

A Significant Consolidation of the Orthodox Presence and Witness in Africa

Missionary Visit to Kenya and South Africa

The ripening of conditions, with God's help, for the missionary work being conducted in Africa by the Holy Synod in Resistance recently required the direct presence of a Hierarchy to Consecrate Churches, Ordain a clergyman, enthrone an Abbess, and lay the foundations for a Church, etc. The aforementioned development made it an urgent necessity for those in charge of our missionary communities in Kenya and South Africa to invite His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili, President of the Holy Synod in Resistance, who has direct responsibility for these missions, to take these matters duly in hand.

However, various difficulties emerged which made it impracticable for the Metropolitan to be present in person, and in the end he sent His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methoni to represent him in these countries.

Kenya

So it was that Bishop Ambrose, accompanied by our beloved brother in Christ from Greece, Mr. Anastasios Vasilopoulos, arrived by air in the capital of Kenya, Nairobi, on Thursday, 17 October 2003 (Old Style). Three of our missionary clergy, Fathers James, John, and Abraham, were awaiting them there, and they and the visitors all set out together for the region of Mount Kenya.



Their first stop was the Convent of the Holy Great Martyr George the Trophy-bearer, where they were given a warm welcome by the blessed Sisterhood of six nuns under Mother Christonymphe, the foundress of the convent, who lived for some time at one of our convents in Greece, before establishing the convent in Kenya. This was followed by a visit to the large central parish of the Holy

Apostle Paul in Kaanja, in the Embu area.

On Friday, 18 October 2003 (Old Style), Bishop Ambrose visited two more of our large parishes in the Meru area via rough and primitive roads: the parish of the Holy Apostle Luke, in Buri, a wooden Church



in a relatively good state of repair, with a resident Priest (construction of a stone Church began a decade ago on an adjacent plot of land, but this edifice remains half-finished for lack of funds); and the parish of the Holy Apostle James the Brother of God, in Misimukuru, also with a resident Priest, situated in an area of wonderful natural beauty. Its stone Church is missing many items (plaster, a floor, and a roof), but the ardent faith of the hundreds of parishioners compensates for these deficiencies many times over!



On Saturday, 19 October 2003 (Old Style), a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Convent of St. George, in which several of our clergy took part. During the Liturgy, following the Small Entrance, Sister Georgia, a Sister of the convent, was tonsured to the Great Schema, and at the end of the service Mother Christonymphe was enthroned as Abbess of the convent in a solemn, dignified, and decorous manner. The spiritual joy of the Sisterhood, and also of the devout Kenyan pilgrims in attendance, was both very great and very evident.

Bishop Ambrose also read Metropolitan Cyprian's formal Hierarchical Letter of Appointment for an Abbess.



This convent, which has many very good prospects for growth, is truly a living miracle of God in the African wilds. The Great Martyr



of Christ, George the Trophy-bearer, protects his newly-built convent from both invisible and visible wild beasts and grants solace to the souls of these few young African women and also to all of the Faithful who have recourse to the convent for spiritual refreshment amid the vastness of this immense continent.

On Sunday, 20 October 2003 (Old Style), after a hazardous journey on roads which torrential downpours had made difficult to traverse, Bishop Ambrose arrived at the beautiful and spacious stone Church of the Holy Archangel Michael in Kathangiriri, Embu, to Consecrate the Church and to Ordain a new Deacon, Father



Symeon Kariyuki, a married man with three children.

Many of our clergy and many hundreds of the Faithful took part in the moving and contrition-evoking Consecration ceremony. Relics of the following Saints were placed in the Holy Table: St. Marina the Great Martyr, St. Arethas the Great Martyr, the Holy Monk-Martyrs of Chozeva, and certain unknown Martyrs. A text containing pastoral counsels by Metropolitan Cyprian was also read; written specially for the occasion and entitled "Our Spiritual Nobility," it has already been published [on the website, see under Administration>The Holy Synod>Encyclicals].



After the Divine Liturgy for the Consecration, Bishop Ambrose and those accompanying him returned by road to Nairobi. The journey was made difficult and hazardous by the condition of the roads, which, on account of sudden downpours, had become almost impassable, and on several occasions the travelers had to push their vehicle out of mudholes so that they could keep going. All of them, including His Grace, became unrecognizable from the effects of their involuntary African "mud-bath."

Bishop Ambrose subsequently visited the Nairobi area and celebrated the

Blessing of the Waters at the Church of the Holy Protection of the *Theotokos* in Karuri (a building made out of tin), where the parish Priest is Father James Waruinge. His Grace also met with the clergy and the laity in order to discuss and resolve many issues involving the Holy Synod's mission in that locality.

The missionary field of Kenya is great and fertile. However, while the harvest is plenteous, the laborers are few.

In any event, after bringing spiritual reinforcement to Kenya, Bishop Ambrose had now to continue his missionary journey down to the southernmost tip of Africa.

South Africa

On Tuesday, 22 October 2003 (Old Style), Bishop Ambrose and his traveling companion arrived by air in Johannesburg, South Africa. They were welcomed by Archimandrite Nazarios and his disciple, Hieromonk Elias, and taken to the Monastery of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, in the Pretoria area.

On the following day, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the Chapel of the Icon of the Mother of God "Joy of All Who Sorrow," near which are temporary quarters for the Sisterhood of the Holy Myrrh-bearers.

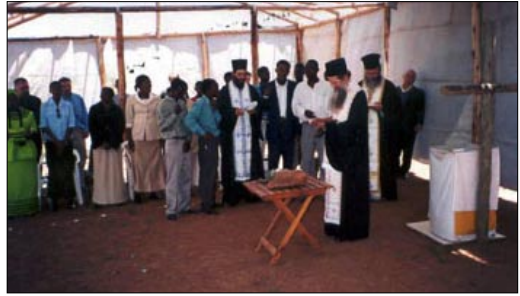
On Thursday, 24 October 2003 (Old Style), His Grace Consecrated the Chapel of the Entrance of the *Theotokos* at the Monastery of the Holy Spirit. That same day, he visited the Church of St. Seraphim of Sarov in Johannesburg, in order to make preparations for its impending Consecration.

On Saturday, 26 October 2003 (Old Style), the Feast of the Holy Great Martyr Demetrios the Myrrh-gusher, Bishop Ambrose Consecrated the beautiful newly-built Church of St. Demetrios at the Monastery of



the Holy Spirit, which was celebrating its Patronal Feast. Taking part were the founder and Superior of the monastery, Archimandrite Nazarios (Pribojan), along with Hieromonk Elias and Protopresbyter Panagiotis Marinos, from Johannesburg,

while the congregation consisted of nearly two hundred Orthodox of various nationalities and tribes, as well as several Catechumens and other persons interested in Orthodoxy.



At the end of the festive Divine Liturgy for the Consecration, His Grace performed the service of the laying of the foundations for a new Church dedicated to the Holy Archangels, in the neighboring area, with a view to blessing the commencement of missionary work among its indigenous inhabitants.

Following the services, the Fathers of the monastery set out a lavish meal



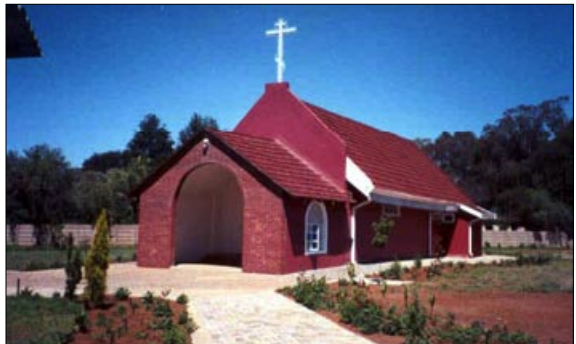
for all of the pilgrims in a marquee which had been put up specially for the occasion. The spiritual presence of Metropolitan Cyprian was evident not only from the formal photograph of him, which was prominently displayed in the marquee, but also from his pastoral counsels

for the occasion of the Consecration, which were read by Bishop Ambrose.

Finally, in the context of these festivities, three groups of young men from a well-known native tribe of that region performed local dances and songs with great aplomb.

On the following day, Sunday, 27 October 2003 (Old Style), Bishop Ambrose Consecrated the equally beautiful, newly-built Church of St. Seraphim of Sarov, at our Greek parish in Johannesburg. His Grace Liturgized with the parish Priest, Protopresbyter Panagiotis Marinos, and Hieromonk Elias. The small congregation of the parish was present, and here, too, the pastoral counsels of Metropolitan Cyprian for the occasion of the Consecration were read.

Bishop Ambrose





held meetings with members of our missionary communities regarding issues of spiritual concern, and at these meetings he provided the Faithful with necessary guidance and advice.

It is obvious that some low-key, but important and very promising, spiritual and missionary work is being conducted in South Africa, and our brothers and sisters in Christ, both clergy and laity, need our prayers and our love.

On Monday, 28 October 2003 (Old Style), Bishop Ambrose and his companion departed by air for Greece, by way of Amsterdam, Holland, after completing this major, fruitful, burdensome, but in many ways blessed missionary journey for the glory of God and for the upbuilding of the Faithful and the Church.