long-term missionary in Tanzania. In addition to teaching he hopes to use his education in linguistics to translate Church texts into the language of the Tanzanian people while also providing administrative support to His Eminence Jeronymos.

ABOVE RIGHT: All missionaries must learn the language and culture of the people they prayerfully hope to serve. Here, OCMC Missionary Katie Wilcoxson (left) continues her language training which will last anywhere from six months to a year.



on OCMC short-term mission teams to Tanzania, Uganda, and Cameroon, Charita Stavrou was deployed to Mwanza, Tanzania in March to begin her service as a long-term missionary to help spread the faith to nonbelievers, and to help with the very practical task of running a sewing operation which

Nursing Pediatric Care, will be applying her skills in this new and challenging setting. She has short-term missions experience in Tanzania, Guatemala, and Alaska and has felt a strong calling for years to serve as a medical missionary. Katie is the daughter of Fr. Aidan Wilcoxson who serves as rector of St. John the Forerunner Orthodox Church in Cedar Park, Texas.

Joining Katie is Felice Stewart, a registered nurse with considerable experience in program and staff management including mental health centers, day and long-term treatment programs. She is a Licensed Independent Substance Abuse Counselor as well with addictions counseling and treatment experience in the US and abroad. Her experience in short-term missions includes Romania, Uganda, Haiti, Vietnam, China, and the Philippines.

Michael Pagedas is a public health educator who will also be serving at the hospital but will likewise be

Continued on page 16



1

1: OCMC Missionary to Albania Georgia Gilman Bendo teaching English at an after-school catechism class at the Protagonist school.



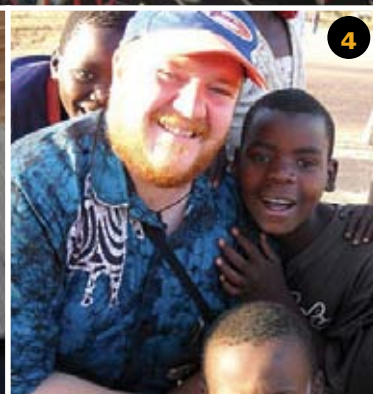
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2: OCMC Missionary to Albania Anastasia Pamela Barksdale teaches Christian Education at the Resurrection of Christ Theological Academy at Shen Vlash.



3

3: OCMC Missionary Floyd Frantz, who directs a comprehensive substance abuse program in Romania and Moldova, receives the "Crucea Transilvania" for 10-years of service in Romania from His Grace, Bishop Vasile.



4

4: OCMC Missionary to Tanzania James Hargrave, who is preparing to begin translating Church texts and provide administrative support to His Eminence Jeronymos, with some of his newest Tanzanian friends.



5

5: OCMC Missionaries to Albania Nathan and Gabriela Hoppe welcomed their new son Daniel into the world as they returned to the United States for a year-long home assignment.



6

6: Melanie Linderman, OCMC Missionary to Albania, seen here during the weekly broadcast of her English language program on "Radio Ngjallja".



7

7: Michael Pagedas settles into life as a missionary in Tanzania. Michael serves as part of a team of missionaries that offer healthcare as a witness to the Faith.



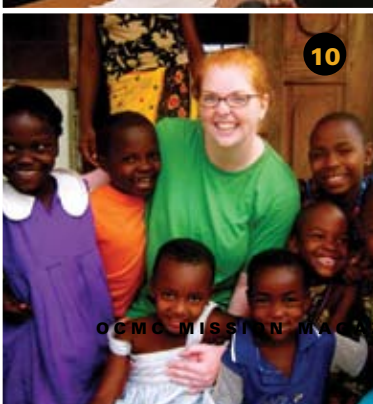
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8: OCMC Missionary George Russell helps provide technology training and solutions to businesses and professionals in Albania. His wife, Pauline, continues to teach at the Protagonist school in Tirana.



9

9: OCMC Missionary to Romania Christian Semon continues to learn the language and culture of the people she feels called to serve. She has begun to assist at the Protection of the Theotokos Day Center which is directed by OCMC Missionary Ancuta Frantz. Christina also traveled to Kosovo to assist with the youth camps coordinated by fellow OCMC missionaries Nathan and Gabriela Hoppe.



10

10: Katie Wilcoxson, an OCMC Missionary to Tanzania, arrived in July to serve as a nurse at a hospital in the Archbishopric of Mwanza. She is part of a team of OCMC missionaries dedicated to offering healthcare to the people of Tanzania.



11

11: Charita Stavrou arrived in Tanzania as an OCMC Missionary dedicated to taking Christ to people who may have never heard the message of the Gospel. Here she laughs with Tanzanian children during a visit by an OCMC mission team.



12

12: OCMC Missionary to Tanzania, Felice Stewart serves as part of a team of missionaries that are offering health care services in the Archdiocese of Mwanza. To assist her in this work she participates in regular intensive language training.

Continued from page 14

involved with educational seminars and workshops that may take him throughout the diocese. The need to bring public awareness and training to this population that struggles with serious health issues such as malaria, cholera, and HIV/AIDS will help to add a new dimension to the Church's healthcare efforts there. Michael has prior short-term missions experience in Mexico and Tanzania, including a more extensive period of service with his Eminence Jeronymos in 2008.

In the coming months, Maria Roeber, another medical professional who currently serves as a labor and delivery nurse at Georgetown University Hospital, will also join the team for service in Tanzania. She has served as co-chair of the Nursing Practice Council and is a member of the Honor Society of Nursing. She has previously participated on a short-term medical mission trip to Uganda. Maria is working hard now to develop her support team and anticipates joining the rest of the team early in 2011. She is the daughter of Deacon Gregory Roeber who serves at St. George Orthodox Church in Altoona, PA.

Together, under the Omophorion of His Eminence Jeronymos, our Tanzania medical missionaries will be supervised by the Resurrection Hospital's local medical director, Dr. David Balyegwera, and work in tandem with medical teams from Greece led by Dr. Kyriakos Maczezis. What a joy and expression of Orthodox unity this will be as these American, Tanzanian, and Greek medical professionals work as the hands of Christ the Healer to tend to the health and spiritual needs of the Tanzanian people.

This ministry of healing will work in tandem with the evangelistic witness of Charita and the translation and administrative services offered by James to provide a Christian witness to the Tanzanian people and to share with them love and faith in Jesus Christ. As the ground continues to be watered, the seeds of the Gospel will surely grow and produce an even greater harvest.



ABOVE: There is now a whole team of OCMC long-term missionaries serving in Tanzania to offer a living witness to the Orthodox faith through ministries of healthcare, translation, administration, and evangelism. Seen here in their first weeks in Tanzania from the left James Hargrave, Michael Pagedas, Felice Stewart, and Katie Wilcoxson are all grateful for the prayers and support they receive from the Church in North America.

Missionary Updates

ALBANIA

ANASTASIA PAMELA BARKSDALE

Anastasia Pamela Barksdale is beginning her third year in Albania, and she has settled into her ministry teaching Christian Education and overseeing Field Placements for the students of the Resurrection of Christ Theological Academy at Shen Vlash Monastery in Durres. Anastasia also assists at the Archdiocese of Tirana in Archbishop Anastasios' office. This fall, Anastasia will begin to offer Bible studies in a variety of venues for students, women and lay leaders in the Church. These Bible studies will be in English, in order to provide opportunities to practice the English that they have learned in School. Her days are filled with continuing to learn Albanian, teaching, lecturing, and preparing books which will be used for ministry for publication. In September, Children in the Church Today, by Sister Magdalen, will be available for the general public. To date, three books and a number of other ministry tools have been translated into Albanian and (with copyright permission) it is hoped that a number of other books will also be published soon: *St. Theophan's Instructions for Raising Children, From I-Ville to You-Ville, Prayers of St. Isaac the Syrian, "The Gift of Prayer,"* and excerpts from *Our Church and Our Children*, by Sophia Koulomzin. Anastasia's next term of service promises to be busy and richly blessed with many projects. Please keep her work, her students, and all the Orthodox faithful in Albania in your prayers.

GEORGIA GILMAN BENDO

Protagonist School begins its 9th year in September! This year, Georgia will be teaching English to the 8th and 9th graders and continuing with the Spiritual Journey afterschool catechism club. Last year, the club began a new book called *Divine Messages*, written by His Beatitude, Archbishop Anastasios and recently translated by Deacon Anastasios (Todi's new name since ordination). Altogether about 50 students took part in the club and enjoyed a number of activities that included a Christmas Party, cutting of the Vasilopita for the New Year, and a field trip to the seminary at Shen Vlash Monastery.

Meanwhile Deacon Anastasios continues his efforts in translating books and editing the journal "Kerkim" (Research/Searching). The 5th issue of the journal came out in August covering

many aspects on the theme of poverty.

Vasili is almost 2 years old and is very active and rough and tumble. He was baptized earlier this year. Please remember Georgia and her family in your prayers.

THE HOPPE FAMILY

It was with great joy that the Hoppes welcomed the birth of their son Daniel Patrick. Daniel was born at 9:47 a.m. January 19, 2010 at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Wabasha, Minnesota. He weighed 7 lbs. 6 oz. and was 21 1/2 inches long. Amidst a year long home assignment Nathan, OCMC Associate Director Fr. David Rucker and OCMC Board Member Fr. Luke Veronis lead a team of two priests and 11 seminarians for two very full weeks of ministry and learning in Albania. This Team was historic in that it was the first joint Team of the newly inaugurated Missions Institute of Orthodox Christianity and OCMC.

MELANIE LINDERMAN

Melanie is getting organized for another school year at the American/Orthodox school "Protagonist". It is an especially exciting time for her as her focus has changed from teaching English to something that is dearer to her heart - character development. Melanie hopes to bring a stronger value system to both the lower and middle schools by instituting a program to encourage students to recognize, understand and promote good traits in each other. This work will be a challenge as Melanie hopes to actively promote Christian ideals without being able to preach Our Lord's commandments. Along with the adult education class and the weekly radio broadcast, she prays that it will be a fruitful and fulfilling year.

RUSSELL FAMILY

With the beginning of the new liturgical year, the Russell family is trying to focus on a renewed commitment to bringing the Word of God to each of the ministries that they participate in. Pauline's effort at Protagonist school will be to teach the students about character traits through a comprehensive program and by example. George continues to bring his expertise and guidance to help Albanian businesses flourish by their increasing exposure through the internet. Christopher and Madeline continue to learn and grow at home as well as in their Christ-centered school. George and Pauline pray each will help solidify their children's belief in God so that they can reach out in their own capacities.

ROMANIA

FLOYD AND ANCUTA FRANTZ

Through your support and prayers, the St. Dimitrie Program in Cluj provides Romania's most disenfranchised people counseling programs and other social services so that they may regain their families, their place in the community, and their relationship with God. Because of the success of the St. Dimitrie Program, OCMC Missionary Floyd Frantz was appointed as a co-facilitator of a national anti-drug program under the Department of Education of the Patriarchate of Romania. This national program is focused on providing counseling education programs for parish priests in Romania, and will also help to develop prevention programs at the parish level. This work has been extended into the Republic of Moldova, where it is also requested, because of the need for such programs there. Floyd is also answering the request from St. Herman's Seminary in Kodiak, Alaska to collaborate and further efforts to prepare priests and counselors to better serve Native Alaskans who suffer addictions.

In July, Bishop Vasile of Cluj bestowed upon Floyd the Crucea Transilvania (The Cross of Transylvania) in the name of Metropolitan Bartolomeu. "This high medal was conferred to Mr. Floyd Frantz, coordinator of the St. Dimitrie Program, in appreciation and recognition of sincere love for the Romanian Orthodox Church, and for the remarkable help accorded the Archdiocese of Cluj through charitable missionary and pastoral service."

Poverty and lack of opportunity leave many women in Romania at a high risk of abandoning their newborn children. By God's abundant grace, your support, and through the powerful prayers of many people, OCMC Missionary Ancuta Frantz continues her work through the Protection of the Theotokos Family Center (PTFC) in Cluj, Romania. Offering counseling and social support programs to the mothers of these at-risk children, the PTFC allows mothers to attend vocational school, have spiritual counseling, participate in a jobs program, and give their children adequate food and clothing while they sort through their very difficult life issues. The children themselves receive daily baths, clean clothing, good nutrition, and a lot of love from the Protection Center staff. During the past five years, more than 100 women and children have gone through the 18-month program of the Center, and most of them have found what they never had in the past: stability in their lives and a sense of love from other people and from God.

CHRISTINA SEMON

Christina recently visited her sister missionary team in Albania. It was a great opportunity for her to witness such active,

heartfelt missionaries, and the faithful dedicated to missions. She assisted in the youth camps in Kosovo. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit and the prayers of others, she looks forward to continuing for a second term of missionary service, and she is grateful for all who have remembered her in their prayers and who have offered their generous support. Ministry work in Romania has taught her how Christ, the Head of the Church, cares for the Body of the Church; and one part of His care is through Church-offered social programs. She continues to work with OCMC Missionaries Floyd and Ancuta Frantz in the ministries they help coordinate. She counts their guidance and support as a blessing.

TANZANIA

JAMES HARGRAVE

Thanks to the prayers, encouragement and financial support of families, parishes and individuals across North America, James' new life in Tanzania began at the end of April. He has since been studying the Swahili language and culture in Dar es Salaam. Since early July the presence of fellow OCMC Missionaries Felice Stewart, Katie Wilcoxson and Michael Pagedas has been a great support and encouragement to James. The team is eager to welcome their colleague Maria Roeber as soon as the North American faithful are ready to send her. In late July / early August James had the privilege of joining the OCMC Teaching Team to Tanzania for two weeks at a youth camp in Geita. James hopes to transition to the city of Mwanza on the coast of Lake Victoria in October 2010. There, he hopes to continue language study and begin his long-term assignment assisting His Eminence Metropolitan Jeronymos and diocesan staff. He would like everyone to know that he is daily sustained by God's grace through your prayers, friendship and generosity.

CHARITA STAVROU

"This is the best place in the whole world to be!" That's how Mama Stavrou, as she is respectfully called, greeted me when I met her recently in Mwanza, Tanzania. She arrived on March 23rd and, according to Metropolitan Jeronymos, Archbishop of Mwanza, has not stopped working since! His Eminence said, "We call her 'The Tree,' because in the services she never sits down. She is planted like a tree and outlasts us all!" It was a joy to see her simple living accommodations very close to the Archbishop's chapel, making it easy for her to attend the daily services so faithfully. When Mama Stavrou is not praying for the people she serves, she is working with her hands on their behalf. She has turned her

rooms into a sewing center where a constant stream of clothes, vestments, altar coverings, and altar curtains are being produced. She recently returned from a month of teaching the faith in another part of Tanzania to people who are not Christians. This is her heart's desire. She told us very clearly when she applied for long-term missionary service, "I want to tell people about Jesus who have never heard about Him before."

KATIE WILCOXSON

Katie is thrilled to have the opportunity to learn Kiswahili and to become better acquainted with the Tanzanian culture. She is beginning to use the words she's learned as she interacts with her teammates and the people around her. The Tanzanians as a whole have been remarkably patient and helpful as Katie continues the learning process. Katie recently reflected, "It's like being a small child again, stumbling to use the right word or combination of words as needed. And there are many things that I enjoy about Kiswahili. For example the double words: pikipiki (motorcycle) or buibui (spider) make me laugh like a little girl."

FELICE STEWART

Recently, fellow missionary James Hargrave met a clergyman from Ghana and asked Felice to arrange a place for him to stay in Dar es Salaam. She was happy to help another foreigner. The night after he arrived, he invited the missionary team and some of his friends that he met at the seminary in Kenya to dinner. The dinner with her Orthodox family made her feel so at home. Of the night she expressed, "I had my first experience of not feeling like a foreigner here in Tanzania".

MICHAEL PAGEDAS

Michael continues learning the language of the Tanzanian people. He and his fellow missionaries spent time in Dar es Salaam and have recently traveled to Mwanza to be with His Eminence Jeronymos. Mwanza will become Michael's home over the next two-years of his first term as an OCMC long-term missionary. With his background in public health, Michael will travel and use his developing language skills to offer health education.

If you are interested in supporting one of the Orthodox missionaries, if you have questions about long-term missionary service, or if you have questions about OCMC's missionary program, please contact OCMC's Assistant Missionary Director Dcn. James Nicholas by phone at (904) 829-5132 x120, or by e-mail at: missionaries@ocmc.org. You can also find information online at <http://missionaries.ocmc.org>.

THIS *is* Orthodoxy

Anastasia Loejos, OCMC Mission Team Member

OCMC Mission Team Member Susan Nelson with two new young friends during a recent OCMC medical mission team to Uganda. Susan has served on many OCMC mission teams. Team members like Susan have a profound impact on the lives of the people they serve.



“As for the Team Members the trip was a spiritual success. They were able to treat Jesus Christ over 3,800 times. These Team members will return to their respective parishes as leaven for the benefit of the parish and the Orthodox Church as a whole.” OCMC Team Member, Fr. Joseph Ciarciaolino



Where do I begin? How do I go about putting on paper an experience that plays in my mind like a favorite song? Over and over again it plays, most of it memorized, but never getting old. Nothing I write will truly do Uganda justice, but I owe it to the beautiful people I met and learned to love to try to put words down.

After a very long and eye-opening journey, I was able to meet up with the other members of our OCMC Health Care Team to Uganda. A Team of eight, we would later go on to see over 3,800 patients during our travels to different villages. Upon arrival, I tried to ward off any thoughts of “what did I get myself into?”, but I quickly realized I didn’t have to try very hard. The initial culture shock I faced was quickly dissolved by the overwhelming warmth and hospitality that engulfed us. “You are most welcome,” they would say, as our hosts greeted us as if we were long lost family who had finally come home. From that moment on, that’s exactly what we were – family.

I went to bed that first night, as I am sure we all did, with a racing mind full of all the sights, smells, sounds, and emotions evoked by a radically different land. I finally dozed off thinking about what one of the Ugandan priests

LEFT: *OCMC Mission Team Members Maria Constantine, Anastasia Loejos, and Rachel Mellas, with a group of children at one of the many health-care clinics they held in Uganda. Everywhere the team went they were greeted like honored guests, with crowds of people and curious children repeating “Apoyo, Apoyo!” (Thank you, Thank you!).*

said as he greeted me earlier, "Are you ready for the clinic tomorrow?" "Yes, I think so," I said, not knowing at all what to expect from the following day. He took my one hand and smiled in a way that said he DID know what to expect from the following day. "Ah," he sighed. "These people have been waiting for you."

Each morning after a breakfast of bread, bananas, and peanut butter (perhaps the best thing I packed from home), we would head out to one of the nine villages we were to visit to set up our free clinic. The rides to and from were an experience in themselves. In the mornings we bounced around on unpaved orange clay roads, passing the sometimes long rides with songs, plans for the day's clinic, and conversations with our hosts and translators about the differences and similarities between the United States and Uganda. Through all of the obvious differences however, the similarities quickly surfaced and served as a glue, bonding our Ugandan hosts to our Team, and us to them. Amidst similarities like our Orthodox faith, respect, sense of humor, and a genuine love for people, it's no wonder how we all "just fit."

Despite my best efforts, I'm convinced that there was no way to fully prepare for that first clinic. We were greeted like honored guests, with crowds of people and curious children, singing and often dancing, grabbing our hands, bowing, hugging, smiling those radiant smiles and repeating "Apoyo, Apoyo!" (Thank you, Thank you!). After a few minutes of greetings, our Team got to work putting together our clinic. Sometimes in churches or abandoned buildings, other times in mud huts, all the while doing the best we could with no electricity and no running water, we set up makeshift areas for triage, patient care, and a pharmacy. "Where are all these people coming from?" I thought to myself, as the crowds seem to have multiplied every time we looked up. People were just everywhere. The fact that we were so busy was a good distraction from the reality of what was in front of us. There were hundreds of people, who had just walked miles in the scorching sun to come, and usually barefoot at that. There were women with babies tied to their backs, children with babies tied to their backs, men with multiple children in tow, and elderly too weak to stand, taking a seat in the dirt to wait. "Oh my God, these people are so sick," I kept thinking, as the unending lines of people explained their many ailments to us. "Malaria, fevers, malaria, 'worms', malaria, dehydration, malaria, seizures, malaria..." This, I quickly learned was field medicine. Though overwhelmed at times, our Team became a well-oiled machine, learning from each day and applying the lessons to the next.

The ride back was always the most difficult. All of us were exhausted physically and emotionally, covered in a fine layer of orange dust. Though we didn't always talk right away,



I think all of our minds were in the same place, trying to "download" what we just saw, trying to rationalize the many people we had to turn away in order to see the very sickest. How we had to pack up an entire clinic to beat the setting sun, but with a line of people still pleading to be seen. Re-living the pictures of desperate faces, trusting us to give them some relief, and certainly praying to God, hoping we served His people with as much love and compassion as we could, and asking for the strength to do it all again tomorrow.

If space would allow, I could go on for pages about the fine details of this experience. These few words seem to barely scratch the surface of the impression Uganda has left on me. However, none of these words would matter if I didn't take time to point out the most engrained memory I brought back. The absolute joy with which these people exist is overwhelming and humbling. They have nothing and give

Karlene Kunz (left) and Fr. Joseph Ciarciaglini (right) prepare medications for distribution during medical clinics that a recent OCMC mission team held in Uganda. Many people suffer from malaria, dehydration, and parasites in this part of the world, so makeshift pharmacies were setup whenever the team held a clinic.



LEFT: In addition to ministering to thousands of people by providing healthcare, the OCMC medical mission team to Uganda was able to enjoy the fellowship of Liturgy during their visit. The experience of the true universality of the Church and the warmth team members felt from their Ugandan brothers and sisters provided team members with a profound opportunity for spiritual growth.

BELOW: OCMC Mission Team Member Rachel Mellas treats a wound on the leg of a man that visited one of the many clinics that she and her fellow team members held across Uganda as part of an OCMC healthcare mission team.



everything. Among such need, there is very little want. Even as they pull themselves out of the shadows of war, surrounded by disease and poverty, they chase away what would be justified sorrow with such joy and resilience. How is this possible? We witnessed a big part of the answer as we attended our first Divine Liturgy together. Gathered in a large hut of mud and sticks, we experienced the most beautiful Liturgy I could have ever imagined. Standing barefoot in the dirt after walking miles to get there, the people sang the liturgy by heart! Adults and children alike not only sang by heart, but with such faith, vigor, smiles, such joy, and at times with a gentle sway back and forth as their beautiful voices meshed into the hymns they knew so well. THIS is their joy. THIS is Orthodoxy. THIS is our Faith in its purest form.

*Let them do good, that
they be rich in good
works, ready to give,
willing to share...*

- 1 TIMOTHY 6:18



ORTHODOX MISSION TEAMS 2011

Share in a Journey of Faith...

All Orthodox Christians seeking to share in a journey of faith and fulfill the mandate of our Lord Jesus Christ are invited and needed to participate on OCMC ORTHODOX MISSION TEAMS.

Alaska • Albania • Guatemala • Kenya • Romania • South Korea • Tanzania • Uganda

Teaching

Share and teach the Orthodox Faith to youth, adults, catechumens, ministry leaders, and faithful. Clergy, seminarians, teachers, youth leaders, students and those willing to teach the Faith are urged to apply.

Alaska
Albania
Kenya
Tanzania

Youth Camp

Participate and help organize a youth camp program in communities that have requested religious education for the youth. Camp counselors, youth ministry directors, students and those with camp experience are encouraged to apply.

Albania
Guatemala
Romania
South Korea

Construction

Help build an Orthodox church for a growing community by offering your labor and service. Engineers, construction workers, contractors, carpenters, painters, electricians and all hard workers are invited to apply today. Construction experience is welcomed, but not necessary.

Kenya

Health Care

Provide a holistic witness of the Gospel by ministering to the physical needs of children

and adults while providing basic health care and education. Health care personnel - doctors, dentists, nurses, counselors, HIV/AIDS specialists, therapists - are especially needed.

Tanzania
Uganda

Apply Today!

All hard workers willing to share the Faith and wishing to participate and serve on an Orthodox Mission Team are urged to apply today.

Participation Requirements

Requirements include:
A completed Mission Team application with recommendation from an

Orthodox Priest; an active member of the Church; spiritually mature individual with good social skills, motivated to learn and serve; at least 18 years of age and in good physical health. All participants are expected to cover costs of their participation and travel on the scheduled Team dates.

Contact

Information and applications are available online at <http://teams.ocmc.org>, or contact: Orthodox Christian Mission Center, 220 Mason Manatee Way, St. Augustine, FL 32086; Tel 1-904-829-5132 or Toll-Free 1-877-GO-FORTH (463-6784), ext. 140; Fax 1-904-829-1635; Email teams@ocmc.org.

Other

New in 2011, Family Mission Team to Albania. Seminarian scholarship grants to be awarded in 2011.

Sharing the Light of Christ in South Africa

Alex Goodwin, Communications Director

To view the urban sprawl of South Africa's largest city, Johannesburg, is a surreal experience. Within this tapestry of concrete and steel is woven one of the most complex stories to ever come out of the African continent. It is a labyrinth of high walls and barbed wire where the extreme dichotomy between rich and poor can be seen within the confines of its many districts, but it is also a major center for the arts, and one of greatest economic forces on the continent. Johannesburg is a snapshot of a country that has been culturally, socially, and economically nuanced by history and the diverse peoples that count themselves as its citizens.

It is in the Johannesburg suburb of Yeoville that an Orthodox seminary is training young men to take the truth of Orthodoxy and the light of Christ to all corners of South Africa. This school, which opened in October 2003, is under the direction of Fr. Athanasius Akunda, an Orthodox priest from Kenya, who has been serving with the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Seraphim in South Africa since 2002 and is supported by OCMC. The seminary recently graduated eight young men who now serve as catechists for the Archdiocese's catechetical program.

The catechetical program and the seminary were both born of the same vision to share the Orthodox faith, which was brought to South Africa by immigrants, with the country's majority black and coloured (mixed-race) populations. Young men from burgeoning communities in and around

Johannesburg and Pretoria would be sent to the seminary, provided a theological education, and then take what they had learned back to their people and surrounding neighborhoods.

Working in partnership with the Archdiocese's Missions Committee, these catechists have been able to help plant the Church in places like Atteridgeville, Brixton, Eldorado Park, Mamelodi, Soshanguve, and Tembisa by participating in liturgical services, offering sermons, and teaching about Christ. Some of the men have even decided to become priests and are continually working to establish and build up ministries like primary schools, orphanages, and food distribution programs for the poor.

These catechists face many struggles which are often a result of both the old and new socioeconomic realities in South Africa. Many of the catechists that have graduated from the school in Yeoville need to work secular jobs in order to make ends meet. Additionally, transport to the communities, scattered across Johannesburg and Pretoria, that they serve is expensive. The catechists are also having to overcome the deeply ingrained distrust for anything that the non-Orthodox blacks and coloureds perceive as coming from a colonial interest.

Within the Church, however, these very struggles have become opportunities for spiritual

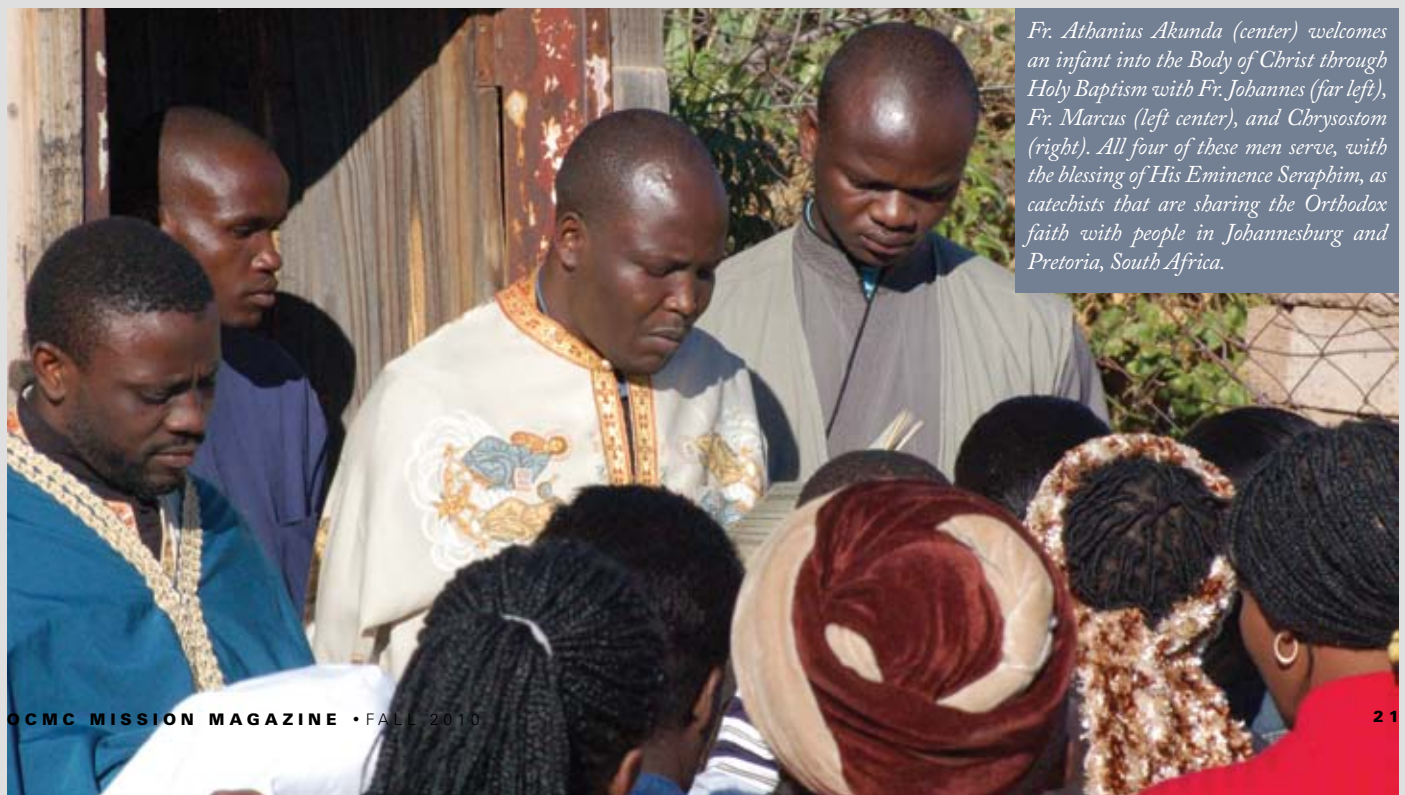
Fr. Athanasius Akunda has been serving as an Orthodox priest in South Africa, with the blessing of His Eminence Seraphim, since the early 2000s. He is working to share Orthodox Christianity with the people of South Africa by serving as dean of a local seminary, directing the Archdiocesan Catechetical Program, and serving on the Missions Committee.



growth and reconciliation among the many diverse peoples that now identify themselves as Orthodox in South Africa. In response to the financial need that exists many of the ethnic, black, and mixed-race Orthodox communities make regular contributions to the Missions Committee and the catechetical program so that their vital outreach can continue. The catechists themselves minister to all Orthodox Christians, regardless of race, fostering an increased level of dialogue between the racial groups of South Africa's Orthodox Christian population.

Each year the Support a Mission Priest (SAMP) program sends funds to the Archdiocese that enable Fr. Athanasius to continue his work with these vital programs of the Church. It is a startling example of how financial contributions to the work of missions have a direct impact on the spread of the Gospel around the world.

For more information about, or to support, the SAMP program of the OCMC visit <http://samp.ocmc.org> or contact Kenneth Kidd by phone at (904) 829-5132 x161, or by e-mail at samp@ocmc.org.



Fr. Athanasius Akunda (center) welcomes an infant into the Body of Christ through Holy Baptism with Fr. Johannes (far left), Fr. Marcus (left center), and Chrysostom (right). All four of these men serve, with the blessing of His Eminence Seraphim, as catechists that are sharing the Orthodox faith with people in Johannesburg and Pretoria, South Africa.

OCMC Executive Director Fr. Martin Ritsi as he biked 200+ miles in August in California's High Sierras to raise awareness for Orthodox missions among the Turkana people and to raise support for OCMC's initiatives in Turkana during 2010, which were aimed at ministering to the spiritual and physical needs that exist there.



COMING TOGETHER in Christ for International Orthodox Missions

KENNETH KIDD, OCMC Annual Gifts Officer

"If we say that we have fellowship in Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (I John 1:6-7).

This summer, Orthodox parishes across the country held mission walks that brought whole communities together to honor and to raise awareness of our brothers and sisters throughout the world who are hearing the life-giving message of Jesus Christ - some for the very first time. By holding mission walks in support of the international mission ministries of the OCMC, 12 communities planted the seeds of missions within the faithful of their parishes. From San Francisco, to St. Louis, to Louisville, to Southbury, Connecticut, these communities symbolically joined OCMC Executive Director Fr. Martin Ritsi as he walked 200+ miles in August in California's High Sierras to raise awareness for Orthodox missions among the Turkana people and support for OCMC's initiatives in Turkana during 2010, which were aimed at ministering to the spiritual and physical needs that exist there.

In 2009, and then again in 2010 as part of an OCMC Mission Team, Fr. Martin visited the Turkana people on behalf of Orthodox Christians across North America. The Turkana enjoy a rich culture; but many of them do not know hope in Jesus Christ - a hope that many of them long for in the face of a daily struggle for survival that is fueled by the cyclical drought and extreme poverty that grips this arid region of northern Kenya. Lacking access to even the most basic amenities, many of the Turkana have to walk several miles for everything, including water and church services. OCMC is committed to sharing the Gospel with the Turkana. All of the mission walks held during the summer and fall of 2010 have assisted OCMC as we continue to reach these people by:

- Helping local clergy to expand the Orthodox Church to new non-Christian villages.
- Building a bore hole (water well) in the village of Loupwala.
- Assisting St. John Nursery school in Lodwar.
- Completing the construction of a church building in Lodwar begun by an OCMC Team in 2008.
- Strategizing with local clergy on how to expand Orthodox Christianity to unreached people in the region.
- Beginning the recruitment of short and long-term mission personnel to serve among the Turkana.
- Preparing for the construction of new parishes in remote villages where a majority of the people are new Christians.

In Ocean City, New Jersey, 80 Orthodox faithful from throughout central and south New Jersey participated in a Mission Walk in mid-May. This mission walk was not something new for these parishes; it was part of an annual

tradition that has been growing for many years now. During the walk this year, many participants carried buckets of water to gain a deeper appreciation for the walk that the people of Turkana must make on a daily basis to provide water for their family and community. Following the walk, the group gathered with food on the sand to reflect on, and pray for, their newly-illuminated brothers and sisters in Turkana.

The Youth and Young Adult Ministry of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA adopted as their theme for the 2010-2011 year as “Go Forth, Make Disciples of all Nations” from Matthew 28:19. To launch this theme for the Ecclesial Year, both summer camps of the UOC of the USA held Mission Walks at their camp near Pittsburgh. Together, these UOC camps raised \$2,000.00 toward this outreach to the Turkana. To complement this walk, the camps had missions-focused Bible studies each day with special prayers for OCMC missionaries as well as lessons on missionary saints. Natalie Kapeluck Nixon, Director of the Youth and Young Adult Program of the UOC of the USA, stated, “Being a missionary is an intrinsic part of being a Christian. We hope to instill in our youth a missionary spirit that will permeate each aspect of their daily life. In doing this, they can truly be like Christ in every way – whether they are called to serve in a foreign country or to their next door neighbor.” Cultivating this deeper understanding of missions will continue throughout the coming year as stories and lessons from mission countries are incorporated into other activities of the youth program.

Mission walks offer an opportunity to encourage fellowship, raise awareness for missions, and foster spiritual growth. Most walks are not long, having lengths of 5K (3.1 miles) or 10K (6.2 miles). They can be held at any time to support the ministries of OCMC, and information about coordinating a walk, including a step-by-step guide, is available by contacting the OCMC at 1-877-GO-FORTH.

Other Opportunities to Raise Missions Awareness

There are numerous other opportunities for Orthodox parishes across North America, with

This summer, Orthodox parishes across the country held mission walks that brought whole communities together to honor and to raise awareness of our brothers and sisters throughout the world who are bearing the life-giving message of Jesus Christ. One of these communities was Holy Trinity Church in Egg Harbor Township, NJ, where OCMC Board President Fr. George Liacopoulos presides.

the blessings of the parish priest and in concert with the parish council, to raise awareness and support for the ministries being done through OCMC as well. These include inviting people to speak about missions, conducting missions Bible studies, coordinating missions retreats, and/or hosting missions-themed luncheons/dinners.

Inviting Missions Speakers

OCMC missionaries, staff members, and/or short-term team members are able and encouraged to speak to local parishes or parish organizations about their experience serving Christ's growing Church around the world. Collections and pledges are often taken following these presentations to support the speaker's ongoing ministry work through the OCMC.

Conducting Mission-related Bible Studies

These studies may be a stand-alone series of studies or a few special studies inserted into the regular curriculum of a Sunday School or a Study Group. There are numerous saints whose lives could be studied, including St. Herman of Alaska, St. Innocent of Alaska, St. Nina of Georgia, St. Nicholas of Japan, St. Raphael of Brooklyn, Sts. Cyril and Methodius, or the missionary journeys of the Apostles in the early years of the Church.

Coordinating a Missions Retreat

The Mission Center is also available to help coordinate day-long, or multi-day, missions retreats featuring speakers who can share the mission experience and facilitate prayerful discussion about the importance of missions. Though hosted at the local parish, retreats are a great way to bring people from various

communities together for fellowship and spiritual growth. Retreats also allow plenty of time for the study of the Holy Tradition of missions as well as the lives of missionary saints. Likewise, this is a good time to develop goals and strategies for the further growth of missions at the local and regional level.

Hosting a Missions Luncheon/Dinner

Missions luncheons or dinners can take many shapes and forms, from a missions focused coffee hour following Liturgy with mission materials placed throughout the hall and a donation basket placed next to the coffee pot, to an elaborate banquet featuring a keynote speaker and dishes from mission countries around the world. Parishes throughout the country have hosted spaghetti dinners, potlucks, pancake breakfasts, buffets, barbecues, international food showcases, tapas, etc.; and each of these events have highlighted the importance of Orthodox missions by placing missions materials, including magazines, prayer cards, and donation envelopes, on dining tables and on display boards. For large events, the OCMC has even been able to provide large display materials for use at the event. While fundraising for missions is an important component of these events, it is even better when a presentation of some sort occurs to raise awareness of missions, potentially reaching someone new whose heart may be leading them toward involvement in missions.

For more information or for brainstorming ideas for your local parish, do not hesitate to contact Kenneth Kidd, Annual Gifts Officer, at kenny@ocmc.org or at 904-829-5132, ext 161.



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PLEASE PLACE YOUR ORDER BEFORE DECEMBER 10TH SO THAT WE CAN SEND YOUR CARD BEFORE NATIVITY. FOR MORE INFORMATION, OR TO ORDER PLEASE CONTACT PHYLLIS SKINNER BY TELEPHONE AT 877-GO-FORTH, EXT 164 OR VISIT WWW.OCMC.ORG.