

❖ Metropolis of Oropos and Phyle

✠ Mission in Kenya

Pastoral Visit to Kenya

By the Grace of God, His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methone made yet another missionary journey to the ecclesiastical communities belonging to the Holy Synod in Resistance in Kenya, acting as representative of His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian, who is ailing. Accompanying him were His Grace, Bishop Sofronie of Suceava, from our Sister Old Calendar Orthodox Church in Romania, and our brother in Christ, Nikolaos Marinakes, one of our spiritual children.

Shortly before, Bishop Ambrose had received a letter (dated December 13, 2008 [Old Style]) from our Episcopal Representative in Eastern Kenya, the Very Reverend John Njue Njagi, with regard to His Grace's upcoming pastoral visit, which we publish below, so as to illustrate the life of our mission in Kenya:

His Grace, Bishop Ambrose,

I bow down and beg your blessing, which enables me to write to you with great honour and respect. Here in Kenya, and particularly in the Embu Deanery, we are standing firm, raising our hearts to Heaven, even though there is a tug of war going on with other denominations, which are trying to convince our followers to join them in what they call Ecumenism.

Your Grace, we are awaiting your arrival, because we know that whenever you come, you bring us a blessing and strengthen our faith. While you are in Kenya, you will consecrate the Church of Saint Andrew at the Convent. We would like you kindly to consecrate it on Sunday, because people are available then. We would like you to visit our Churches, so that you can see the progress we have made since you last visited us. Among the places you will visit is a one-acre plot of land that I have helped the Convent to acquire in Meru.

At the Convent, the nuns are progressing well, except that their number is growing—they are now fifteen. They need a special programme to provide enough food for themselves. If we can help them buy another plot of land down there in Meru, they can be self-sufficient.

Hieromonk Theophanes and his two Brothers are doing well. Father Theophanes is doing everything possible to help the Christians in spiritual matters. He is organizing seminars for young people—both men

and women—so as to give them guidance in practising their faith.

I and the other Priests and Deacons are moving forward and together as brothers. All of them remind me to thank you and the entire Synod for the help that they regularly receive through me. Also, we unceasingly continue to pray for the health of Metropolitan Cyprian and the progress of the Holy Synod. Your Grace, please pass on our greetings to our brothers there in the Monastery and everywhere you visit. With your blessing, Master,

The least among others,

Very Rev. Archpriest John Njue Njagi

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Bishops Ambrose and Sofronie arrived by air in Nairobi on Wednesday, January 22, 2009 (Old Style), where they were welcomed by the Very Reverend James Waruinge and Archimandrite Mark (Kaseya) Hagiokyprianites, who had previously arrived from Kinshasa, Congo, in order to take part in this pastoral visit.

Following a tour of the region, south of Nairobi, inhabited by the Masai people, primarily for the sake of allowing Bishop Sofronie to become acquainted with the African landscape, the visitors arrived, via Nairobi, in the region of Embu, near Mount Kenya, on Friday, January 24 (Old Style), where the main portion of our Holy Synod's flock resides.



Here, after visiting the Church of the Holy Apostle Paul, in Kaanja, where the region's Episcopal Representative, Father John Njue Njagi, is Rector, the Bishops were greeted at the Convent of the Holy Great Martyr George, which now numbers fifteen nuns and novices, under the wise guidance of the Reverend Mother Christonymphe. At the convent, Bishop Ambrose held gatherings with our clergy in Kenya and then with the convent's sisterhood.



On Saturday, January 25 (Old Style), a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Church of the Archangel Michael in Kathangiriri. Bishops Ambrose and Sofronie concelebrated with a dozen or so clergy, including the Kenyan Hieromonk Theophanes (Mutori) and Archimandrite Mark—both of whom received their monastic training at the Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, in Phyle, Greece—, with many native faithful in attendance.

Following the Divine Liturgy and a meal, a visit was made to the temporary building of the Monastery of the Holy Three Great Hierarchs, which is under construction. Father Theophanes is in charge of the monastery, which for the time being also houses two novices.

Visits were then made to the parishes of Holy Wisdom and the Holy Apostle James in other villages in the region.



On Sunday, January 26 (Old Style), the relatively spacious Church of the Holy Apostle Andrew, at the Convent of St. George, in the region of Mount Kenya, was consecrated with order and solemnity. Bishop Ambrose presided, assisted by Bishop Sofronie, eight Priests and two Deacons. The Holy Relics of the Holy Great Martyrs George and Arethas, of the Holy Monk-Martyrs of Chozeva, and of certain unknown Holy Martyrs were placed in the Holy Table. Several hundred devout native Orthodox were in attendance at the Consecration service and at the Divine Liturgy that followed.



Later, after the festal meal at the convent, the visiting Hierarchs returned to Nairobi, where, the following day, Bishop Ambrose appointed Archimandrite Mark a Confessor, at the Church of the Holy Protection of the *Theotokos*, in Karuri.

After several meetings, at which certain issues were resolved, the two Bishops and their travelling companion returned by air to Greece before noon on Tuesday, January 28 (Old Style).

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By the Grace of our Lord, this pastoral visit was fruitful, allowing the visitors to ascertain the general progress of our mission in Kenya



and to determine the immediate needs that have to be covered for the success, with God's help, of this sacred ecclesiastical work.

