

Missionary Visit to Kenya and the Congo, Africa

DURING the **second** half of January (Old Style), with the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian, His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methoni, who is responsible for the Holy Synod in Resistance's foreign missions, accomplished, by the Grace of God, yet another visit to Africa. This was a missionary and pastoral tour of the Orthodox native communities of Kenya and the Congo, for the support and consolidation of the ecclesiastical life and witness in these countries. Bishop Ambrose was accompanied, as in the past, by our brother in Christ, Anastasios Vasilopoulos.

a) Kenya

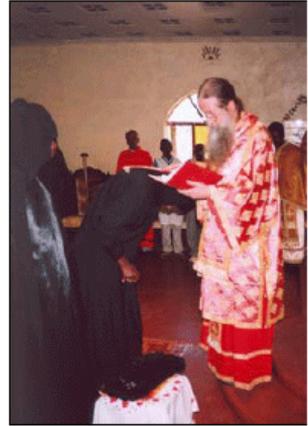
ON Wednesday, 18 January 2007 (Old Style), the visitors from Greece flew to Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, by way of Amsterdam, finally arriving at their destination the next morning. From there, together with the Very Reverend James Waruinge, who welcomed them, they headed by ground transport to the Convent of the Holy Great-Martyr George the Trophy-bearer in the region of Mount Kenya. They were given a warm reception at the Convent by the clergy, the eleven-member Sisterhood under Mother Christonymphe, and quite a few of the region's Faithful. Though exhausted, Bishop Ambrose had the opportunity to speak, if only briefly, with all of those present, and then stayed overnight at a hotel in a neighboring city.

On Friday, 20 January 2007 (Old Style), a *Synaxis* was held with



our clergy in Kenya, followed by a monastic *Synaxis* with the members of the Sisterhood of the Convent of St. George.

It is worth mentioning the superb natural beauty of this region of Kenya, which is like a piece of Paradise: green-clad slopes, peaceful landscapes, tall trees, rivers and brooks, waterfalls, harmonious vegetation, and Mount Kenya towering majestically in the background!



On Saturday, 21 January 2007 (Old Style), Bishop Ambrose celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Convent of St. George, assisted by Kenyan clergy, and with a large crowd of pious Orthodox natives in attendance. At the conclusion of the Liturgy, His Grace tonsured two of the Convents Novices Rasophore-Nuns, who received the monastic names Xenia and Christophora.

After the meal, visits were made—with truly great difficulty, on account of the nearly non-existent road network—to the parishes of the area: to those of the Holy Archangel Michael in Kathangiriri, Sts. Constantine and Helen in Kibungu, St. Stephen in Kathangiriri, Holy Wisdom in Embu, St. James in Makengi, and the Church of the



Resurrection of our Lord, which is under construction in Mukuri.

Preparations are being made in Kathangiriri for the foundation of a men's monastery, and at least three young men have already expressed a desire to become monastics.



On the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, 22 January 2007 (Old Style), a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the spacious stone Church of the Holy Apostle Paul, in Kaanja, with at least a thousand Faithful in attendance. Making a special impression were the chanting by the entire congregation with vitality and enthusiasm, the presence of countless children, who were attentive, well-behaved, and quiet (!)—as is the case, for that matter, nearly everywhere in Africa—, as well as the exemplary participation of the majority of the Faithful in the Divine Eucharist!



The Divine Liturgy was followed by an *agape* meal and a festal program with speeches, greetings, and the characteristic African expression of joy and gratitude with traditional songs and dances.

On Monday, 23 January 2004 (Old Style), a visit was made to the house of Father James in Karuri, and then to the house of Father Paul Njoroge, who has just recently joined our Synod.

b) The Congo

ON Wednesday 25 January 2007 (Old Style), Bishop Ambrose and his travelling companion flew to the Congo and landed in the capital city of Kinshasa, where Hieromonk Elias (Palmos) from the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, near Pretoria, South Africa, also arrived at the same time. They were met, there, by the head of our mission in the region of the capital, the Reverend Father Theodore Lumpungu, who served them a meal at his house.



At noon the next day, they arrived by air in the city of Kananga, where the Bishop from Greece was given an enthusiastic welcome by the clergy and laity of the region, after, to be sure, the grievous events of last October.

We would remind you that, at that time, our former Episcopal Representative, Father Chrysostomos Tshibusu, together with a few other clergy and laypeople, departed from their canonical jurisdiction, i.e., our Holy Synod, with no explanation or notification whatsoever, and summoned some self-styled Bishop from America, Gregory of Colorado, who proceeded to actions that were at the same time schismatic and blasphemous, for their supposed ecclesiastical restoration!

The overwhelming majority of the clergy and laity, which were neither enticed by, nor succumbed to, defection, showed Bishop Ambrose their spontaneous love, and received his consoling and encouraging presence with rejoicing and gladness.

Spiritually edifying discussions were then held, as well as meetings, conducted in a friendly atmosphere, with the Deputy Prefect of Western Kasai and the Chief of Police in Kananga, concerning matters pertaining to our mission in this region of the vast Congo.



On Friday, 27 January 2007 (Old Style), following a distant walk, which was necessitated by the terrible condition of the roads, Bishop Ambrose celebrated the Divine Liturgy, together with a fair number of the clergy, at the Church of St. Nicholas in Nganza, which is built of brick and has been roofed with foliage. During the Liturgy, he Ordained Deacon Father Chrysostomos Elungu, from Mbuji-Mayi, to the Priesthood.



That same day, in the presence of the Chief of Police of Kananga, Father Chrysostomos Tshibusu was obligated to give back the Church items (sacred vessels, Liturgical books, etc.) with which he had been provided some time ago, before his defection, but which belong to our mission.

This was followed by meetings for the rendering of spiritual and material aid to those in greet need.

On Saturday, 28 January 2007 (Old Style), Bishop Ambrose liturgized with a number of the clergy at the Church of St. Charalambos in Katoka, where he Ordained Thomas Tsigunda to the Diaconate. It is revealing that the former Rector of the Church in question joined the schism of Father Chrysostomos Tshibusu, but was forced to leave the parish, since not one parishioner followed him—not even his parents!



A visit was then made to a building site in the city of Kananga, which is intended for use, after the necessary arrange-

ments are made, as a parish center. This was followed by meetings with the Faithful, gatherings with the Priests, etc.

On Sunday, 29 January 2007 (Old Style), a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was served in a specially-adapted city school hall, which is temporarily been used for this purpose by the Parish of the Holy Apostles. Bishop Ambrose liturgized with many Priests and Deacons, with at least five-hundred of the Faithful in attendance, while a choir of young people chanted beautifully.



That day, the delegation returned by air to the capital city of Kinshasa, where, the following day, they undertook the required procedures for the publication of the Divine Liturgy in the local Lingala dialect. At the same time, the clergy from our mission in nearby Congo-Brazzaville, the Reverend Father Emmanuel and Deacon Father George, arrived.



On Tuesday, 31 January 2007 (Old Style), the transportation problems on the streets, caused by the sand, made it necessary for Bishop Ambrose and his companions to walk on foot for a long duration to get to the Church of St. Nectarios, where a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was celebrated, during the course of which Deacon Father George from Congo-Brazzaville was ordained a Priest.

The return was again made by way of a march through the lit-

erally scalding sand, as also was a visit to a school, to which our mission provides substantial support. Here, they paid the full school year's tuition fees for its thirty Orthodox students and undertook the care for the construction of a roof for the building! Unfortunately, there was not time to visit our mission's other school, that of "St. Cyprian."

After settling many other necessary matters, they made the extremely difficult and "eventful" (as was to be expected) passage through the Kinshasa airport until the boarding of the return aircraft!

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From there, once again via Amsterdam, Bishop Ambrose and his travelling companion returned safe and sound to their homeland. This was a veritable miracle, after the indescribable fatigue and hardship of this so very difficult and dangerous missionary journey.

At the same time, however, there was joy and satisfaction in the Lord over the contributions, entailing great sacrifices, to sorely-tried regions, where the mission implies enthusiasm, witness, and martyrdom!

Thanks be to God for His ineffable gifts!

