



## The Nativity of Christ & His Gift of Himself

Letter from Fr. Daniel Byantoro, the founder of the GOI (Indonesian Orthodox Church) and Dean of the Indonesian Orthodox Clergy

Dear Friends,

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

The self-offering of Christ on the cross for our redemption is possible only because of His assuming our human flesh from His human Mother at the time of His Nativity in Bethlehem. It is the voluntary act of self-giving and self-emptying (Philippians 2:5-6) of the Divine Self that our meaningless lives of sin could be made full by His Divinity. This is the essence of the purpose of the coming of Christ into the world. The Nativity can be understood in its fullness only in the light of the cross and the empty tomb, His self-sacrifice.

In Indonesia as in other Islamic cultures, there are two major feasts: Eid al-Fitr celebrated after the conclusion of the Ramadhan Fast, and Eid al-Adha celebrated after the conclusion of the Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) season. On Wednesday, November. 17, 2010, Muslims around the world celebrated Eid al-Adha, or feast of sacrifice, by slaughtering sheep and cattle in remembrance of Abraham's near-sacrifice of his son, Ishmael/Ismail, the ancestor of the Prophet Muhammad and the Arab world. In Orthodox Christianity, animal sacrifice has been superseded in Jesus Christ. Christ is the supreme sacrifice that was given by God in our place, just as the goat given

by God to Abraham was a substitute for his son, Isaac (Genesis 22: 10-14).

We participate in the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross through our faith expressed in baptism united in his death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6:3-11), and through our frequent participation in Holy Communion where we partake His Body and Blood (I Corinthians 10:16). Through our union in the Sacrifice of Christ, we are also told to offer the Sacrifice of ourselves in imitation of His Sacrifice, where we have to *".....continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the*

*continued on page 3*

## GOI Response to the Massive Mount Merapi Volcano

As you have probably heard, Mount Merapi, a large volcano in Indonesia, erupted last fall. It is a very active volcano and located near Orthodox parishes that have been affected. Though none of the churches were harmed, gifts from Friends of Indonesia have enabled the rebuilding of a damaged parishioner's house.

Presbytera Heleni (wife of Fr. Alexios), Presbytera Maria (wife of Fr. Markus), and Deaconessa Monica (wife of the late Dcn. Lukas) decided that they had to help too. They organized donations from the churches, and bought some items

with donated money from FOI to be used for the victims of the volcano which they distributed at a shelter.

These were distributed to a shelter which had been have trouble meeting all of the demands.



**LEFT PHOTO:** Deaconessa Monica on right, Shelter owner on left; **RIGHT PHOTO:** left to right, parishioner, Deaconessa Monica, Fr. Marcus, Owner, Pres. Maria, Pres. Heleni, Arif family (parishioners)

# Holy Resurrection Church in Papua Nearing Completion

The Church of the Holy Resurrection, a new Orthodox parish located in Jayapura, Papua New Guinea, is growing thanks to the hard work of its clergy and parishioners. Their clergy, Fr. Athanasius and Fr. Dcn. Chrysostomos, were both ordained in 2009.

The small parish is being built on Fr. Athanasius's ancestral land, the only thing that was left to him when he left his former position as a Baptist minister. When Fr. Daniel visited them during Lent, the building was nearly complete. Thanks to Friends of Indonesia, they were able to acquire more of what was needed, including a beautiful little silver cupola and some large icons for the iconostasis. The building includes the central church, two lean-to rooms for the cler-

ics' households, and a porch/kitchen for community meals and other social events.

The people of Papua are thirsting for more spiritual lessons and frequently come to Fr. Athanasius with questions. Presbytera Paraskeva is also very involved in evangelism among women and has developed her own tracts. Deacon Chrysostomos evangelizes among the educated as he works at a university where he has won many converts. They have also taken missionary trips into the jungles of their region.

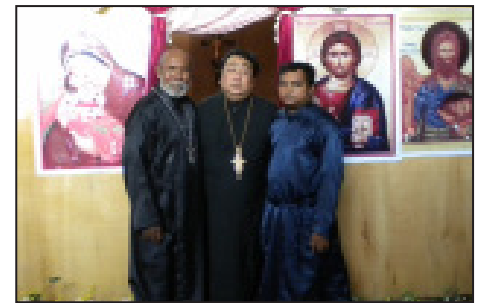
Meanwhile, Dcn. Chrysostomos has been actively seeking new ways to spread the Orthodox Christian faith throughout Papua, and beyond. Here is a recent report sent to Fr. Daniel Byantoro by Dcn. Chrysostomos:



Fr. Athanasius (left), Presbytera Paraskeva (right)



Dcn Chrysostomos (left), Fr. Athanasius (right)



Fr. Athanasius (left), Fr. Daniel (center), Dcn. Chrysostomos (right) in front of iconostasis with new icons

*Peace be to you, in the Name of Christ,*

*Dear Father, thank you for sending a translation of the prayer for the departed, I will give it to Fr Athanasius. Furthermore, as I had passed by you earlier, I have made the tract entitled, "Is the early Church still in existence?" I distributed 458 of them in booklet forms (with the size of 10 x 15 cent.), as the first step to introduce the Orthodox*

*Church to the land of Papua in a grand way. At present, we are making efforts to print it in a larger number. Out of the 458 tracts that we have spread, there are some people who responded to it seriously. Therefore, we request your prayers that we may be given wisdom as to how to follow up this result. This ministry*

*continued on page 4*

## Priests Embark on Training Mission

Currently, our vice-president of GOI, Fr. Alexios Cahyadi, and Fr. Dionysios S.Halim, from our mission to Sumatra,

are on a training mission in Australia by the blessing of Metropolitan HILARION. The purpose of the training

is to train the priests more deeply into a solid liturgical tradition. Other than Fr. Daniel, many of the priests in Indonesia have not had the experience of a full liturgical cycle. Since Fr. Daniel travels a lot and has a large number of parishes, he alone cannot ensure that all the parishes know enough to follow the complete liturgical cycle. Fr. Alexios and Fr. Dionysios will in turn be able to train other priests. The Indonesia Orthodox Church wishes to ensure that future generations will have a deeper, more consistent liturgical experience.



Fr. Dionysios and Alexios (left)



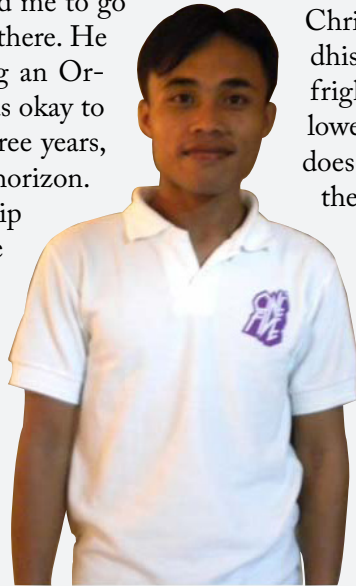
Fr. Dionysios (left), Fr. Alexios (right)

# From the Buddha to Christ—A Young Man’s Journey to the Ancient Christian Church

My name is Johan Trisanjaya. I am of Javanese ethnicity in Indonesia. I was born in 1982 in the village of Prigi in Central Java. I was raised in a Buddhist family; my father is a government servant and my mother is a house wife.

Most people in our village are Muslim, but many adhere to Buddhism. As a Buddhist, I was so active that I was appointed as the President of the Buddhist Youth Association. The essence of Buddhist teaching is “to love without limit”, where the law of deeds (“karma”) is emphasized, in which all our deeds in this life will bear fruit in our next re-incarnation. The love is not limited to only humans either, but in loving plants and animals too, since they could have formerly been human. When you die with a good karma you will be born in the next body in a high state of being. When you die with bad karma, you will be born either in a lower status of life in society, or even as an animal or in the demonic realm.

As I was about to start high school my cousin, Fr Alexios, came to my village and told me to go with him to Solo and to go to school there. He had been a Buddhist before becoming an Orthodox priest. I agreed. I felt that it was okay to be exposed to Christianity only for three years, because it would help to widen my horizon. I had always attended Church worship and gatherings, but I always sat at the back row since I felt guilty about being a Buddhist but praying as a Christian. Finally, out of my confusion, I left Fr. Alexios’s house and returned back home for two weeks without even a leave of absence from school. During these two weeks, I lost all direction in my life and felt confused. I began to act in a mindless way. I started to do



things that I have never done before to the surprise and embarrassment of my father since he is considered a pillar in society.

One day I felt as though someone whispered to me and commanded me to go back to Fr Alexios in Solo, so I went back. After some days in Solo, I began to learn about Orthodoxy again. I felt the urge to be baptized, and Fr. Alexios agreed. I was surprised that even though I did not go to school for two weeks I was not even reprimanded or punished by the school, as would be expected. After I was baptized with the baptismal name of “Johanes” (John), I have been helping the ministry of Fr. Alexios. In the year 2006, I was elevated by Metropolitan HILARION to “Reader.”

What I found liberating in Christianity is that Christ had defeated the power of death through His resurrection so that there are no more endless cycles of birth and death in re-incarnation, and it is no longer the law of karma that has power over you, but the power of grace through Christ’s victory over sin, death and the devil. The Buddhists are so frightened by karma, because they are frightened by the prospect of re-incarnation into a lower realm, but there is no fear of God, since God does not exist. But in order to achieve good karma there are so many difficult regulations and requirements to be achieved; it is as if there was no grace of God.

Having understood the beauty of the teaching of Orthodoxy, I now have a very strong desire to serve Christ, either as a priest or as a layperson. I am preparing myself to go to seminary either in Russia or in the United States in order to realize this dream. I have been spending time with Fr. Daniel during his last visit, driving him across Java and up to Bali. Please pray for me. Thank you.

*‘Nativity’, from page 1*

***fruit of [our] lips, giving thanks to His name.... not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*** (Hebrew 13:15-16). In this verse, it is said that “to do good and to share” is the real form of sacrifice, whereby “with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” Our living sacrifice to God is ongoing.

I am thankful that this ministry is one of the ways that you have chosen to participate in Christ’s sacrifice. As we journey

through this Advent season, preparing to join Christ liturgically as He begins his earthly ministry, I pray that you will continue to be ***“fellow workers for the truth”*** (III John 5-8) with us in this small part of Christ’s ministry on earth as we seek to reach out to the Indonesian people.

In Christ,

*Fr. Daniel Byantoro*

# YOUR HELP IS CRITICAL

Friends of Indonesia tries to faithfully communicate the progress being made by the Church in Indonesia, as in this newsletter, but we also need to clearly communicate that there are serious financial needs as well. Typically, Indonesian priests can secure only the most menial and low-paying secular employment, due to their obvious allegiance to Christ, and they all have families to support. Most of the Indonesian parishes must meet in the home of their priest because they cannot afford any sort of permanent, dedicated meeting place. With the help of generous Orthodox Christians in the US, we have been able to help a few parishes secure their own church buildings. There are many more parishes and newly planted missions that very much need assistance.

## MONTHLY PLEDGES & SUPPORT

While certainly any gift is more than welcome at any time, regular monthly pledges are particularly appreciated. Over time these small gifts add up quickly! Also, having pledges helps us budget our larger gifts to the Church in Indonesia.

Please consider making a monthly pledge, in any amount, and please take the time to pray for the Church in Indonesia every month as you fulfill your pledge.

## OTHER NEEDS—USED VESTMENTS & LITURGICAL ITEMS

One of the ways in which Orthodox Christians can help is by donating used, serviceable vestments and other liturgical items, such as chalice sets, censers, incense, oil lamps, etc. (Icon prints mounted on wood cost too much to ship, but high-quality paper icon prints are very appropriate.) Most Indonesian priests have no more than one set of vestments, and many do not have even one complete set. Please ask around at your parish, and spread the word among your friends in other parishes. Those interested in making a donation of used vestments or liturgical items should contact us first, either by email at [info@friendsofindonesia.org](mailto:info@friendsofindonesia.org), or by telephone at (410) 864-8007.

We are grateful for everything that has been sent so far!

*'Holy Resurrection', from page 2*

*is no small expense, even apart from our daily needs. We also plan to send the tracts to two other provinces coordinated by Fr. Presbyter Athanasius, namely the Province of West Papua and the Province of Maluku—West of Papua. We are building relationships with the Province of Maluku through my relatives in Maluku. We are also praying for financial assistance to meet the requirements for supporting this evangelistic work.*

*May God the Holy Trinity bless you, Father, with wisdom, strength and health to do this ministerial duty. Greetings from all the people in Papua.*

*Unworthy Secretary of the Parish of the Resurrection:  
Dcn. Chrysostomos*



**Friends Of Indonesia**  
**PO Box 9484, Baltimore, MD 21228**  
**[friendsofindonesia.org](http://friendsofindonesia.org)**

Friends of Indonesia exists to raise awareness and support for the Indonesian Orthodox Church. Our purpose is disseminate information about Indonesia, its history and culture, and about the Orthodox Church in Indonesia; and to encourage Orthodox believers to support the Church in Indonesia through their prayers and gifts.

Please contact us through the web site, or by calling (410) 864-8007. If you leave a message we will return your call promptly.