

Pastoral and Missionary Visit to Oceania and Southeast Asia

By the Grace of God, His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methone recently made another pastoral and missionary journey to Oceania and Southeast Asia, acting as representative of Metropolitan Cyprian, who is ailing, and with the blessing of our Standing Holy Synod.

On Saturday, October 25, 2009 (Old Style), His Grace arrived by air in Melbourne, Australia, via Singapore. Our Priest, Father Stylianos Papadopoulos, offered him hospitality at his house.

On Sunday, October 26 (Old Style), the commemoration of the Holy Great Martyr Demetrios the Myrrh-Gusher, he liturgized at the Church of the Dormition of the *Theotokos* (in the district of Beaumaris) together with the Church's Rector, Father Stylianos, and Protodeacon Basil Yaki-



mov from Canberra, who belongs to our Sister Church, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (under Metropolitan Agafangel). A good number of the faithful—primarily Greeks—were in attendance. The service was held in Greek, English, and Slavonic.



That afternoon, Bishop Ambrose was invited to the Serbian Church of St. Stephan of Dečani (in Carrum Downs, Melbourne) by its Rector, Hieromonk John (Smelic), of the ROCA. They served Vespers according to the Slavonic *Typikon*.

On Monday, October 27 (Old Style), Bishop Ambrose celebrated the Divine Liturgy with Father Stylianos and Protodeacon Basil at the Byelorussian Church of the Holy Three Martyrs of Vilnius (in Yarrville, Melbourne), which belongs to the



ROCA. Despite the fact that it was a workday, around fifty of the faithful, primarily of Russian descent, were present.



In the afternoon of the following day, Bishop Ambrose arrived by air in Auckland, New Zealand, in order to visit the small community belonging to our Holy Synod under Father Paul Vermaak (from South Africa). On Wednesday, October 29 (Old Style), Bishop Ambrose served the Divine Liturgy at the communi-

ty's small Chapel, located in the courtyard of an Orthodox family of Italian descent, with a small group of faithful in attendance. During meetings that took place following the Liturgy, the prospects for this community were discussed. Later on, His Grace was able to do some sightseeing.

On Thursday, October 30 (Old Style), His Grace again served the Divine Liturgy, this time in Italian, for the sake of the Chapel's proprietors, who also provided the chanting.

The following afternoon, Bishop Ambrose arrived by air in Sydney, Australia and headed for the Church of the Holy Unmercenaries (in Dulwich Hill), in order to serve festal Vespers on the occasion of the Church's Patronal Feast. Taking part in the service were Father Dragan Saracevic, the Church's Rector, who hails from Serbia, and Father Stylianos Papadopoulos, who came from Melbourne to take part in the Church's Feast Day. The Mystery of Holy Unction was then performed for the faithful in



attendance.

On Saturday, November 1 (Old Style), the commemoration of the Holy Unmercenaries Cosmas and Damian, Bishop Ambrose celebrated the festal Divine Liturgy at the Church with Fathers Dragan and Stylianos. This was followed by



a procession with the Holy Icon of the Saints through the streets around the Church, with stops for prayerful intercessions. When they returned to the Church, Bishop Ambrose, assisted by Father Dragan, performed the Mystery of Baptism for the child of one of the families belonging to the parish. A festal meal followed.

His Grace then travelled by road with Father Dragan to Canberra, where he was given accommodation in the commodious parish residence of the Serbian Church of St. George, located in the center of the Australian capital. The Church's energetic Rector, Father Dragan Saracevic, has recently undertaken a renovation of the Church, and has also begun catechetical and language lessons for children in the Church.



On Sunday, November 2 (Old Style), Bishop Ambrose celebrated a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy in the Church of St. George with Father Dragan and Protopresbyter Basil, in the presence of around forty faithful. This was the first such Liturgy celebrated here since the historic Church joined our Holy Synod a few months ago. A festal meal followed in the spacious parish hall.

The next day, Bishop Ambrose visited the nearby Parliament Building, which is open to the public, where a matter of concern was discussed.

On Tuesday, November 4 (Old Style), Bishop Ambrose and Father Dragan Saracevic visited a Minister of the local government and a Member of Parliament who is responsible for matters regarding the legal safeguarding of our Exarchate in Australia, and were offered constructive cooperation in the promotion of this necessary state regulation. Bishop Ambrose and Father Dragan then visited museums and other sights of the city.

On Wednesday, November 5 (Old Style), the Bishop from Greece visited Canberra's Greek Club, where he was warmly greeted, and was offered an abundant fasting meal by the club's manager.

He then returned by road to Sydney, where he spent the following two days—Thursday and Friday—meeting with parishioners from the Church of the Holy Unmercenaries, during which time he

heard confessions and offered spiritual guidance to many. Conditions were made rather more difficult by the summertime Australian temperatures, which rose to 42°C!

On the weekend of November 8 and 9 (Old Style), the commemorations of the Holy Angels and of St. Nectarios, respectively, Bishop Ambrose liturgized at the Church of the Holy Unmercenaries, with a large throng of faithful in attendance. He also continued to make visits to homes and to perform necessary rites.

On Tuesday, November 11 (Old Style), His Grace departed from Sydney by air for Singapore, where he arrived in the afternoon, and was received by our Priest, Father Demetrios Sithuraj-Ponraj, and his family.

On Wednesday, November 12 (Old Style), Bishop Ambrose crossed over the bridge into the neighboring country of Malaysia, where Father Demetrios has formed a Church, in the nearby city of Johor Bahru, dedicated to St. Nectarios of Ægina, which serves as



the mission center of our ecclesiastical jurisdiction in this multicultural region of Southeast Asia. This mission shows encouraging potential.

He then held two special meetings with groups of people interested in Orthodoxy, who come from different nationalities (Indians, Chinese, Malaysians, Portuguese, etc.) and religions (Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Roman Catholics, etc.).

On Thursday, November 13 (Old Style), His Grace visited the historic island of Sentosa. That evening, he left for the airport for the long and tiring return flight. With God's help, he arrived in Greece on Friday afternoon, November 14 (Old Style).

This pastoral and missionary journey to the ends of the earth—which was extensive and laborious from every viewpoint—for the strengthening of the flock of Greek, Russian, Serbian, and indigenous anti-innovationist Orthodox, as well as that of many others interested in the Truth, was crowned with success and with many great blessings, to the glory of God.

