

Mission in the Congo, Africa

WITH THE BLESSING of His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian, one more missionary journey-“milestone” to Central Africa was accomplished, with God’s help, in the middle of July of this year, for the necessary consolidation and expansion of the Orthodox witness and ministry of the Old Calendar Holy Synod in Resistance.

His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methoni, together with Hieromonk Mark (Kaseya)—a native of the Congo who has been a monastic for the past fifteen years at the Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, Fili, Attika—and our brother in Christ, Mr. Anastasios Vasilopoulos, departed from Athens by air and arrived in the capital of the Congo, Kinshasa, via Paris, on Thursday, 7 July 2006 (Old Style).

There, the delegation from Greece was given an especially warm welcome by the Priests, Fathers Theodore Lumpungu and Paul Kambala, and by Deacon Father Ambrose. They were given accommodation at a hotel, which was finally found with some difficulty on account of the elections that were being held in the country.



• **On Friday**, 8 July 2006 (Old Style), a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Church of St. Nectarios, in the capital’s Mikonga region, with a good number of the native Faithful in attendance. During the Liturgy, Bishop Ambrose had the opportunity to greet them after an absence of two full years.

The next day, owing to problems raised by the elections, they were not able to fly to Kananga, in the region of Western Kasai in central Congo. The flight was finally made on Sunday, 10 July 2006 (Old Style), in a cargo plane. After an exceptionally painful and dangerous

flight, the delegation eventually landed not in Kananga, as had been expected, but in another region altogether: Tshikapa!



- **On Monday**, 11 July 2006 (Old Style), the desired flight to Kananga was accomplished, with God's help. The delegation from Greece, having arrived two whole days late, was given an enthusiastic welcome by a large part of the clergy and laity of the multitudinous Orthodox Mission under the Episcopal Representative, Protopresbyter Chrysostomos Bacibasus.

- On Tuesday, 12 July 2006 (Old Style), a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Church of the Holy Apostles in Kananga, during the course of which Bishop Ambrose Ordained Deacon Father Andrew Kampa to the Priesthood and Timothy Kubongo to the Diaconate.



- On Wednesday, 13 July 2006 (Old Style), at the Church of Sts. Athanasios and Cyril in Nganza, Bishop Ambrose Ordained Deacon Father Martino Lukusa to the Priesthood and Vitaly Somi to the Diaconate.

- On Thursday, 14 July 2006 (Old Style), a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Church of St. Charalambos in Katoka,

during which His Grace Ordained Deacon Father Simon Tshituakadi to the Priesthood and Gregory Bantu to the Diaconate.



On the afternoon of the same day, an assembly of the Bishop and the Mission clergy took place at the Church of the Twelve Apostles in Kananga.

- On Friday, 15 July 2006 (Old Style), during the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at the Church of St. Nicholas in Nganza, Bishop Ambrose performed the Ordination of Deacon Father Pachôm Bokama.

Over the course of that week, a visit was also made to the construction site of the new large Church of the Holy Apostles in Kananga, which will become our Synod's Mission center in this very promising region of Central Africa.



- **On Saturday**, 16 July 2006 (Old Style), a flight not having been found—again, owing to the elections—for the trip to Mbuji-Mayi, a region of Eastern Kasai, the flight was eventually made with the kind grant of a helicopter by the U.S. peace-keeping forces, which are stationed in the country on account of the years-long civil unrest. Fr. Chrysostomos from Kananga followed the delegation on its journey.

In Mbuji-Mayi, Bishop Ambrose and his companions were received at the Church of St. Anthony the Great by the Episcopal Representative of the region, Fr. Anthony Mutombu, and other clergy, as well as by many Faithful. A meeting of the clergy was held on the same day.

- On Sunday, 17 July 2006 (Old Style), during the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at the Church of St. Anthony, His Grace Ordained Bartholomew Mbuyi a Deacon.



• On Monday, 18 July, 2006 (Old Style), during the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at the Church of St. Basil the Great in the same city, Bishop Ambrose Ordained Deacon Father Bartholomew Mbuyi to the Priesthood and Chrysostomos Elungu to the Diaconate. After the Divine Liturgy, the marriage was performed of a young, pious couple belonging to the parish of Sts. Peter and Justina.

• **On Tuesday**, 19 July 2006 (Old Style), the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Church of St. Anthony, after which a flight was made back to the capital of Kinshasa.

There, on Wednesday, 20 July 2006 (Old Style), the Feast Day of the Prophet Elias, Bishop Ambrose celebrated the Divine Liturgy with the clergy at the Church of St. Nectarios in Mikonga and Ordained Antipas Ilunga a Deacon.



All of the Ordinations that had taken place in the preceding days were performed at the recommendation of the spiritual Fathers and Episcopal Representatives, for the covering of the immediate pastoral needs of the Mission in the Congo, which is rapidly and steadily developing. Thus it is that the clergy in this country now numbers twenty-five Priests and ten Deacons.

On the same day, Wednesday, a visit was made on foot to the new Mission school building

in the region of Mikonga, and a meeting was carried out with its Director.

• On Thursday, 21 July 2006 (Old Style), a visit was also made to the new large Church dedicated to the Dormition of the *Theotokos*,



which is being constructed in the region of the capital. Meetings with clergy and laity followed.

• **On Friday**, 22 July 2006 (Old Style), the delegation from Greece crossed the River Congo—with all of the difficulties (customs and others) entailed by such an undertaking—, in order to visit the Synod's Missionary Community in Brazza, the capital of the French Congo, or Congo-Brazzaville

There, on Saturday, 23 July 2006 (Old Style), a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Church of the Great Martyr George the Trophy-Bearer, during which Bishop Ambrose Ordained Luke Bwekessa a Deacon.

• On Sunday, 24 July 2006 (Old Style), during a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, His Grace Ordained Deacon Father John Bakarila to the Priesthood and George Maladila to the Diaconate. Thus, the clergy in Brazzaville now numbers two Priests (Fathers Emmanuel and John) and two Deacons (Luke and George).

The next day, Bishop Ambrose visited the home of Fr. Kyrillos Bis-siafami, the first Priest in our Synod's Mission, who has lost his sight and has by now retired.

That day, the team returned to Kinshasa by way of the difficult and adventurous crossing of the Congo River. From there, having made the necessary preparations, Bishop Ambrose and his companions departed by air and, after a twelve-hour flight throughout the night of Tuesday, 26 July 2006 (Old Style), they safely arrived in Athens at midday on Wednesday, 27 July 2006 (Old Style).

• **The report** of this missionary journey was, by the Grace of God, very encouraging: the divine gifts abundant, the edification evident, the

work arduous, the toil incalculable, the material and spiritual contributions continuous, the sacrifices immense, and the prayers constant, that the Lord of the Vineyard, the Great Shepherd of Sheep, might protect, increase, bring forth, and receive immortal souls into His Kingdom!

