

CONCERNING THE MISSIONS OF THE SYNOD IN RESISTANCE IN AFRICA

As the Bishop of our Holy Synod responsible for its African Missions, I have been asked by His Eminence, Archbishop Chrysostomos to write for our American communities a brief account of the present state of these missions and their needs. This is most easily done by country, as each area has its own particular problems. The problems which obtain everywhere in Africa, however, are: the lack of liturgical and catechetical texts in local languages, as the official national languages—that is, English, French and Kiswahili—are not widely understood outside the towns; a lack of means of transport for the clergy and catechists; the lack of permanent church buildings; and in general a lack of funding for projects which could otherwise be undertaken. It should be noted that all our clergy in Africa work with no salary whatsoever; we are able to provide only basic necessities: liturgical equipment and vestments. But more analytically:

- a) **The Democratic Republic of Congo.** In this country we have our largest group of faithful, now numbering in the tens of thousands, but also face the greatest practical difficulties, largely created by the local political conditions, which have caused a total breakdown in all the systems of transport, the electric grid, the water supply, etc., throughout the country (outside of the capital). Thus our twenty priests and the catechists who accompany them have to travel over enormous distances (several hundred kilometers) on foot in order to spread the word of God, baptize those who believe, and found simple churches. We have succeeded in printing the Gospels, a prayerbook, and a priest's service book in the Tshiluba language, and we are now preparing texts in Lingala and Kikongo for the districts where these languages are spoken. A school (primary and secondary), with over 100 children, functions under the aegis of our church in Kinshasa, and a men's monastery is being constructed on a plot acquired for the purpose in Kananga. The Synodal Representative in Congo is Archimandrite Marc (Kaseya), who previously spent some fifteen years training in Greece, and the three main districts are administered by Vicars who report directly to the Representative and to the Bishop. We still have no finished permanent church buildings, and worship is conducted in primitive structures built of mud. The standard of the services, however, is maintained with dignity, and the singing is excellent and a real pleasure to hear. Our greatest difficulties are the lack of means of transport and the enormous costs of building materials—roughly four times that of Europe or America.
- b) **The Republic of Congo.** This country, the former French Congo, despite its fairly recent political upheavals, is both more stable and better administered, allowing our mission to advance without serious problems. A church with a permanent structure was built several years ago and serves as the parish for the central city, while another church is under construction in the Western suburbs. A school with some 200 children also functions under the direction of the Vicar, who is assisted by three other priests.
- c) **Kenya.** Kenya has the rare distinction in Africa of having a stable existence since its independence from colonial rule. There our Synod has two Vicariates, the much larger being in the Mount Kenya area, with four large stone churches already built (two have been consecrated), and other wooden chapels fully

functioning. There, four priests and two deacons assist the Vicar. An important element of our witness in Kenya is a convent, now numbering 15 nuns (and with many more aspirants who would join if there were more space), which is the first Orthodox monastic establishment in Black Africa since the times of early Egyptian monasticism.

This, in a few words, is now the extent of our Synod's presence in Africa. This work, however limited, has only been made possible by the generous contributions of our faithful in Greece. How much this will be able to continue, given the present economic disaster of our country, is difficult to say, though we trust entirely in the providence of God, Who has, through the inspiration of our Metropolitan, blessed this endeavour and entrusted it to us.

† Bishop Ambrose of Methone
Synodal Director of Missions

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African Missions
Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina
P.O. Box 46006
133 10 Ano Liosia, Greece

Donations in any amount are helpful.