

❖ METROPOLIS OF OROPOS AND FILI  
✧ Mission in Congo (formerly Zaire)

“Come, all ye nations, learn the power of this awesome mystery”



## Missionary Visit to Africa\*

With the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian, His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methoni made a missionary visit to the Old Calendar Orthodox communities of the Congo, Africa, for nearly two weeks in the middle of February. He was accompanied by one of our spiritual sons, Photios Athanasopoulos, who scribed the following remarks after their return:

How on earth can you describe such an astonishing experience? How can you translate experiences and images into words and put them in writing? These were things that I experienced for the first time, startling images which did not correspond to anything that I had experienced up until then.

After passing through Nairobi, Kenya, where they met with the leaders of our mission there, the visitors arrived by air to Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire), an immense country in the center of Africa (the size of half of Europe!), with a population of fifty-two million, a country sorely tried by poverty, exploitation, diseases, wars, and, in





recent years, by uninterrupted civil conflicts.

In the Kinshasa area, Bishop Ambrose visited Churches, as well as the St. Cyprian School, and Ordained one Priest and two Deacons for the needs of the mission.

The next stop was Kananga, where the Greek visitors were given an enormous welcome by thousands of Faithful. The program included daily Divine Liturgies in different Churches in the area, so that three Priests and two Deacons could be Ordained, in addition to those already mentioned; visits to the parishes and to the Governor of the Kasai region; spiritual guidance for the clergy and the Faithful; Confessions; the resolution of problems; and the provision of moral—and especially material—support and aid for the many people in immediate need, etc.

Bishop Ambrose also visited for the first time the distant city of Mbuji-Mayi, where, during the Divine Liturgy in the Church of that locality, he Ordained yet another new Deacon.

His Grace found that the mission here is truly making progress, despite the tragic shortage of essential supplies. The existence of young men and women who want to become

monastics is a particularly hopeful sign.

The deprivations, the sacrifices, the demands, and the expenses of such a missionary journey are indescribable, but the reward of the spiritual fruit that

it yields is rich and consoling: the mere recollection of the pure and innocent faces of the thousands of natives, illumined by the inner joy of the life of Grace, evokes awe, reproves, and serves as a reminder to us....

Our mission in the Congo numbers more than thirty-thousand Faithful, with twenty Priests and five Deacons, and the prospects are very auspicious.

“Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift” (II Corinthians 9:15).

\* Source: *Άγιος Κυπριανός*, No. 306 (January-February 2002), pp. 108-109.