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Odoiporikon

Orthodox Mission in the East

Quarterly Newsletter of the Patriarchal Foundation of
the Far East Mission – Issue 73 October - December 2020



St. Nicholas Cathedral in Seoul snow-covered and decorated for Christmas

Christ is born, glorify Him!
Christ has come down from heaven, receive Him!
Christ is now on earth, exalt Him!

Christmas Message 2020

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

The grace and infinite mercy of God has blessed us to celebrate God's descent to earth this year as well, during which **"the Word became flesh and dwelt in us."** (John 1:14)

Human pride, which had brought humanity to despair, forced the Messiah to come into the world in ways of extreme humility. The cave, the manger of the animals, the poverty, the refuge, the passions, the humiliation of the crucifixion, were all endured by the God-man in order to help the wounded and fallen man realize that only through deep humility will he rise and be saved. **"Christ condescended once to become a human being, using all the lowly elements. And He did this in order to trample on human pride."** (St. John Chrysostom, EPIE. 6, 16)

For this reason, Christ comes and "dwells" only in the heart of a humble person. Only **"the poor in spirit"** gain the gifts of His Love. God who is **"rich in mercy"** (Eph. 2: 4) enriches us not with His wealth, but with His inexplicable **"emptiness,"** with His incomprehensible poverty. He gives the **"orthodox enrichment of theology"** not to the worldly rich, nor to the powerful and wise of this world, but to the **"fishermen of the Spirit,"** to the humble and pure at

heart. St. John Chrysostom comments poignantly on this incomprehensible mystery. He says: **"Christ emptied His glory, so that you might become rich, not with His wealth, but with His poverty. If you do not believe that poverty is the cause of wealth, think of our Lord, and you will have no doubt. Because, if He had not become poor, you would not have become rich. This is the amazing thing, that poverty has generated wealth."** (St. John Chrysostom, EPIE 19: 454)

"O Christ, what shall we offer You for your coming on earth as a Man for our sake"? We have nothing to offer you, but the crumbs of our weakness. Lord, as a loving Father you asks us: **"Child, give me your heart"** (Prov. 23:26). You are not asking for something external, e.g. our money, our belongings, but ourselves. You ask for the center of our psychosomatic existence, our heart, with its passions and weaknesses, in order to purify and sanctify it. Yet we, alas, repeatedly refuse to answer the redeeming call of Your unspeakable charity!

Lord, you stand outside the door of my heart and knock like a beggar. If I open to You, I know that You will enter, as you promised, and You will dine with me. I know very well that You will not have any requirements. You will dine with whatever I offer You, as long as it is taken from the



essence of “my crushed and humble heart” (Psalm 50:17). And You will remain in me forever, as long as I ask You with all the warmth of my heart: Lord, stay with me.

My beloved, as we are spending this Christmas in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, let us consider how many times the celebration of Christmas has passed, without us living and experiencing with deep awareness the truth that Christ comes “**to save humanity, whom He created as Philanthropos, as the God who loves humankind.**” How many times have we failed to make the necessary effort to protect ourselves and to put on a fight against the terrible virus of sin?! How many times have we approached the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist without repentance and a crushed

heart?! How many times have we allowed selfishness and ego to destroy our love for God and our neighbor?!

Let us, therefore, humble ourselves sincerely before Him and with repentance let us ask Him to come and be born and dwell in us.

On behalf of His Eminence Metropolitan Soterios of Pisidia, our Clergy, the Faithful, the newly-Illumined, the Catechumen and our collaborators in the Lord, I pray that you all will celebrate Christmas in good health and that our Lord Jesus Christ protects you from COVID-19. Have a blessed Christmas together with your loved ones!

With much love and honour in the Incarnate Christ,

† Metropolitan Ambrosios of Korea

Orthodox Apostolic Ministry of Holy Metropolis of New Zealand



My Beloved Brothers,

it is my humble hope that the joy of our Incarnate Lord Jesus Christ will always rise in your hearts and that that joy will overflow into your works and your lives.

Along with my humble wishes I send along a booklet containing a brief report on the Orthodox Mission endeavor which is taking place in the Pacific Islands: Fiji, Tonga and Samoa. These are areas which have only just received the light of the Gospel in the past few years, after the inspired and love-filled efforts of our reverend predecessor, Metropolitan Amfilochios the Metropolitan of Ganou and Hora, formerly of New Zealand, as well as those of the supporters and coworkers of our Sacred Metropolis.

Very soon I will send you a link which will take you to a beautiful documentary,

dedicated to that honorable Hierarchy, who laboured for the transmission of the Word of God to those areas where previously animism and magic reigned. The documentary was produced selflessly by two exceptional members of our Local Church, Angelo Giannoutsos and Anna Matsi. It was offered over to the discretion of the Sacred Metropolis so that it might inform and inspire, so as to be a tangible record of the work thus far accomplished inasmuch as the history of the Orthodox Faith in this far-flung corner of the world continues to be written.

Presenting to you the activities that we endeavor to sustain, we seek at the same time your prayerful, personal and economic assistance and help. We feel a sacred duty to continue this work of Mission. For this reason, we also ask that you not forget us in

your prayers. We also beg you to encourage and support those who potentially have the calling to Mission, whether Clergy or Laity. We invite whosoever have the strength to personally contribute to this work, transfusing the Orthodox way of life to the indigenous inhabitants, informing them by word and by deed of the Sacred Economy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, we ask that you support economically the work of our Sacred Metropolis. Our Local Church does not have an organic income sufficient to meet her operating expenses which approach around 10,000 Euros per month. We are almost entirely dependent upon the gifts of the faithful Christians. The monies that we seek will cover the needs of the children of our Saint Tabitha Orphanage in Fiji, the financial support of our priest, and the material needs of our Missionary and Sacred Parishes.

We are aware that the times that we are experiencing are beyond difficult. The COVID-19 epidemic and the economic crisis have limited drastically the possibility of supporting organizations and activities of a charitable and missionary nature. But even the smallest gift is significant to us.

I beg you please, do not forget us, the clergy and the laity of our Sacred Metropolis, in your prayers, especially those newly illumined brothers and sisters of ours. We humbly pray that our Lord who was Born upon the Earth to graciously bless both your life and to your work, granting to you health, length of days, joy and blessing, unto His Glory and to the Benefit of His Holy Church,

With love in Christ,

†Metropolitan Myron of New Zealand



The Flame of the Orthodox faith has been lit in the Pacific,

AND THE FIRE IS GROWING AND SPREADING.

Two thousand years after the Resurrection of the God-man Christ, here in the Antipodes we bow in reverence to the God of Love who wants "All Men to be saved and come unto the knowledge of the Truth" (Timothy 2:4).

Eleven years ago Metropolitan Amfilochios of NZ, lit the initial spark. He was the initiator, mainspring and the pillar of the Mission in the Pacific. Following in his footsteps in the way of Christ's Love, his Spiritual children, continue this walk inspired by his example. We humbly try to practise the presence of Christ in our daily life, to continue on and advance the work of the Orthodox Church so as to continue bringing the True Faith to the island nations of the Pacific.

Could it be that Christ is calling you right now?

IF HE IS, LET US KNOW!

ST TABITHA HOME IN FIJI

Next to our Holy Trinity church in Saweni, Fiji, we have also established an Orphanage/Children's Home dedicated to St. Tabitha which since 2015 has operated in cooperation with the Fijian Ministry of Social Welfare. Over the last five years, over fifty children have been in our care in St. Tabitha Home. We currently house around twenty-five children, in a modern, fit for purpose, fully staffed facility. Our aim is not only to house these children, but to provide them with an education and a loving and supportive environment in which they can flourish and grow. Adjacent to our Children's Home, we have constructed a small hall for the new kindergarten which will open soon. The ongoing costs of running the Children's Home are around NZD 6,000/month.

This sum covers the direct day to day expenses: food, electricity, clothing, schooling and the cost of payment for staff and tutors. The nuns who care for the children do so unpaid, and dedicate themselves to this mission out of love for Christ and for the children. Funds raised are used to support our children's home, their education, our priests, our monasteries, housing and transportation and, in the event of natural disasters, for community relief.

All those who come to serve in the Apostolic Ministry of our Metropolis are people whose first priority is to serve God and His Church without the offer of salary or financial compensation. 100% of the money you donate goes directly to our programmes. All of our administrative team are volunteers, which keeps our overheads low.

Since 2009 with the help of God, across Oceania, we have baptised hundreds of people, and many are being catechised. Our Church has purchased properties throughout the Pacific, in the two main islands of Fiji and in the main island of the Kingdom of Tonga, Tongatapu; and in Apia the capital of the Samoan Islands.

We have built and established six churches, so far, for the Liturgical assembly of the locals:

- Four in the Fijian Islands with two more churches planned in the near future.
- Two churches in Kingdom of Tonga in Nuku'Alofa.
- In Apia, Samoa we have purchased a plot of land and the church of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John is scheduled for the future.



THERE IS NO GREATER BLESSING THAN TO SERVE OUR BELOVED BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN THEIR NEED.

Our goal as a Metropolis is to share the Gospel and Love of Jesus Christ within the Island nations of Tonga, Fiji, and Samoa, and also to reach out in support to the people of these islands. According to our strength, we strive to lift them up, whether from poverty or from harsh circumstances. Moreover, to provide the means for the people we serve to live in true Christian community. Sometimes our work is as simple as extending a helping and loving hand.



The Gospel of Christ prompts us to visit the sick, to comfort those who mourn, to clothe the naked, to reconcile those who are in conflict, to visit those in prison and to work for their release, to shelter the orphan, to support the widow or single mother, to help others to find work.

Since the inception of the Mission we have supported dozens of children through their education in Fiji. In addition, three boys are being funded to continue their education in Greece, and one is currently training in New Zealand. Our focus on education is a priority. At this very moment we are working on plans to establish the first Orthodox Primary School in the Islands of Fiji.



DONATE SUPPLIES

At different stages of each project there are specific needs. Please get in touch if you would like to make an in-kind donation.



DONATE YOUR TIME & SKILLS

From website design to cooking or building, we have a need for every skill. Please get in touch with us if you can offer some of your time and talent to help our mission.



DONATE MONEY

Every little bit helps. 100% of the money you donate goes directly to our mission programmes.



DONATE PRAYER

Last but not least, please remember us in your prayers. A prayer is an expression of love and every good deed starts with prayer.

<https://orthodoxpacific.com/>

As ministers, diakonos even, we understand that we come to each new place and each unique person in humility of service as Christ Himself who gave the perfect example.



FIJI FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT 2019

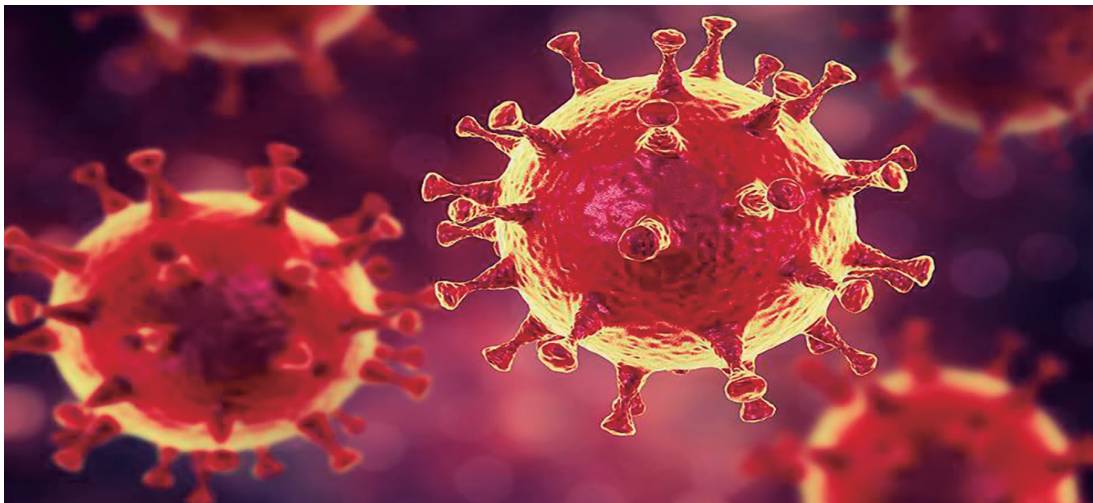
- DONATIONS 173,630NZ
- FOR ORPHANAGE -61,051NZ
- FOR CLERGY STIPENDS -26,432NZ
- FOR BUILDING, OPERATION & MAINTENANCE EXPENSES -43,157NZ
- FOR TRAVELLING EXPENSES -14,980NZ
- FOR PHILANTHROPIC ACTIONS -14,450NZ

God-abandonment and the “Heavenly Penance” of COVID-19

From the Fall of Adam and Eve and their exile from Paradise until the coming of the Messiah, Christ’s incarnation and saving actions in history, innumerable centuries passed. All this time, it seemed as if God had abandoned humanity to our tragic, unredeemed fate.

absent from our lives. What actually happens is that many times God is not seen. If, in reality, He had departed from us, then we all would have been lost at once. Without God’s grace, no one can live.

One way or another, all people experience the apparent abandonment from God. Just



Yet, this is not true. God never forsook the creation of His hands. With paternal affection, He followed the course of humanity on earth and from time to time sent messages of His presence, through His Angels, His Prophets, His miraculous interventions, His pedagogical trials, thus cultivating systematically and patiently the longing for God and quest for a Savior in the hearts of post-fallen humanity. The fall and rebellion of the first human beings against their Creator was so great that it took a long time to prepare subsequent generations to receive the expected Messiah.

In our time, the great evil of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused many people to feel abandoned by God. Many believe that God has forsaken us. However, while God may seem to be hiding for pedagogical reasons, He never really abandons us. His grace is never

as we sometimes experience intensely the presence of God within us, we also experience, at times, His temporary absence. This happens, in part, in order to humble us and teach us to base our spiritual progress not on our own strength, but solely on God, who told us, **“without me you can do nothing”** (John 15: 5).

It is characteristic and instructive for all of us that, in His human nature, Christ also experienced God’s abandonment as he suffered on the Cross. For this reason, He cried out in a loud voice: **“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”** (Matt. 27:46)

The tragedy of today’s pandemic can be understood as a “heavenly penance,” through which we may come to our senses and amend our ways. Just as an earthly father may reprimand his child to teach him how to

live rightly, so also may our Heavenly Father allow an ordeal like this in order to awaken us from our apostasy, unfaithfulness, and egoism.

The term “**penance**” can mistakenly be associated with punishment, thus portraying God as an avenging sadist. Our Church, however, uses the term “penance” not to denote a punitive act, but a healing one stemming from the inexpressible charity of God and His Church toward the spiritually sick person. As is well known, the canons and penances used in the Orthodox Church are not “cannons” that kill, but medicines that cure spiritual illness, aiming at the holistic health of the person.

The pandemic is a test that we must accept in obedience to Christ. We must humbly acknowledge our sinfulness and admit with contrition, that “**we are justly punished for what we have done**” (Luke 23:41). We must not, by any means, detach this trial from Heaven. For is it possible that the whole of humanity would endure such a trial without God’s permission? Is it possible that the new coronavirus is superior in power and authority to the Triune God of Love? No, of course not; but how should we respond?

First, we must accept this “heavenly penance” prayerfully. Let us raise our hands to Heaven and ask with tears our Merciful Lord to “shorten” the days of our trial (cf. Mk 13:20). Second, we are to accept the “heavenly penance” pedagogically. That is, to believe absolutely that this pandemic is a blessed teaching tool of infinite love for our salvation. Nothing that God allows in our lives does not have a salvific orientation. Third, we are called to face the “heavenly penance” with **repentance**. There are countless examples from the Bible and the life of the Church that confirm the fact that sincere repentance affects God greatly and is even capable of changing His decisions. A great example is the authentic repentance of the Ninevites, for whom only

three days were enough for God to change his mind and not to destroy their city (Jonah 3: 1-10). St. John Chrysostom mentions that, in this event, “**God ‘lies,’ going back on His word, out of love for humanity**”! If we were to say like the Ninevites, with a repentant heart: “**Lord, stop Your wrath, as we have stopped the error; stop the punishment, like we have stopped evil. You have educated us with fear, so give us time to prove our love for You,**” then we can be sure that through our sincere repentance, God will also “repent” (Jonah 3:10) and remove the “heavenly penance” from us.

One may ask: So should we do nothing to protect ourselves from the new coronavirus and leave everything to the Providence of God? Certainly not. We will follow the rules of hygiene, we will consult the doctors, we will take medicines, we will get vaccinated, and we will observe the safety measures recommended by health experts. After all, “**God has appointed the doctor in his function and that is why we must honor him. The Most High gives knowledge to the physician to heal; The Lord created medicines from the earth and a sensible man will not loathe them**” (Wisdom of Sirach 38: 1,2,4). Nevertheless, we must above all, turn our minds and hearts to the “physician of our souls and bodies” and ask Him to “speak only one word” (Matt. 8: 8) in order to get rid of this terrible scourge.

In these difficult times we are experiencing as a global human community, God, through our repentance, will bend to the sighs of our heart, because it is not possible for Heaven to remain apathetic to the drama of the earth. The sooner we acknowledge our mistakes, and the more sincerely we repent, the sooner God will resolve the “heavenly penance” and by His grace we will head into the post-COVID-19 age.

† M. A.

Pastoral Care for Orthodox Students in Korea Amid COVID-19



Apart from all the other difficulties we faced in 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were prevented from conducting our annual winter and summer camps.

Instead, last October, when the restrictive measures became more flexible, we were able to organize three-day camps in our Parishes.

The central theme of these camp meetings was "Our freedom in Christ". In his introductory speeches, HE Metropolitan Ambrosios of Korea stressed the value of freedom, saying, among other things, the following:

"Freedom is God's greatest gift to man. We humans love freedom because we are created free by our Creator. Therefore, we rightly protest and rebel when we lose our freedom,

because life without freedom is hell.

Yet, when some people hear that we are created free, they argue that in reality we are not free, because we are constrained by God's commandments. Can it be that the Law of God is a restriction on our freedom? Certainly not! On the contrary, it is a protection of our true freedom, so that we may not become slaves to our passions, the devil and people.

The apostle Paul clearly teaches us: "Christ set us free so that we might be free. Therefore remain steadfast in freedom, and do not be brought under the yoke of slavery again" (Gal. 5: 1).

For a deeper understanding of freedom in Christ, the speaker used the following three examples:

First, as we all know, road signs and traffic lights in the streets do not exist to deprive drivers and pedestrians of their freedom, but to protect them from accidents and death.

Second, parents from an early age do not allow their children to do what they want. To them this seems to be a restriction on their freedom, because children cannot understand, due to their immaturity, their real interest. This is why they usually react, shouting or crying, because they want to do whatever they wish. Good parents, however, do not



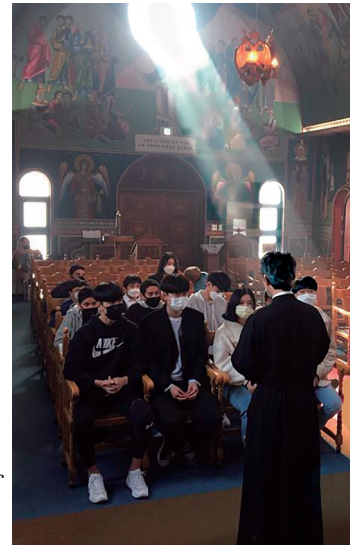
give in to their stubborn behavior and sometimes they need to use disciplinary measures.

Thirdly, during the Korean Civil War (1950-1953) a Greek soldier of the Greek Expeditionary Forces, the late Spyridon Mantzaris, found himself in the following difficult situation: A poor Korean boy, with the box of glaze loaded on his back, wanted to cross the Han River to go to the opposite

side. The Greek soldier, who was keeping guard on the frozen river, as shown in the historical photo below taken by an American soldier, did not allow him to do what he wanted, because if he went on the opposite side,

he would be killed by the Northerners. The boy did not understand the good intentions of the soldier, and so he protested by crying loudly. The soldier, as he himself told us many years after the incident, with pain of soul he tried to explain to him through body language, as they could not communicate in any other human language, that it was for his own good he would not allow him to cross the river. But, in vain. Eventually, however, he "deprived" him of his freedom by force, and saved the boy from certain death.

The same thing happens with us. The "no" of God is not a restriction of our freedom but the path to true freedom. Many times, we do not understand God's love or His loving protection. Also most of the time we do not understand the "language" of God so we cannot "communicate" with Him. Then God necessarily uses pedagogical measures in order for us to understand what



is best for us. But, unfortunately, many people do not understand the expediency of divine intervention and thus lose their trust in God. What certainly saves is holy obedience. "Let Your will be done". Thus, with the experience of spiritual life and our maturation through obedience, we slowly begin to understand God's charity and the work of Divine Economy for the preservation of our freedom in Christ."

During the three-day camp program, in addition to indoor and outdoor games, the discussions and other interesting events, the program also included the lighting of the candles of the Holy Altar, as part of a lesson on preparing the church before the common worship.

The children were also introduced to the book **"The visit to the loft"**, translated into

Korean by Mr. Christos Gousidis, which refers to the childhood of Saint Nektarios. The group reading of the book was followed by a commentary and relevant discussion.

Athanasia D. Kontogiannakopoulou



Visit of the Slavophones to the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Lord in Gapyong

On Sunday, November 15, 2020, approximately 40 Slavonic faithful accompanied by Rev. Fr. Roman Kavchak visited the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Savior in Ga-Pyong. They attended the Service of Matins and the Divine Liturgy, celebrated by His Eminence Metropolitan Soterios assisted by Fr. Roman. Following the Divine Liturgy, a meal was offered to everyone, during which His Eminence Metropolitan Soterios spoke to the faithful on a spiritual topic.

Later, all the Slavophones participated in the cleaning of the courtyard of the Monastery and helped with various other winter preparations.

We express to them our heartfelt thanks and gratitude for their love and efforts toward the embellishment of our Monastery.



The Feast Day of St. Dionysios in Ulsan



Glory to God who has made you our unsleeping intercessor! We thank God for the blessing to again celebrate the great feast of Saint Dionysios of Aegina, the patron saint of our Orthodox community in Ulsan. Through Saint Dionysios's continual prayers, our dear Metropolitan Ambrosios and Deacon Yohan were able to travel to Ulsan to lead our celebrations in the midst of the 3rd wave of COVID-19 here in Korea.

On Saturday afternoon women of our community lovingly decorated our church with flowers for the occasion and many other final touches were made to beautify our temple for the divine services. Great Vespers was offered in the evening with Artoklasia with the attendance of the local faithful Koreans and expatriates along with a few guests. His Eminence conveyed to us the touching and renowned story of Saint Dionysios's great forgiveness of the man who killed the saint's own brother, and he also encouraged us to take this as an example of the continued forgiveness

and repentance that we need to strive for in our own lives.

On Sunday morning we continued the celebration by offering Matins and the Divine Liturgy. This year during the services we had the blessing of using 3 new hymns about the life of St Dionysios that were chanted for the first time in our temple! We look forward to singing these hymns in future years! After the divine services we had a gift exchange! As a special treat, Metropolitan Ambrosios offered a Christmas gift to all the children of our community. And our faithful offered gifts of congratulations and appreciation to Metropolitan Ambrosios and Deacon Yohan for the special sacrifice and love they have shown us.

We thank God for all his blessings in our lives including the cheerful celebration of our intercessor St Dionysios which prepares our hearts to joyfully celebrate the Incarnation and Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rev. Christopher Moore

CALL FOR HELP

The effort to build the holy church of the Dormition of the Theotokos in Jeonju along with the Community Center, which began last April with the help of God and of our Virgin Mary, has already progressed satisfactorily to date. The project is scheduled to finish next August. Therefore we kindly ask those who can help complete this sacred project, to submit their offer to the following special Bank Account:



SWIFT CODE : HVBKKRSEXXX

WOORI BANK

Adress : World Cup Buk RO 60 Gil 17, Mapo-gu, Seoul , South Korea

Account Number : 1005-602-591496

Orthodox Metropolis of Korea

Address : 43, Mapodaero 18-gil, Mapo-gu, Seoul, Korea

Tel : +82 2 362 6371

Donors will receive an official receipt as well as a thank you letter from the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea.



DONATION DEPOSITS

National Bank of Greece: Account Number: 040-296124-56

IBAN: GR6001100400000004029612456

Alpha Bank of Greece: Account Number: 473-002101-099272

IBAN: GR8901404730473002101099272

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**Lord Jesus Christ,
through the intercessions of Your Holly Mother
help us complete this sacred work,
so as to spread the Orthodox witness,
and glorify Your Holy Name.**



Members of the Church Council with some of the faithful of the Parish of the Dormition of the Theotokos in Jeonju, during their visit to the construction site of the church and the adjacent Community Center
