



Fall Newsletter 2023

VESTNIK

News from the frontlines of our Church

Dear <Informal Salutation>,

I hope that your day gets brighter when you glance through this newsletter. Because none of the things below would have been possible without your help!

You are bringing the Light of Orthodoxy to Indonesia

Sometimes in America, we think we have a hard time being Orthodox in a non-Orthodox country.

But we don't know the half of it!

Fr. Aleksander Kobesi is a ROCOR priest in Bali, Indonesia, which is 87% Hindu and 10% Muslim. That may sound like a tough environment to preach the Gospel in, and it is! But thanks to you, incredible things are happening!

This summer, Fr. Aleksandr met a young Hindu man named Kadek. Just 20 years old, Kadek found out about Holy Orthodoxy online and wanted to become a Christian. Now he has been to church several times and Fr. Aleksandr is guiding him as a catechumen. But there are perils – and heartbreak – involved.



Here is what Fr. Aleksandr writes:

“His father, mother, and brothers did not allow him to convert to Christianity. Converting from Hinduism to Christianity is not an easy matter, because he had to leave his extended family and sever ties with his extended family. This takes courage from a Hindu. There are two consequences of this: first, a Hindu is no longer recognized as a member of his family; and second, the presence of the Orthodox Church is considered an enemy by Hinduism because it is considered to Christianize Hindus. This is one of my challenges in introducing Orthodox teachings in Bali.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ said, “He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”

*Kadek wants to be worthy of the Lord,
even if it means his family will disown and disavow him.*

There is real danger here, too; anti-Christian violence in Indonesia has been on the rise over the past several years. Fr. Aleksandr knows the danger, and remembers the words of Christ:

“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Mathew 10:16).

Your donations are helping Fr. Aleksandr bring souls to Christ. He is taking the risks, but he needs your help to survive and grow the Church:

“This is the impact of the financial assistance of donors. I have to walk to get many souls to be saved. Donor assistance has had a profound impact on our Orthodox mission in Bali. We really need your support!”

Please support the ROCOR Mission in Bali, and remember Fr. Aleksandr and Kadek in your prayers!

Your Donations Are Helping the Suffering in Ukraine

Even though the present conflict started just a year and a half ago, thanks to you, the Fund for Assistance has been able to help those suffering in Eastern Ukraine for almost ten years! Because of kind people like you, we've been able to help thousands of people, providing food and supplies through the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.



On Sunday, June 25, a benevolent concert was even held in the cathedral hall of the Synod of Bishops in New York City to benefit those in need and victims of the war in Ukraine! All funds raised were directed to those in need through the FFA.

Here is just one example:

Maria sent a video thanking FFA donors like you for helping her and her son get the aid they needed the most. Maria's 30-year-old son Alexander was born with cerebral palsy. This means that muscle movement is severely limited and he can't survive without help. He is completely dependent on his mother. Moreover, because of the constant stress he's been living under for the last two years of chaos and war, Alexander desperately needed at least 10 sessions of therapy.

The great news is – he got it! But *only* thanks to you.

You probably know that thanks to **YOU**, the Fund for Assistance is the largest single source of Orthodox-affiliated humanitarian aid in Ukraine today. Because we send your generous gifts to the people we know, the aid gets to the people who need it, rather than ending up in someone's pocket. Alexander is one of these people who received your help.

Today, his mother says that because you paid for her son's therapy sessions, he is calmer, more independent, and more relaxed. You have made a huge difference in this family's life.

Because of you, people like Alexander in Ukraine are discovering hope and receiving the help they need.

You Are Providing Nutritious Meals for School Girls in Bethany

Decades of strife in the Holy Land have resulted in terrible levels of poverty, leaving many children with inadequate living conditions, schools, or even something to eat. We know the particular love our Lord had for children, saying:

“Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Our nuns in the Holy Land have taken these words of the Savior to heart, and run the Bethany Girls' School since 1937. Here many local Palestinian girls – Orthodox and Muslim alike – are given a quality Orthodox education. Local families whose children are enrolled know the value of the School and help support it when they can, but it isn't always enough.

Mother Maria, the abbess, shares how important YOUR support is to the School:

“All of the funds you have given to us came at a very important time, and were very helpful.”

In addition to learning, the Bethany School offers a sanctuary from the chaos outside, food for the students, a medical clinic, and – in some cases – a place to live for girls with no home. The nuns even run a summer camp, so that there is no gap in the care being given to their students.



“Your donations have allowed us to open a small canteen that we built at the School in order to provide our students a healthy breakfast and some snacks – sandwiches, juice, milk, fruit, and vegetables. More than that, we have a Christian family here in Bethany with three girls who are students in our School... The family was struggling financially and running the canteen was a source of income for them.”

“I am really thankful to all of you who have participated. You made a real difference. Thank you!”

You Helped a Mission Keep its Church in Korea

One of our ROCOR missions was about to be thrown out on the street...



Fr. Paul Kang from the Korean Orthodox Mission (South Korea) contacted us and told us that their mission was four (4!) days away from being thrown out of their church...

For many years, the mission was self-sufficient, funded by its own clergy. Seeing how difficult poverty was for the mission and for his father, who was the priest at the time, the current head of the mission, Fr. Paul Kang, focused on his education, got a Ph.D. in Physics, and became an entrepreneur.

Fr. Paul (mostly) single-handedly supported the work of the mission, as well as book translation and publication for several years. But his business went bankrupt and – since he was supporting it on his own dime – so did the mission.

They have their own priest, several readers, and a growing community of parishioners – comprised of native South Koreans, as well as Russians. They serve in Korean with a little bit of Slavonic.

Thanks to generous people like you – we collected over \$20,000!!!

Fr. Paul was able to pay the rent and have some money left over!

This would never have happened if it hadn't been for your kindness and willingness to help your Orthodox brothers and sisters – even as far as South Korea!

*“He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord.
And that which he hath given will He pay him again” (Proverbs 19:17).*

Orthodoxy is Surviving in Haiti – Thanks to YOU

Matushka Rose Legouté is the widow of Priest Gregoire Legouté, one of the first two ROCOR priests in Port-au-Prince. She's currently our main contact with the ROCOR Mission in Haiti.

She wrote us a long e-mail about what's going on in Haiti and the mission there. It sounds like a terrifying place to try to survive. Some notes from her e-mail:

“There is no legitimate power at the moment in Haiti, power is in the hands of groups who resort to violence and materially occupy the spaces of power.

*“People are **leaving the country** in droves – **trying to get away** from the **violence**, the **hunger**, and to avoid **being forced to take up arms** by the militant gangs.”*

Meanwhile, our small Orthodox population refuses to give up. Their life is nothing like they could have ever imagined: Violence in their streets. Universal poverty. Constant danger. Constant hunger. Unrelenting uncertainty.

To quote the UN, “Haiti is on the verge of an abyss...”



Their misery is absolute. They used to survive on 2 dollars a day. Now even 1 dollar seems like riches. But... they are determined to go on.

They are determined to keep their parishes going, to keep educating their children, to keep the Orthodox Faith, and to work out their salvation – in fear and trembling – for their lives, as well as their souls.

The last several months (and years... OK, not years – decades) have been horrible in Haiti. But what's going on now is worse than anything the country has yet seen.

And then we turned to you...

We needed to collect \$10,000 to meet the needs of the Haitian Mission, but thanks to your generosity, *we raised over \$13,200 in just days!*

The kindness of generous donors like you is just the medicine the world needs today. This would have been impossible without your help.

This money will help the Orthodox School in Port-au-Prince continue functioning, pay the teachers' salaries, provide for some educational materials, and even pay for school lunches for the kids.

May the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you always! (Num. 6:26).

<Informal Salutation>, if you had time to glance through this letter, I hope you were struck with two beautiful things:

1. How much even a small donation can accomplish!
2. How many people are praying for you!

Thank you for all that you do for our Church!

May God shield your loving heart with His love in return for your beautiful kindness!

With love in Christ,



Mark Selawry
FFA President

P.S. If you know anyone who – like you – wants to help our Church, please share this letter with them. And thank you for putting your faith into action by helping the amazing people above.

Patrick's will says a lot about him. What does yours say about you?

A few years ago, a wonderful man named Patrick (William) Brien, from Somerville, New Jersey, left a bequest for the Fund for Assistance before he went to be with God.

Seven years later, Patrick's bequest to the Fund for Assistance is helping to shape the history of our whole Church. It is thanks to remarkable persons such as Patrick that the Fund for Assistance is able to continue its important work – vitally helping hundreds of our Church members, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and making our Church stronger year by year.

In fact, some of the things in this newsletter were accomplished thanks to the funds Patrick left us.

Order your free bequest guide today to see how easy it is to leave a gift that will strengthen your Church for generations to come. Call us at 917-817-2925 or e-mail info@fundforassistance.org