

Pastoral Visit to Haiti

Following an invitation by His Eminence, Metropolitan Agafangel, First Hierarch of our Sister Church, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCA)—which does not have a French-speaking Hierarch—and with the approval of the Standing Holy Synod in Resistance, His Grace, Bishop Ambrose made his second visit to Haiti, where the ROCA maintains Orthodox missionary communities which Protopresbyter Gregory Williams, from Tennessee, in the USA, supervises and oversees.

This pastoral visit, which lasted from September 16 to 24, 2010 (Old Style), was deemed necessary—especially after the catastrophic earthquake in January—for the rejuvenation and strengthening of the small



Orthodox flock in this Caribbean island country.

Bishop Ambrose liturgized on the Sunday after the Exaltation of the Precious Cross, September 20, 2010 (Old Style), in the Church of St. Augustine in Jacmel, with Father Gregory and the local Priest, Father Ambroise Noel. On Wednesday, September 23, 2010 (Old Style), the Feast of the Conception of the Venerable Forerunner, he liturgized again with the same Priests in the Church of St. Dorothy of Kashin in the capital city of Port-au-Prince.

During his stay, Bishop Ambrose tonsured four Readers and ordained one Subdeacon, met with mission personnel, settled various matters, and worked with Fathers Gregory and Ambroise to help improve the development of the Orthodox mission in Haiti.

Remarkably enough, none of the mission's Orthodox Christians were killed in the earthquake which, as is well known, took hundreds of thousands of lives and caused terrible havoc. The two Orthodox Church

buildings remained nearly intact, and the damage was relatively minor to the mission's three schools, where approximately eight hundred children study, and also to the homes of Orthodox Christians, which are gradually being repaired, and this at a time when more than one million of the country's earthquake victims live in tents under wretched living conditions, all the while showing fortitude, and even humor, in their tribulations!

Bishop Ambrose gave those in charge of the Orthodox mission a substantial amount of money to help repair the school buildings and feed the children. The funds had been raised chiefly through the efforts of the young students of the Iconography School run by the Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, Phyle, Attica, who offered their works as prizes in a raffle held for this purpose. Father Ambroise responded with a brief letter of fervent thanks on behalf of the mission in Haiti.

This pastoral visit helped and strengthened the Orthodox flock both spiritually and materially, and, in general, served as a breath of hope to this much afflicted country.

