

Now More Than Ever ... You Can Be the Help a Priest has Been Praying For



The help you provide as part of our SAMP program reaches out to touch lives in parishes around the world.

We thank God for everyone who supports the work of OCMC with their prayers and financial gifts. But every October, we make a special point of thanking the generous friends who give every month as part of our Support a Mission Priest (SAMP) program!

As you’ve been reading in this issue of MISSION, dioceses around the world need your help now more than ever. And that’s especially true for many of the nearly 400 priests in 16 countries — many of whom serve more than one parish —who are supported by our SAMP donors.

You can help sustain Orthodox priests through these tough times, and for years to come, by becoming a SAMP donor today. Just go to [ocmc.org](http://ocmc.org), click **"Donate"** in the upper right, and select **"Support a Mission Priest."** Thank you!

MY NEXT GIFT TO SUPPORT ORTHODOX MISSIONS

**Yes, Fr. Martin!** You can count on me to continue to share the Gospel through my prayerful support of OCMC Mission Teams. **Here is my gift of:**

- ☐ \$XX1   ☐ \$XX2   ☐ \$XX3   ☐ \$\_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I want to join the Sts. Cyril & Methodius Society with a monthly gift of: \$\_\_\_\_\_

To give online visit [www.ocmc.org/donate](http://www.ocmc.org/donate). 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. Please remember OCMC in your estate planning.



Feast of the Holy Protection of the Theotokos

Celebrated on October 28, this feast commemorates the appearance of the most holy Theotokos to worshippers in Constantinople in the tenth century. As the faithful prayed, the Virgin appeared and spread her veil over them, as a sign of her loving protection of all who believe in her Son.

Apolytikon of Holy Protection in the Fourth Tone

*O Virgin, we extol the great grace of thy Protection, which thou didst spread out like a bright cloud beyond all understanding; for thou dost invisibly protect thy people from the foe's every assault. Since we have thee as our shelter and certain help, we cry to thee with our whole soul: Glory to thy great deeds, O most pure Maid. Glory to thy shelter most divine. Glory to thy care and providence for us, O spotless one.*



God bless you for your faithfulness and generosity!

MISSION

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



Now more than ever ...  
**YOUR LOVE IS CHANGING LIVES**

From Indonesia to Nigeria and beyond, your generosity is sharing faith and hope around the world.

**O**ur mission teams haven't been able to go into the field since last winter, but that doesn't mean you haven't been sharing our beautiful Orthodox faith and helping people in need through your support of the Orthodox Christian Mission Center. In fact, your brothers and sisters in Christ all over the world want to thank you for how you've been helping them through the tough times created by the COVID-19 pandemic!

The fact is, Orthodox dioceses worldwide have been hit

especially hard by the economic fallout of the pandemic. In South Asia, Central America, and so many other places, not only churches, but schools, hospitals, orphanages, outreach programs and other ministries, have had to scale back their work, or even shut down entirely.

His Eminence Metropolitan Alexander of Nigeria tells us that, like many bishops around the world, he had to close his churches and limit daily services to only a priest and his assistants. And unlike wealthier

countries, where parishioners can stay in contact through phones or social media, His Eminence laments, "who has those facilities in our rural areas? How can a priest find money to load his phone with data?"

But it's not just priests who are affected. "People in rural areas depend on farming and selling in the markets," Met. Alexander explains. "When markets are closed, you understand the problem."

Fortunately, OCMC has been

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Go and make disciples of all nations. — MATTHEW 28:19

SPECIAL SUPPORT A MISSION PRIEST EDITION See page 4!



Christ's Presence is Needed Now More than Ever!



Rev. Fr. Martin Ritsi  
Executive Director

Lately, I've been thinking about Our Lord's words at the very end of the Gospel of Matthew:

"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

While we don't know when the end of the world will occur, if Christ promises that, even in the Last Days, He will never depart from us, just think how powerful the message of His abiding presence, love, and peace is for hurting people in times like we're seeing now!

With your generous prayers and financial support, OCMC continues to proclaim Jesus Christ's presence and love, and to share our Orthodox faith, even in the midst of pandemic. As you'll read on the next page, our ministry has looked a little different these last few months, but the message is absolutely the same, and the love and concern you show for others reminds them that Christ is present through our actions. Indeed, Jesus never abandons us — God is with us!

Pandemic or no, you are sharing Christ's eternal love with the world without interruption, and I cannot thank you enough for that.

In Christ,

*F. Martin Ritsi*

Fr. Martin



Parishes Across America Join the Trek

In the previous issue of MISSION, we invited supporters and friends like you to be part of OCMC's 2020 Virtual Trek4Missions to raise funds to recruit, train, and support missionaries.

We're happy to report that, 226 individuals in 33 teams from more than 20 parishes across the country answered the call! Together, we raised more than \$125,000 for this vital work.

The virtual Trek began on August 9, the 50th anniversary of the glorification of St. Herman, who was a member of the first Orthodox mission team to Alaska. By the end of the Trek on September 14, Trekkers logged more than 20,000 total miles, almost 5 times the length of St. Herman's journey from the Valaam Monastery in Finland to Kodiak.

While we can't all travel to distant lands like St. Herman — especially these days — we are all called to be missionaries right where we are, and share the Gospel in whatever ways we can. That's how Trekker Mary Blacklock discovered Orthodoxy.

"I struggled and almost gave up on the faith," Mary says. Being introduced to Orthodoxy was like "coming home."



Trekker Mary Blacklock is eager to share the message of Orthodoxy the way it was shared with her.



Fr. Alexey Petrides and his team from Bethlehem, PA are among the more than 200 people who took part in the Trek4Missions this year.

Now she shares that witness with others, in part by supporting OCMC through the Trek4Missions!

We are very grateful for everyone who participated, either as a Trekker or a donor. Bless you for helping raise and train a new generation of Orthodox missionaries for the world!

With Your Help, OCMC Mission Teams Go Virtual!

For months, OCMC short-term missions team members have been praying for health and travel restrictions to be lifted, and for conditions to be safe enough for them to travel and share their Orthodox Faith with the world. Their host churches and families have been praying just as hard for the chance to receive them.

In most cases, that isn't possible yet. But that doesn't mean the vital witness team members share has to stop. In the coming weeks, we will be inviting people from across the country to sit in front of their webcams as members of OCMC Virtual Teams. This is an exciting opportunity for us to continue the Church's mission while connecting with our brothers and sisters we can't yet visit. So please keep team members, and the people they will be serving, in your prayers! And as always, thank you for the generous financial support that makes their work possible.



Alaska

Two different Virtual Teams will be serving indigenous Alaskan communities, one at a school in Akhiok on Kodiak Island, and another at Newhalen.



Ghana

Exciting plans are coming together to help train youth leaders as counselors and catechists for Orthodox youth camps.



South Korea

Fr. Chris and Mat. Jen Moore, who were featured in the last issue of MISSION, will be welcoming team members to a Zoom meet-and-greet with Ulsan Youth Camp participants. Plans are being made for similar exchanges with other Orthodox youth groups from around South Korea.



Uganda

In addition to youth leadership training, team members are exploring the possibility of having live sessions with clergy members and/or recorded lessons His Eminence Bishop Silvestros can share with clergy on his travels around the diocese.

"From Indonesia to Nigeria"... continued from page 1

able to help priests and parishioners in Nigeria and elsewhere ... thanks to you!

Since the start of the pandemic, you and other OCMC supporters have donated more than \$130,000 in aid funds that is being distributed across more than 30 countries. When combined with our Support a Mission Priest program (see page 4 for details), your generosity is making an amazing difference! Thank you for your love and compassion!



"Thank you for the concern you show for us here. We also think and pray for you in the States as we read about the spread of the virus. May God protect all of you."

— His Eminence Met. Alexander of Nigeria