

Here’s an exciting new opportunity from your OCMC!

Christ calls all believers to share His Good News with others. Joining the Sts. Cyril & Methodius Society is a great way you can support the mission work of OCMC!



If you’ve been looking for a way to do even more to share your Orthodox Faith with the world, we’re saving a place for you in OCMC’s new Sts. Cyril & Methodius Society!

The Society is made up of generous friends who have pledged to support OCMC with their prayers and regular monthly gifts. In return, members receive special recognition and a thank-you gift.

As Apostles to the Slavs and Equals-to-the-Apostles, Sts. Cyril and Methodius are inspirations to Orthodox Christians as we carry out the Great Commission. We hope their example inspires you to take this next step in your partnership with the Orthodox Christian Mission Center by sending your first Sts. Cyril & Methodius Society gift today!



Bright Week Scripture Meditation

Bright Week is a time of rejoicing as we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ our God. But it should also be a time of spiritual focus and rededication. Fr. Martin encourages you to spend some time this week with the following verses.

When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

“O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

— I Corinthians 15:54-58

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN MISSION CENTER

MISSION

Reports from around the world for supporters and friends of Orthodox Christian Mission Center

Bright Week Edition!

“Are we friends?” “Yes, we are!”

A young girl experiences fun, friendship, and food while sharing the Faith in Africa



Ella Sipp shared her Orthodox Faith and had the experience of a lifetime as part of an OCMC mission trip. You can too!

A first trip to Africa is memorable for anyone. But when you’re 12 years old and you are going to Africa to share your Orthodox Faith with others as part of an OCMC mission trip ... well, then it becomes pretty much unforgettable!

Ella Sipp and her mom went to Kenya on an OCMC trip a few months ago. We asked her to tell you about it...

“Jambo! That’s Swahili for ‘Hello.’ The whole thing was like

pinball, ding, ding, ding, up and down all over the world. First we went to Florida for training, then an all-night flight to Amsterdam in Europe and another eight-hour flight to Kenya. We went to a café with our short-term mission team, then we went to a church where some locals sang songs for us. All these little kids crowded around me.

“Then we went to our hotel. My mom and I shared our room with Bessie, who has brown hair and brown eyes, and Connie, who has

gray hair and blue eyes. Every night we could hear the Muslims being called to prayer from our hotel. The first morning we went to the orphanage and met everyone. We sang songs and did a craft together (they looooooove beads). For breakfast at the orphanage we had ‘butter sandwiches,’ boiled eggs, and fresh bananas.

“We would usually do stories, crafts, and vespers every morning. They taught us songs like ‘mambo

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MY GIFT TO SUPPORT ORTHODOX MISSIONS

Yes, Fr. Martin! You can count on me to continue to share the Gospel and sustain Orthodox Missions through my prayerful support of OCMC. Here is my gift of:

☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$_____

☐ I want join the Sts. Cyril & Methodius Society by giving monthly. I will give \$_____ each month.

For credit card gifts, please call or give online at www.ocmc.org/donate.

Thank you!



God bless you for your faithfulness and generosity!

Thank you! Your gift is tax deductible. Please make your check payable to OCMC and send it to 220 Mason Manatee Way, St. Augustine, FL 32086.

2017 APRIL NEWSLETTER



APRIL 2017

GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS.

— MATTHEW 28:19

Christ is risen!

Welcome to this special **Bright Week** edition of *Mission*.

As we celebrate Christ's victory over death this week, I wanted to share with

you some stories of the amazing impact you're having on the world, and in people's lives, through your support of the Orthodox Christian Mission Center.

The seven days of Bright Week are considered one single day on the liturgical calendar — a day of rejoicing and celebration. I hope you feel some of that joy as you read about the power of your giving. I have to admit, I was deeply moved by young Ella Sipp's story on the front page of this issue. If you haven't read it yet, please take a minute to do so. You won't regret it!

And if you feel called to take Ella's advice and go to Africa (or somewhere else in the world) as part of an OCMC mission team, please let us know at ocmc.org. Thank you!

In Christ,

F. Martin Ritsi

Fr. Martin

P.S. Your generous prayers and giving help to carry out the Great Commission and connect you with our Orthodox brothers and sisters around the world. Now we've made it even easier for you to experience this joy! Read about our new **Sts. Cyril & Methodius Society** on page 4. And thanks again!



The Rev. Fr. Martin Ritsi
Executive Director

You're sharing water and "living water" in Kenya

In the dry and dusty Turkana region of Kenya, water is precious at the best of times. But in times of severe drought, finding enough water is a daily struggle. OCMC team members visiting the Turkana area recently were shocked to see very young girls digging a deep hole in a dry riverbed in a desperate attempt to find water.



A dry well — a much too common sight in the drought-stricken Turkana region of Kenya.

Fortunately — through God's grace and your support of OCMC — our team was there, not only to tell people about Christ and His Church, but also to learn about the need for wells in their villages!

In the Gospel of St. John, our Lord tells the Samaritan woman He meets at a well that He will give her "a well of water springing up into everlasting life" — and she goes on to become our beloved St. Photini.

Now that we've made friends in these Turkana villages, local Orthodox priests will continue to share our Holy Faith with them. Thank you for providing both water and the "living water" of Jesus Christ through your support of OCMC!



OCMC team members help Kenyan children pump water from their village's new well — a well YOU provided, through your support for OCMC!

Albanian priests' wives find strength in fellowship, thanks to you!

Being the wife of an Orthodox priest puts a woman in a unique and special position. Sometimes it's a lonely position — particularly if she has few chances to interact with others in the same situation. Thanks to you, clergy wives in Albania recently were able to spend time with some American clergy wives on a retreat sponsored by OCMC.

One of the Albanian women described how, although she had attended an Orthodox seminary, she'd had few chances to keep growing in the Faith since she graduated. The retreat was the first time she'd met other clergy wives from across Albania and been able to discuss her challenges with them.

Whether we call them *presbytera*, *khouria*, *matushka*, or some other title, priests' wives are a vital part of our Church community. In Europe, Africa, and America, you're helping strengthen and sustain these women of God through your support of OCMC!



American and Albanian clergy wives were able to share their experiences while at a retreat hosted by OCMC.

Are we friends, continued...

sawa sawa' and 'habari gani.' Near the last day, I made two friends, Valery and Damaris. Damaris wrote me a note saying she thought of me as her friend and would miss me when we left. Now we're pen pals! One of my favorite conversations with Valery was her saying, 'Are we friends?' and me saying, 'Yes, we are!'"

Ella's fun story is proof you're never too young (or too old) to share fellowship with others, even on the other side of the world! The powerful witness of a child's faith can and does change lives — we see it all the time! Thank you for helping make it happen through your generous support of OCMC!



"There is a lesson to be learned in my story: Go to Africa! The people there are amazing, and you'll learn lots of things, culture, music, dancing, art, food, and friends! So take that next flight to Africa! They love God and will love you also." — Ella Sipp