

the *Presbyter*

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Being Sent

I've just returned from Tanzania. My parish is funding the building of a church in the village of Kubunswu, part of the Diocese of Bukoba, in conjunction with the OCMC. Tanzania is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world. More than twice the size of the state of California, it has a population of roughly 40 million people, mostly farmers. 35% are Christian; 35% are Muslim and 30% are members of various traditional African religions. Only 10% of the roads are paved, which often makes travel difficult. Only 9% of the population has electricity. Clean drinking water is a major problem. AIDS is on the rise. Medical care is scarce to the point of being practically non-existent.

The average life expectancy in Tanzania was reported several years ago to be 50, but Father Anastasios, the priest-monk and 1983 graduate of the University of Athens Medical School who has spent the last 10 years of his life in Africa and operates a small clinic for the Diocese, tells me that number has actually gone down and is probably closer to 45. If I were an average Tanzanian, I'd already be dead. This explains why I saw so few old people and so many small children everywhere. The average age of the population in Tanzania is only 17. I find it hard to remember when I was 17.

My two weeks in Tanzania with 11 members of my parish as part of a larger construction crew composed of locals was both exhilarating and exhausting! It was, to use the old cliché, life-changing. From Orange County to Kubunswu: not merely two different worlds, but two vastly different universes. My perspective on many things has been broadened and deepened in ways I hadn't imagined before, and therefore forever changed.

Bukoba, the seat of the Diocese, is a town of nearly 40,000 situated on the west coast of Lake Victoria, one of the largest freshwater lakes in the world - the size of Ireland. Bishop Jeronymos of Bukoba, who was our host, moved things along at a fast yet somehow unhurried pace that was hard to keep up with. There is no time in Africa, I was told. The Church is growing in Tanzania, as Christianity is in Africa generally. The Diocese of Bukoba now has 160 communities, with 70 permanent churches constructed (soon to be 71) but only 40 priests, each priest responsible for as many as four communities, usually within a 20 kilometer radius. Most priests travel by foot or by bicycle to serve the communities assigned to them.

When I asked Bishop Jeronymos what the greatest problem is that he faces, he began by describing himself specifically as a *missionary* bishop and then said that his greatest challenge is personnel: qualified men to serve as priests, but he also needs doctors to staff the hospital he's building, architects and engineers to assist in the design and construction of churches, nurses, office workers, translators and more. No surprise concerning his need for well trained personnel to serve Christ's Church. One of my parishioners, concerned that she was neither a priest, a doctor or nurse, wondered what she had to offer to the situation. An accountant, the bishop immediately put her to work going over the books of the Diocese.

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What did surprise me is that Bishop Jeronymos characterized himself as being a very particular kind of bishop: a *missionary* bishop. I asked him, "Aren't all bishops supposed to be missionary bishops? Aren't all priests supposed to be missionaries, offering the Good News to everyone?" This, it seems to me, is an issue for us as clergy in America. How many of us see ourselves not only as pastors, but also as missionaries and evangelists? This is part and parcel of what we mean when we confess that we belong to "the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church." The Church is not apostolic merely because we have preserved and passed on the teaching of the Apostles; that's absolutely necessary, but there's more to being apostolic than that. The Church is apostolic in the sense that She – and therefore her clergy – are *sent*. The Lord Jesus said to the disciples just before He ascended, "Go!" *Do we feel sent?* Or are we doing things on our own, content in our own little world, parochial in the worst possible sense of that word?

A parish that is not concerned with courageous and sustained evangelism to the society around us and open to all who desire to join our churches, as well as active in missions work abroad, has failed to observe Christ's command and is neither apostolic nor catholic in the fullest sense of those words. As clergy, we are responsible for setting the apostolic and catholic tone in the life of the parish entrusted to us by our Master. In this issue of *The Presbyter* are the stories of two of our brothers, Fathers George Livanos of Canonsburg, PA and Aris Metrakos of Columbia, SC who have been actively involved in missions to Tanzania and Romania and found that not only have their parishes experienced a sense of renewal, but they have experienced a sense of *personal* renewal, as well.

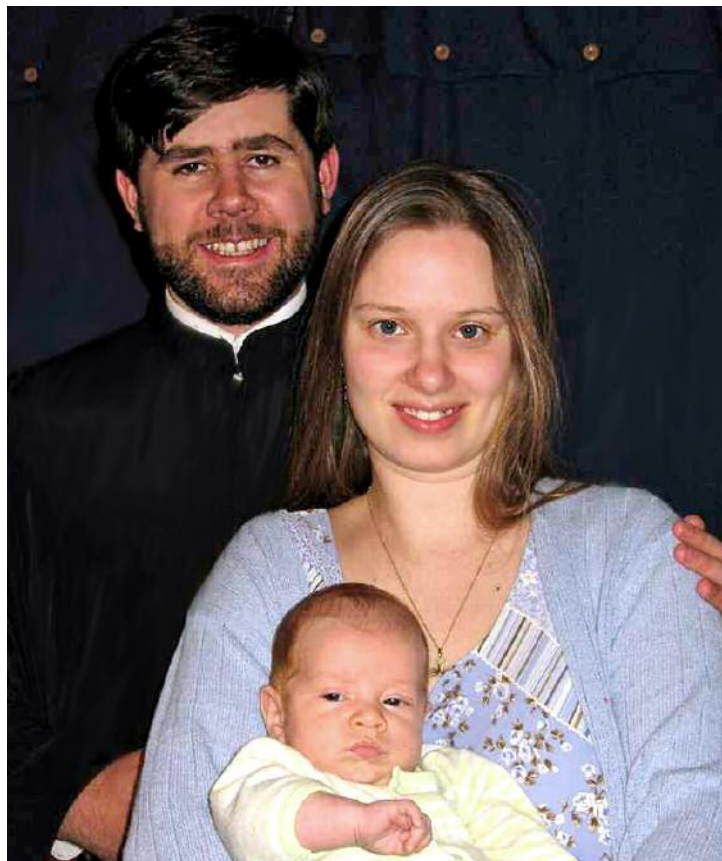
Finally, let me take this opportunity to remind you of the National Clergy Retreat that will take place at Antiochian Village in Ligonier, PA this coming October. Registration forms are included in this issue of *The Presbyter*. As the Lord Jesus would often take time away from the crowds and demands of ministry, a retreat – a *real* retreat – is something absolutely essential for us, His disciples. I can assure you that you will emerge from this year's retreat spiritually nurtured and renewed for ministry!

—Rev. Steven P. Tsiachlis - President, APC
Pastor, St. Paul's Church - Irvine, CA



A.P.C. Holy Cross Scholarship

This year the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council gave its first annual scholarship award to a graduating seminarian at Holy Cross. In consultation with Father Nicholas Triantafillou, the President of HC/HC, this year's scholarship was given to Mr. Anthony Cook, a senior who graduated this past May.



Short note from Anthony Cook Holy Cross class of '07

I was born and raised in Flagstaff, Arizona, within various different Pentecostal churches in the area. I became Orthodox in 2001 in Jackson, Michigan while attending Hillsdale College. Under the guidance of Fr. Demetrios Tonia, the priest at Holy Trinity parish in Fort Wayne, Indiana, I submitted my application to Holy Cross during my senior year of college, and began my course of study at the seminary in the fall of 2003. That December my wife Elisabeth and I were married. I have very much enjoyed my time at the seminary, particularly my three years of field work at the Church of the Annunciation in Newburyport, MA with Fr. Kyriakos Saravelas and at Holy Trinity parish in Concord, NH, again with Fr. Demetrios Tonia. I will graduate this May, and hope to be ordained and begin parish ministry soon after. My wife and I were blessed this past January with the birth of our firstborn son, Justin. We would like to express our profound and heartfelt thanks to Father Nicholas Triantafillou and the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council for this most generous scholarship. We pray that we may show ourselves worthy of it in the years to come.

BUILDING A CHURCH IN TANZANIA

When Fr. George Livanos of All Saints Orthodox Church in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, received a copy of the OCMC magazine in May, 2001, he had no idea that reading it would be the first step on his path to building a church in Africa. During his sermon for the Sunday of the Blind Man, Fr. George preached about how “sometimes we don’t really use our sight as we should” and that often times we don’t even see the poor man next to us. Then on the spur-of-the-moment, Fr. George used the OCMC magazine caption as an illustration and told his parish that for just \$20,000 a church could be built in Africa. “It just slipped out,” Fr. George said. The response to this spontaneous example was immediate. At coffee hour after the sermon, the president and vice president of the Philoptochos society told him if he built a church in Africa, the Philoptochos would support a priest to serve there through OCMC’s SAMP program. Then two mothers came to him individually—one a single mom—and said they would like to volunteer to go with him to build the church in Africa. And later that week he received a letter from someone who was visiting the parish that Sunday with a check enclosed for his church in Africa. This overwhelming response shocked Fr. George—most of all because he didn’t remember saying anything about building a church in Africa.



The All Saints Church at Kasikizi, Tanzania

I wondered if God was telling me to build a church in Africa

Then a few weeks later at a Leadership 100 Conference, he spoke to Helen Nicozisis. He told her he was looking for something to “spark [his] church...maybe I’ll build a church in Africa.” It just “popped out of my mouth,” Fr. George said. Nicozisis had recently been elected as the President of OCMC’s Board of Trustees. She immediately called OCMC and found out that there were plans to build a church in Tanzania. This news stunned him, and he began to think that perhaps he was supposed to build a church in Tanzania. “I wonder[ed] if God [was] telling me to build a church in Africa,” he said.

Soon after that, Fr. George received a phone call from OCMC asking if his church would host an event as part of the fall Lecture Tour. The guest speaker was Bishop Jeronymos of

Tanzania. Fr. George said when he asked the parish council about hosting Bishop Jeronymos, “no one argued, so then I went for the gold.” He told them about the idea to build a church in Africa. The council voted unanimously, not only to build the church, but to offer \$5,000 as an initial donation. As people in the parish heard about it, donations started coming in. After Sunday Liturgy with Bishop Jeronymos, All Saints parishioners presented the bishop with a pen and ink drawing of the church they had pledged to build—All Saints Church of Tanzania, a sister church to their own. Fr. George said the presentation was very emotional. “Everyone started crying,” he said.

Fr. George and three of his parishioners applied for OCMC’s 2002 team to Tanzania to help build the church. It was to be a life changing experience for him, as he chronicles in the article below, written originally in 2004 for the OCMC Mission Magazine:

The Consecration of All Saints in Kasikizi, Tanzania

I write this article having just returned from my second mission trip; from a trip which took me back to places I visited only two years ago. I was blessed to travel with my 15 year old son, Micah, my friend and classmate, Fr. Martin Ritsi, Executive Director of OCMC, and two wonderful ladies (who prefer to remain anonymous). We were invited by His Grace, Bishop Jeronymos, of Bukoba, Tanzania, to attend the consecration of three churches built through OCMC, one of which was donated by my parish. I would have never expected to return to Tanzania so soon, but the Lord had other plans for me and my parish.

In 2002, I was blessed by the Lord to represent my parish of All Saints in Canonsburg, PA, to lead an OCMC Mission Team to Tanzania. This was my first ever mission trip and I was both nervous and excited. The Team was assigned the task of joining local residents of the village of Kasikizi to build a new, larger church. I had no building skills, but I did have the drive within me to see this project to its completion.

Our involvement in missions was life-changing

As published in the 2002 Vol.18, No.1 issue of the OCMC Mission Magazine our parish's journey into the mission field was most unexpected.

It all began with a spontaneous mention in one of my sermons of how it only costs \$20,000 to build a church in Africa. My parishioners latched on to the idea and began volunteering their time and money to build a church in Africa. I didn't even intend to build a church; I was just using it as a comparative example, but before I knew it, donations came pouring in. Our involvement in missions was life-changing, not only for my parish but for the people in Kasikizi, Tanzania, and the members of our 2002 OCMC Mission Team which undertook part of the physical labor. Our parish raised \$35,000 for this sacred task. We not only raised money for the actual church building, but we were able to cover the cost of the items needed for its consecration as well. I am so proud of my parish.

The people of this humble village are some of the warmest, loving people I ever met

On this recent trip, as we traveled through Tanzania, I dreamt of the moment when I would return to Kasikizi, a place written in my conscience forever. It is a place that God has touched, and the faithful are reflections of His Love. I know that the people of this humble village are some of the warmest, loving people I ever met. They are servants of the Most High. The building of the church dedicated to All Saints was for them as vital as fresh water. Their identity as members of the body of Christ was imprinted on each brick, on every stone broken by hand, on each shovelful of dirt scooped into a bag to be carried and dumped yards away on foot.



Bishop Jeronymos of Bukoba with Father George Livanos at the consecration of the All Saints Church in Kasikizi

As we arrived in Kasikizi, I felt as though I had come home. I fumbled out of the van and was quickly surrounded by young and old alike. Smiles, tears, hugs, Swahili words of welcome (Karibu sana!) filled my space. They took me by the hand and ran with me to the now finished church. It was beautiful! It was magnificent! And once inside, I broke down again and cried. I saw in my mind's eye all who had worked side by side standing around the walls of the church. The large laminated Icons that I brought with me two years before were wrapped around the whole building. There was electricity in the church and that was incredible in itself because, when we had started construction two years ago, the village itself did not have electricity.

I was shaking with joy as I stood in the Holy of Holies and saw the Holy Table which awaited the sacred relics to be placed in it and to be washed with Holy Chrism. Even now as I write this article, tears start to form in my eyes as I relive this experience. Micah began shooting many pictures with one hand, while he videotaped with the other. He documented the whole trip for us and the OCMC. He never felt like a stranger in a strange land. He was constantly drawing the attention of the young who asked him about life in America. Micah made new friends and looks forward to one day returning to these places when he is older in order to help them in whatever capacity he is able to. A father could not be

more proud of his child than when they share the same walk together. I will forever be thankful to the Lord that Micah and I walked together in the same footsteps, where only two years ago, I had walked alone.

Bishop Jeronymos of Bukoba with Father George Livanos at the consecration of the All Saints Church in Kazikisi

We spent Saturday night and Sunday morning (August 14-15) celebrating the consecration services for our sister parish.

The Sunday services lasted for hours; but I had wished that it would never end. The nave was full of faithful. There were so many children that I wondered where they all came from. The crowds poured out of the church and onto the surrounding grass field.

Everyone wanted to be part of this day. Afterwards, as we ate our afternoon meal, I began to feel sad. I looked around the table and knew that I would have to leave. In my heart I knew that my parish's mission here was finished for now. We were called by God to come here and offer the good people a church which would be used by the villagers and the seminarians who study here, who one day will become the future indigenous leaders of the Church.

Fr. Gerasimos, the priest of All Saints, is a true man of God. He spends days away from his family who live many kilometers away in order to minister to his flock. He serves the parish and various local communities, which for the time being have no church building to worship in. He is

not as young as he moves. Being one of the four senior clergy of the Diocese, his face reveals the many long days and nights he has spent bringing the Gospel to all. His family is very supportive of his ministry. We laughed together for many days when we realized we are both fathers of seven children. When we left, I told him that we will pastor each other's parish through prayer.

We rejoiced with them

The faithful put on a grand party for us all before we left. We knew that we could only stay a little longer. They danced and danced. We rejoiced with them. When it was time to go, there was a bit of silence. We hugged and cried again. Two years ago I said, "I will see you soon." This time, I said "Goodbye." I do not know what is in store for our parish and the Kasikizi community. If the Lord wills, we will never abandon them. They are one of us now. We are one of them.



—Rev. George Livanos
Pastor, All Saints Church
Canonsburg, PA

MISSION TO ROMANIA

It's nine in the morning and it looks like the world has poured into the streets of Manastur. This densely populated neighborhood of the Transylvanian city of Cluj bears witness to the scars of Communism and the hope of capitalism. Monolithic blocs of Soviet era housing contrast with the newly remodeled and stylishly decorated apartments of Romania's growing middle class who live inside them.

Soviet-style "blocs" are renewed from the inside by Romania's rising middle class.

I use the crosswalk and observe the traffic signals but knowing that red lights mean little to many Romanian cabbies and deliverymen makes me feel like my life is in jeopardy. I've joined the crowd headed for the bus that takes commuters into the center of Cluj, home of the seat of government and a massive university. This morning I decide to hail a cab. I'm schlepping a laptop and a bag full of youth ministry tricks. It's impossible to negotiate the mosh pit on wheels without a free hand during rush hour.

I arrived from the States at noon yesterday and instead of jet lag I feel manic. Good thing. It's going to be a busy ten days. The cab creeps toward the Archdiocese through clogged streets never intended to accommodate the ever-increasing traffic load. I'm dropped off in front of the driveway, the only entrance through the walls of the complex that houses the Archdiocesan offices and a seminary.

Sorin is there waiting for me. An amiable young man of great piety with an infectious smile, this dedicated member of the Archdiocese staff is an accountant and so much more. He has arranged my program for the next week and a half and will ensure that I receive the logistical support needed to accomplish my work.

We go to see Bishop Vasile, the archdiocesan hierarch who oversees mission activity. The Bishop is a man of vision with an understated demeanor and a loyal following of clergy and laity alike. Many regard this former abbot of one of Romania's most prominent monasteries as a living saint. The Bishop's kind eyes dance winsomely as we review my full schedule.

the brutalities of the Communist era could not extinguish the faith of Romania

I came to Romania to teach the Romanian Church some American youth ministry theories and techniques. We are going to make the most of the time that is available. Today is Wednesday and before I leave the following Friday, I will present three three-hour seminars covering youth ministry basics: two to clergy and one to college students and young adults. I will visit six different churches and a school and youth center, presenting ten sample youth ministry meetings and encouraging the formation of youth groups where they do not already exist. There will be two Hierarchical Divine Liturgies and lots of social eating.

The Romanian Church has a long and rich tradition. It has produced countless saints, monasteries that are spiritual treasure troves, and brilliant theologians. Even the brutalities of the Communist era could not extinguish the faith of Romania. For centuries the faith was passed through the family. Today there is no question that any young Romanian who worships regularly with his parents and practices the faith at home will benefit just as the children of past generations did.

Unfortunately, such young people are becoming the minority. And that is why I am here.

After the fall of Communism, secularism, consumerism, materialism, and the ideas of Western popular media began to influence Romanian society. Many in the Romanian Church believe that new approaches to youth ministry will help young people deepen their ties to Christ and His Church, especially those from homes where the Christian faith is only marginally practiced. Since American Orthodoxy functions and in many cases thrives in this type of hostile cultural environment, Romanians hope that we may have something valuable to offer them.

This trip has been six years in the making. In 2001, I led a mission team that ran a summer camp for Romanian at-risk adolescents for the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC). I saw then that the Church in Romania might benefit from greater exposure to American youth ministry techniques. It wasn't until 2003 that Bishop Vasile and I discussed the possibility of further collaboration and service to the Archdiocese of Cluj.

In 2004, I spent three weeks in Cluj, studying the language and building bridges. The next year I led another mission team, and in 2006 I returned alone to run a summer camp. By that time I saw that I could serve more productively by building youth programs. I had developed reasonable fluency with the language, gotten to know many Romanian church workers, and came equipped with years of youth ministry experience. Bishop Vasile liked the plan and here I am.

It's Wednesday evening and we've converted the nave of an urban church into a youth meeting room. (I guess there is at least one advantage to not having pews.) Some religion teachers brought their pupils to church and I've arranged 80 middle-school teens into two concentric circles. They scream with delight as they participate in one of my favorite large-group ice-breakers. When the game finishes we form one large circle on the floor. Next comes a skit, followed by a lively discussion. Then another game to break them up into smaller groups. They are given materials to encourage small group discussion. They are at an age when conversation comes hard but today they talk up a storm. One more game, this one with an implicit lesson, and then a wrap up discussion. An hour has elapsed since the opening and closing prayer but it seems like five minutes.

Their religion teachers approached me, "Where can we get material like that?" I give them my email and promise to send games and activities on a regular basis. It will be the first of many such requests.

On Friday morning I presented my second youth ministry seminar for clergy. About 15 of us are in the music classroom of the seminary. My computer is hooked up to an LCD projector and I've prepared an extensive lecture in Romanian addressing everything from the role of games in youth ministry to the basics of counseling. The three hours are over before we know it, and we head downstairs for a private lunch.

Sometimes they talk so fast that I can't follow

There is great camaraderie among the younger priests and they use this opportunity for lively discussions about a variety of topics. Sometimes they talk so fast that I can't follow. No problem. I'm grateful for the opportunity to tune out. In the past 44 hours I have done two hour-long parish youth programs and two three hour seminars.

As always, a translator works with me. Today Radu (a final year law student) bails me out of any linguistic jams. When doing the youth programs, the translator serves a double function. By giving me the freedom to teach entirely in English, it takes the outside expert phenomenon to a higher level. More importantly, teaching in American English implicitly counters the message that in order to be "modern" or "western" one must abandon Orthodoxy.

I go back to the apartment of my host family, Doru, Cristina and baby Maria (old friends who spent two years as faithful members of my parish in the States) long enough to brush my teeth and gather my materials. Sorin has arranged for someone to meet me in front of the bloc where I am staying and we take a cab to the parish of St. John the Evangelist.

We celebrate Holy Unction in a wooden building that houses this new congregation, headed by the charismatic and energetic young priest Father Calin. The evening sun bakes the A-frame church that is filled with wall-to-wall faithful. After the anointing we assemble the youth on the front porch of the church.

Like last night's group and two others that I would later encounter, this is more of a young adult gathering. I use this opportunity to explain that we are going to do an hour's worth of activities, the purpose of which is not simply to bolster the faith of tonight's participants. Instead, I want them to see that running a meeting like this requires no special training and I hope to inspire them to form a parish-based group like this for themselves and for teens and grade-schoolers.

The A-frame church is filled with wall-to-wall faithful

With the help of my translator, I run through a series of skits, games, and discussions, explaining my rationale and methodology every step of the way. They respond enthusiastically, and like so many other nights, after the meeting they compile a list of phone numbers and emails and make plans to form a group. As always, the hour flies by.

Sunday brings a day of extreme church. A two-and-a-half hour Hierarchical Liturgy is followed by an hour's worth of speeches honoring the birthday of a local professor. After a reception we head off to lunch at Bishop Vasile's residence.

Bishop Vasile

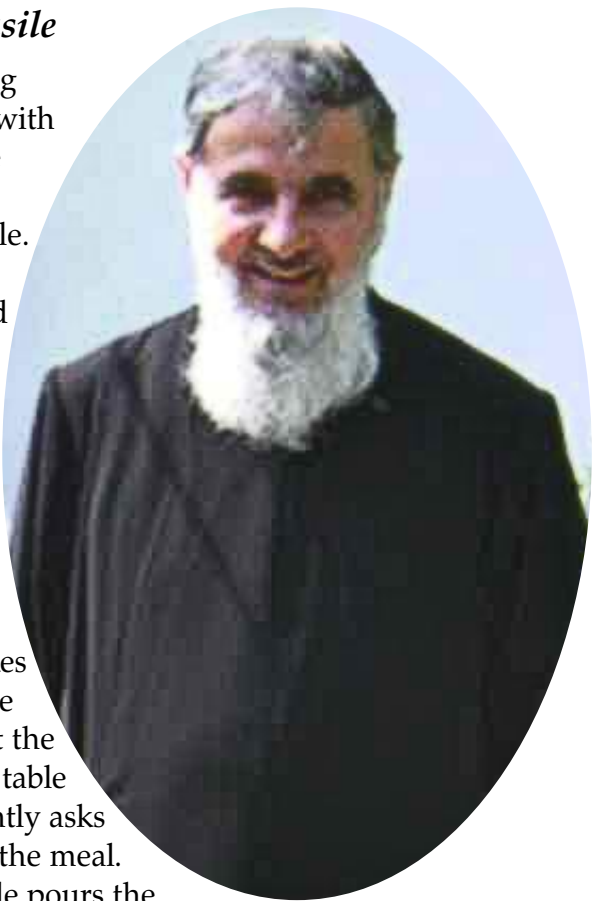
Every dining experience with this humble man is unforgettable. Sure the food is good (a nun prepares a monastic cuisine that is simple but delightful), but the Bishop makes it special. He rarely sits at the head of the table and frequently asks me to bless the meal.

Bishop Vasile pours the drinks and insists on serving himself last. His humility and piety are not a show. He is known for giving the money he receives to the poor.

We talk about the Church, plans for the future, the priesthood, and so much more. As I pour out my heart to him, I understand why the Bishop is such a renowned confessor. He is a good listener and is careful to speak slowly enough for me to understand him.

After lunch we are driven to the underground church at the University. Yes, this church is really underground. Romanians often build their sanctuaries from the bottom up. They dig a basement and set up worship. As money comes in, they build the above ground part of the church — a process that can take years. We are there for a wedding of two young people that I know well from summer camps past.

The well-loved and wildly popular Father Ciprian leads the “Students’ Church” and the local chapter of the church organization for college students and young adults. Today Father Ciprian will not celebrate. Instead he and his iconographer wife will serve as sponsors — a role they have filled many times before for other couples.



Father Ciprian and Preotesa Corina

Father Ciprian and Preotesa Corina are the real deal. With laughing eyes and rosy cheeks, Father is a cross between a young Santa and everyone’s favorite uncle. It is no wonder that he is the spiritual father of hundreds. Preotesa’s thoughtful spirituality, reputation as a gifted painter of icons, and chic but understated elegance command everyone’s attention when she is present in a room. I feel blessed to be able to call them friends.

After the wedding I am whisked off by another former camp co-worker to have dinner with her parents and younger brother, another old camp pal. On the way we stop for Vespers at the neighborhood church. Mercifully, no program is scheduled.

I’ve known this priest for a couple of years and he attended my first seminar on Thursday. I’m not very certain if he was cool with the content of my lecture. Vespers ends and Father announces, “After he gives a brief sermon, Father Aris will lead a program for our youth.”

I groan inwardly. I’m tired and have no materials with me. I put on my best face, size up the group, and plan the events that will consume the next 60 minutes. Winging it has become second nature over the past few days. Every time I show up at a church, I have no idea what the size or composition of my audience will be. I assume that this evening will not be that much different. But it is.

The priest is so taken with the program that at its conclusion he insists that those present make a covenant to meet again as soon as possible. They agree to meet the following night. (I was told that after that meeting they agreed to meet again seven days later.) What I first regarded as a hassle





Soviet-style "blocs" are renewed from the inside by Romania's rising middle class.

has become an enormous blessing. Tuesday morning I attend a school that is planning to start an after school program to keep kids off the streets. The priest and his assistant ask for my take on their plan. We chat and brainstorm for two hours, after which Father Claudiu runs me downtown for an audience with Metropolitan Bartolomeu. As Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Cluj, Vad, and Feleac and the Metropolitan of Cluj, Alba, Crisana and Maramures, Metropolitan Bartolomeu is the spiritual leader of millions. Even in his ninth decade of life, this scholar, preacher, liturgist and shepherd is still a commanding presence.

The Metropolitan blesses me and we sit across from his desk. He looks warmly at me with eyes that are crowned by eyebrows that remind me of Romanian haystacks. Like the Orthodox Church everywhere, news travels fast. The priests who sat through the seminars and witnessed the parish programs have been talking. His voice is like muffled thunder. "I hear 'Good News'," he puns. Sorin is with me. He can tell that the Metropolitan is pleased. Both of us breathe a sigh of relief.

It's Ascension Thursday and I'm standing around the altar of the Cathedral with five other priests, as Bishop Vasile stands at the head and two deacons execute their duties expertly. I've become accustomed to these VIP liturgies over the years. In 2005 I was one of seven priests who served Vigil and Liturgy at a monastery where 196,000 pilgrims had come for the Dormition of the Theotokos.

I feel less like a liturgical fifth wheel today. Even so, the young priest next to me whispers instructions

and I'm grateful. The Dean of the Cathedral and I are discretely visiting with each other. "How many years?" asks Father Octavian. "As what? A priest?" I respond. "No, in the States," he clarifies. All those mornings of getting up at 4:30 a.m. to study Romanian have paid off.

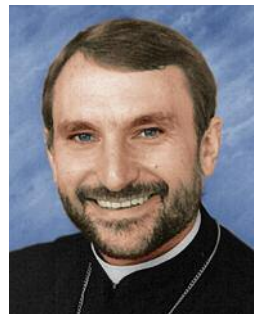
After Liturgy, Calin, Bishop Vasile's driver, takes me, two other clergy, and three seminarians to the Heroes' Cemetery for a religious civil ceremony honoring Cluj's war dead. Calin is a theology school grad with the personality of Mister Rogers and the driving skills of James Bond. Calin, the Bishop, and I have logged many miles together over the past four years that I have come to regard him as my little brother. One memorial service, two speeches, and a dozen wreath layings later, we go back to Bishop Vasile's for one last lunch.

At table with the Bishop and me are Calin and Sorin. It's a bittersweet moment. The past nine days have flown by. So much has been accomplished, but there is so much left to do. I have a family back home and I miss them terribly. But the men at this table and the three people at the bloc in Manastur have become a second family. As usual, the Bishop asks me to bless the meal. Tears are welling up and I can barely get the prayer out.

We visit. We recap the trip. We make tentative plans for a similar mission in May 2008. I promise to send youth ministry materials to Sorin for distribution. The Bishop has a gift for me, an exquisite icon of the Theotokos and a magnificent stergar, the cloth that is draped over icons in a Romanian home. Since it's a feast, we have a fried fish as the main course and ice cream and honey dew melon for dessert.

After lunch, Calin runs me up to Doru and Cristina's where we spend a melancholy evening of goodbyes. "Thank you for doing so much for Romania," says Doru.

"No. I thank Romania for helping me to learn what it really means to be a priest."



—Rev. Aris Metrakos
Pastor, Holy Trinity Church
Columbia, SC

Written for www.orthodoxytoday.org

THE NATIONAL CLERGY RETREAT

"Nourish your heart...engage your mind...connect in conversation."

Sponsored by the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council in an ongoing effort to provide continuing education and spiritual formation to the clergy of the Archdiocese

The Priesthood: Integrity and Transformation

October 2nd, 3rd and 4th, 2007

LOCATION: Antiochian Village, 130 Church Camp Trail, Bolivar, PA 15923 - (724) 238-3677

FEATURED SPEAKERS: His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios and Father Vasilios Thermos

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Tuesday, October 2, 2007.....Check-in begins at 3:00 PM

Afternoon arrivals may enjoy the Antiochian Village Facility: Camp Grounds with shrines to St. Thekla and St. Raphael of Brooklyn, Museum, Bookstore, Fitness Room, or visit historic Ligonier, PA.

5:30 pm.....Vespers

Welcome by Father Steven Tschlis, APC President

6:00 pmDinner

7:30-9:00 pmOpening Session

His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios
"Discipleship and Priesthood"

9:00 pm.....Snack and free time.

Confessions & Mentoring

Wednesday, October 3, 2007

8:30-9:00 amOrthros

9:00-10:00 am.....Breakfast

10:00-11:00 am.....Session Two: Fr. Vasilios Thermos

"Pastoral Relationships, Self-knowledge & Spiritual Maturity"

11:00-11:30 am.....Break

11:30 am-12:30 pm.....Session Three. Fr. Vasilios Thermos

"Psychological Aspects of the Priestly Family"

12:30-1:30 pmLunch

2:00-6:00 pmAfternoon Excursions

6:00 pm.....Dinner

7:30-9:00 pmPresentation by Fr. Michael Kontogiorgis & Pane

Discussion: "Pastoral Dilemmas and Personal Integrity"

9:00 pm.....Compline

9:30 pm.....Snack and free time.

Confessions – Mentoring

Thursday, October 4, 2007

8:00-10:00 am.....Divine Liturgy

Final comments by Fr. Vasilios Thermos

10:00-11:00 am.....Brunch

11:30 amDepart for Airport

RETREAT HIGHLIGHTS

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON EXCURSIONS

Option 1: Flight 93 Memorial Site and Johnstown, PA

Visit the Flight 93 Memorial Site where just a few heroes overcame the power of evil as they lost their lives for our country on 9/11. People have commented that visiting this ground is a very "moving" experience. Hop on the bus again for a beautiful short drive to Johnstown, PA. Enjoy the view of the Conemaugh River Valley from atop the Johnstown Inclined Plane- the world's steepest vehicular incline built in 1901. Have an ice cream cone at the top of the observation deck before you depart for the drive back to Antiochian Village. The drive over the mountain, one of the highest points in Pennsylvania, is amazing in the Fall.

Option 2: Frank Lloyd Wright's Falling Water

Travel a distance on the Laurel Highlands Scenic Byway from the charming town of Ligonier, through the horse country of Rolling Rock, to the architectural gem of Frank Lloyd Wright's Falling Water. The drive alone is considered one of the TOP TEN most scenic sites in the Laurel Highlands, and it will only be enhanced by the changing color of the leaves in October. Frank Lloyd Wright's Falling Water, which is built directly over a waterfall, is named one of the "50 places of a lifetime" by National Geographic Traveler Magazine. Falling Water exemplifies Wright's concept of organic architecture: the harmonious union of art and nature.

Option 3: Golf at Champion Lakes Golf Course

There will be an additional cost for this option. Greens fees paid at the time of play.
\$40.00 - 18 holes w cart; \$25.00 - 18 holes no cart; \$21.00 - 9 holes w/ cart

CONFESSION & MENTORING SESSIONS

Also available will be experienced and seasoned clergy to offer confessions or time for pastoral counsel, mentoring and advice.

RETREAT COSTS

Single Room: \$350. Double Room: \$300. Triple Room: \$250.

Room costs include all meals and lodging, airport transportation, and choice of an outing on Wednesday. NOTE: Golf requires additional cost.

DRIVING DIRECTIONS

See the Antiochian Village Website: www.Antiochianvillage.org

QUESTIONS

Call Fr. Jerry Hall at 330-434-0000

Email: frhall@annunciationakron.org



'The Presbyter'

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*Clergy email addresses provided by the Archdiocese.
Contact the Archdiocese for updates or changes.*

NATIONAL CLERGY RETREAT

“Nourish your heart...engage your mind...connect in conversation.”

Sponsored by the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council

Antiochian Village, 130 Church Camp Trail, Bolivar, PA 15923

October 2nd, 3rd and 4th, 2007

REGISTRATION

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip Code:** _____

Phone: _____ **Cell phone:** _____

Email: _____

Parish Name: _____

Room Choice: ___ Single (\$350) ___ Double (\$300) ___ Triple (\$250)

Roomate choices: 1) _____ (double)

2) _____ (triple)

Excursion Choice:

___ 1. **Flight 93 Memorial Site and Johnstown, PA**

___ 2. **Frank Lloyd Wright's Falling Water Tour**

___ 3. **Golf at Champion Lakes Golf Course**

Flight Information: **Airline:** _____

Flight No. _____ **Arrival Time:** _____

(Important for proper transportation scheduling)

Arrival: October 2, 2007

Transportation will be provided from Pittsburgh International Airport upon arrival. Schedule your arrival time for one of the following charter buses departing to Antiochian Village: 1:00 PM and 3:00 PM.

There will be a 5:00 PM shuttle for those arriving from the Western US. We ask those from the Central and East to try to use the 1:00 PM and 3:00 PM busses.

Departure: October 4, 2007

Plan for a 3:00 PM flight time or later. Busses will depart Antiochian Village at 11:30 AM to arrive in Pittsburgh at 1:30 PM.

Make Checks payable to: A.P.C.

and Send to: Fr. Jerry Hall / Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church

129 S. Union Street, Akron, OH 44304-1590

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 1, 2007

We need your registration information on time to properly plan this retreat!

DO NOT BE LATE!

OUR SPEAKERS

His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios

His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios is Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in America, Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Chairman of the Holy Eparchial Synod. He was consecrated as a Bishop on September 17, 1967. A long-time and beloved professor at Holy Cross Seminary, he was elected Archbishop of America on August 19th, 1999, by the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. He was enthroned as the spiritual leader of some 1.5 million Greek Orthodox Christians in America at the Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in New York City on Saturday, September 18th, 1999. He will be celebrating the 40th anniversary of his episcopacy in September, 2007.

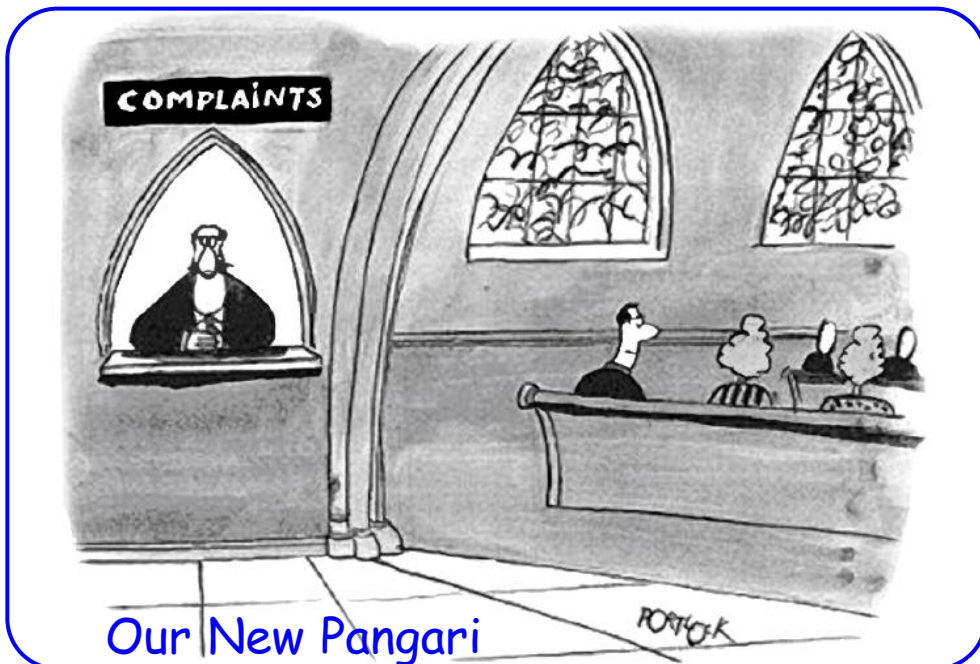


Fr. Vasilios Thermos

Father Thermos has served as a priest since 1986 in the Diocese of Viotia near Athens, Greece. He also works as a psychiatrist for children and adolescents in private practice. In additions, he has a Ph.D. from the Theological School of the University of Athens. His dissertation dealt with the psychology of priestly vocation. He has lectured as a Visiting Scholar at Harvard Divinity School, Boston College, and Andover Newton Theological School.

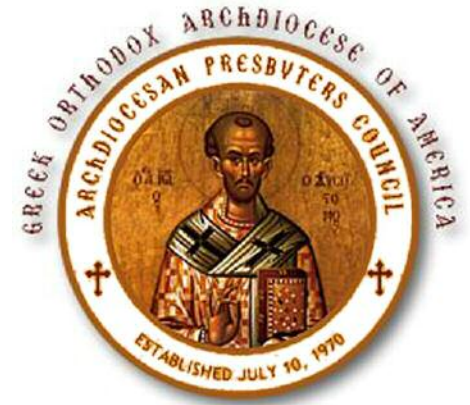


Fr. Thermos has written 19 books and has lectured extensively on subjects pertaining to the well-being of clergy and their families, as well as working actively in the field of clergy preparation and training. He is married and has two daughters.



The Presbyter

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A.P.C. 2006-2008

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