

Where Moth and Rust Cannot Destroy

The Mission Center's Investment in the Growth of the Church across Africa

In the coming months, OCMC's investment in the African Church will be growing thanks to strategic partnerships we have recently developed with institutional donors. Two projects totaling \$225,000 aimed at strengthening the vital theological training needed to grow the ranks of Orthodox clergy serving across the continent are being explored:

- In Nairobi, Kenya, plans are being developed to construct a student hostel/dormitory to help the Makarios III Seminary create sustainable funding for its ongoing operations.
- Another project was just approved to renovate and re-open a seminary in Lagos, Nigeria.
- A third project is underway to construct a seminary in Cameroon.

Support from foundations and grant funding is something OCMC is seeking more of to complement your support and have an even greater and lasting impact in the world.



www.ocmc.org/donate

Be a part of the Church's continued growth in Africa with a gift to the Orthodox Christian Mission Center today!



Sunday of the Paralytic

May 7, 2023

The importance of Missions is evident in the Kontakion of the Sunday of the Paralytic, which emphasizes how Christ is so needful in our lives and in the lives of others:

I am grievously paralyzed in a multitude of sins and wrongful deeds. As You raised up the paralytic of old, also raise up my soul by Your divine guidance, that I may cry out, "Glory to Your Power O Compassionate Christ."

2 Ways You Can Do Even More for Missions

Every year, OCMC needs millions of dollars to spread the Gospel, support and train missionaries, offer support to mission priests, and underwrite vital initiatives of the Church. By God's grace, faithful like you have stepped up every year to make the work of the Mission Center possible. Here are two special ways that you can help ensure that we have all we need for years to come:



OCMC has partnered with FreeWill to make it easy to remember OCMC in your will or make non-cash gifts like stocks or Qualified Charitable Contributions (QCD's) toward the Church's mission.



Become a member of the Ss. Cyril and Methodius Society and join the ranks of donors furthering mission work around the world with an ongoing pledge of support.

We ask that you prayerfully consider elevating your giving in support of missions in one or both of these ways, and we thank you for the impact it will have.

MISSION

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



From a Small Seed a Great Tree Has Grown

The Growth of Orthodoxy in East Africa through Your Support

In East Africa, we have seen tremendous growth from when there were just a handful of clergy, one Archbishop and a couple of assistant bishops covering all of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda.

Over the years, through the support of donors like you, the Church is being firmly established - clergy are being trained, evangelism and outreach ministries are being sponsored, churches, schools, and clinics have been built, wells drilled, and teams of volunteers and missionaries have been sent to help water the early seeds of the faith that had been planted.

Through the steadfast prayers and support of Orthodox Christians like you, the number of parishes in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda has grown, requiring the spiritual direction of ten Orthodox bishops (four in Kenya, and three each in Tanzania and Uganda) in different dioceses.

What's more, many of the ten bishops in East Africa, now serving hand in hand with missionary bishops from abroad, are African-born.

A critical reason why so many in the African Orthodox Church have been able to rise to vocations of spiritual leadership is because of

the theological education offered through a handful of seminaries that have been established and sustained in Africa, distance learning offered through the St. Stephen's Program, opportunities to study abroad in Greece, the US, and elsewhere, and ongoing mentorship

To help support the Church in Africa's continued growth, the faithful like you are working through the Mission Center to establish three more seminaries in Africa.

The parable shared by Christ in Matthew 13:31-32 has proven true:

continued on page 2



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

TWO WAYS YOU CAN ELEVATE YOUR GIVING!

see page 4



FROM FR. MARTIN

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

Now begins our journey towards the Ascension and Pentecost, when the Church received Her mandate and the gifts of the Holy Spirit to take the Gospel to all nations. The work that was begun by the Apostles following Pentecost continues to this day.

In this issue of Mission, we are excited to share with you what our new Projects and Grants Manager, Santhe Loizos, and I were blessed to see concerning the Church's ongoing mission during our recent visit to Kenya – a country where you have had a tremendous impact over the years.

Our Kenyan brothers and sisters are deeply thankful for what your sacrificial offering of time, donations, and prayers have meant to them since OCMC first began working in Africa decades ago. We are also happy to share what your commitment to missions will be making possible in the future, not only in Kenya, but in other African countries as well.

The Church in Africa is growing. Increasingly, it is being led by hierarchs that have risen up from amongst Orthodox communities who join missionary hierarchs to further establish the Church throughout the continent.

Moreover, we are seeing more and more people from the African communities reaching out to their brothers and sisters to bring them the Good News of Jesus Christ as lived in the Orthodox Faith.

As you'll read, there are many ways you can continue the Church's legacy of sharing the love, hope, and salvation of Jesus Christ with the world. Thank you for the transformative change you have been a part of, especially in Africa, over the years. We look forward to continuing to partner with you as you answer the call that we all received at Christ's Ascension and that began at Pentecost with the descent of the Holy Spirit.

In Christ,

Fr. Martin Ritsi
Executive Director

From a Small Seed a Great Tree Has Grown continued from page 1

"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

Indeed, a great tree of African Orthodoxy has grown from the seed that was first planted so many years ago. The tree continues to grow thanks to you.



His Beatitude THEODOROS II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and all Africa during OCMC's recent emergency food distribution in Turkana.

A Family Reunion in Turkana

OCMC Executive Director Fr. Martin Ritsi Reunites with an Old Friend as the Mission Center Continues Its Witness

In a small village in the harsh, drought-stricken Turkana region of northern Kenya, OCMC Executive Director, Fr. Martin Ritsi, and local Turkana clergy were able to share the Gospel and an invitation to the open arms of the Orthodox Church with a local shaman named Salale.

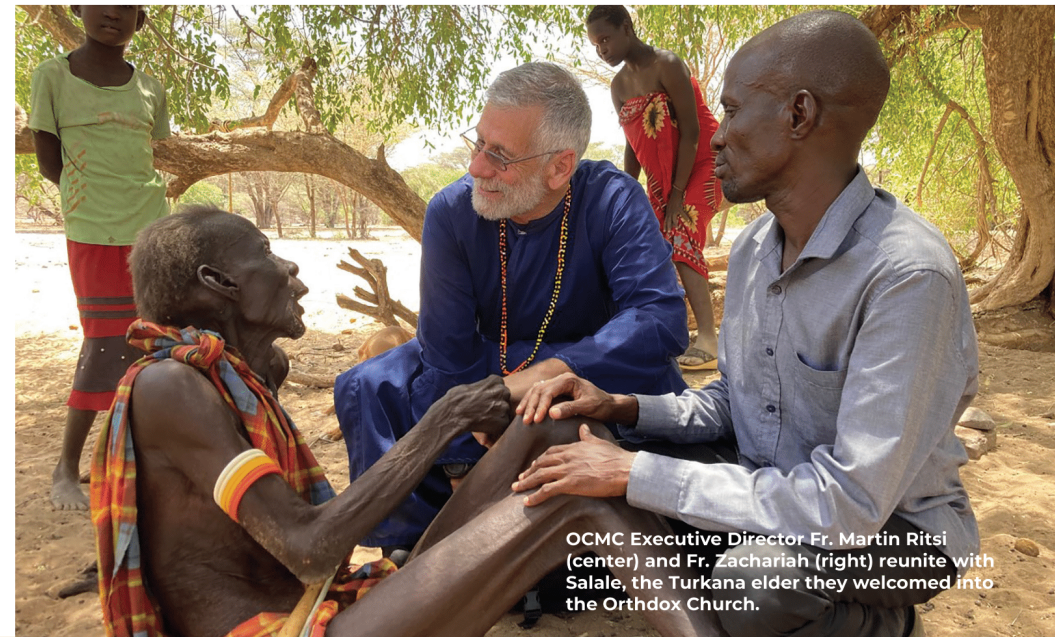
Their first meeting was back in 2010. In the months that followed, Salale and the people of his village came into the Church. Thanks to the ongoing evangelical efforts of Kenyan clergy in Turkana and numerous OCMC evangelism Teams, people in other villages were received through Holy Baptism as well.

In the years that have followed, OCMC donors have supported the clergy serving in Turkana through the Support a Mission Priest (SAMP) program and have helped evangelize numerous non-Christian communities, baptize hundreds of people, build three churches, three schools, drilled wells, provided food in times of severe drought, and assisted in women's retreats and youth outreach programs as well.

During his latest visit to Turkana in February, Fr. Martin was able to reconnect with Salale. Their friendship has endured over the years, as has OCMC's commitment to the people of Turkana through your support.

The drought there is as severe as ever. While there, Fr. Martin traveled with His Beatitude THEODOROS II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and all Africa, and local priests to provide emergency food relief in five different locations throughout the region.

Going forward, plans are being developed to reach nine new non-Christian communities by training and sending catechists and clergy to bring them to the Faith. Committed missions supporters like you have seen the birth of Orthodoxy in this remote corner of East Africa. Thank you for your ongoing prayers and contributions as it grows and matures.



OCMC Executive Director Fr. Martin Ritsi (center) and Fr. Zachariah (right) reunite with Salale, the Turkana elder they welcomed into the Orthodox Church.