



REPORT FROM INDONESIA

Archimandrite Daniel Byantoro

Happy New Year!

For those of you who are new supporters of the Indonesian Orthodox Church, as well as for those who have been supporters for a long time, I would like to let you know what has been happening recently in Indonesia. Since our last newsletter, I have been back and forth between the US and Indonesia,

and want to report on events that took place during my most recent trip.

As you know, the mission field for the Orthodox Christian Church in Indonesia is ripe and waiting for the harvest. Although Christians in Indonesia evangelize and teach under difficult circumstances, the people themselves, in many of Indonesia's largest cities

as well as rural areas, are hungry to hear the Good News about our loving God, who took upon Himself our frail human nature in order to unite us with Himself.



God is constantly blessing the Indonesian Church with new opportunities, and each small opportunity seems to turn into a larger one. While still in the US, I met a person from Medan City, North Sumatra, through the Internet.

We chatted via email, and he eventually asked to become a catechumen. So I was determined to meet him in Medan, and he had assembled a group of interested friends. So Fr. Gregory and I flew to Medan, and stayed there for several days, teaching and preaching. On the Sunday we were there, Fr Gregory celebrated the liturgy alone, because we had brought only one Liturgical

vestment, but I was able to preach in my plain black cassock! The new mission community that has been formed there is named for St Sergius of Radonezh.

Spiritual Leadership of the Orthodox Church

Despite this type of success in evangelism, some of our most difficult trials have come, sadly enough, because of a lack of unity and purpose within the Orthodox Church. For the past year or so, I have had to be very cautious about letting my supporters know about my ecclesiastical status, due to my desire to protect the Indonesian Orthodox Church and her members from scandal and false accusations. However, the time has come for me to be completely open with those faithful believers who have been praying for and supporting this missionary effort, some of them for many years. After many years under another hierarchy, it became apparent that the Indonesian Orthodox Church would never be permitted to function as an indigenous church, nor to spread the Gospel to the Indonesian culture in an authentic and effective manner. So early in 2005, I was received under the spiritual protection of Archbishop Hilarion, who is the Archbishop of Australia and New Zealand for the

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

V. Rev. Fr. Gordon Walker

Dear Friend,

Having known Fr. Daniel Bambang Byantoro as a dear friend and co-laborer in Christ since 1985, and having helped him and his ministry to the best of my ability for over 20 years, I am very pleased to let you know, by means of this newsletter, of the new organization

that has been formed specifically to support his important missionary outreach: Friends of Indonesia.

In establishing this support organization we have adopted as our goal, "The Evangelization of Indonesia for the Holy Orthodox Faith". This is an immense and challenging goal! With approximately 285,000,000 people spread across 13,370 islands, some of them still largely dangerous jungle areas, others with tribes of indigenous and poorly

educated people, and over 538 separate dialects and languages, Fr. Daniel, the other Indonesian Orthodox clergy, and the Indonesian Orthodox faithful are faced with overwhelming difficulties. However, through your prayers and your sacrificial financial support, God is doing a mighty work in Indonesia, and we are privileged and blessed to have a small part in it.

In giving and praying for this ministry, we must see ourselves much like the

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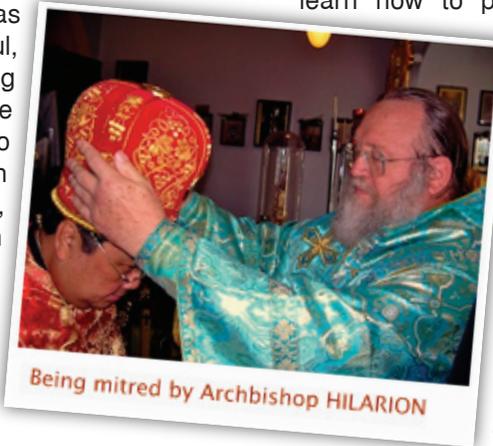
Russian Orthodox Church Outsides Russia.

He accepted the Orthodox Church as a special protectorate, and has been a wonderful, loving, and caring spiritual father to me personally, and also to the Indonesian Church. In October, Archbishop Hilarion asked me to come to Sydney to see him. While I was there, I was awarded with a Mitre, which is a high honor given to senior priests in the Russian tradition. This is also a very visible honor, as during liturgical services, I now wear a mitre (crown) similar to that worn by a Bishop. I was very grateful and humbled to have this honor bestowed on me. Also while in Australia, he had me give a talk at the diocesan office in Sydney about the work in Indonesia.

As you may know, Indonesia has a unique governmental requirement that all religious groups must be affiliated with a state-recognized organization. In Indonesia, the only recognized Orthodox Christian organization is the GOI ("Gereja Orthodox Indonesia", or Indonesian Orthodox Church), and the government recognizes me as the founder and president of this organization. So this is the umbrella under which our Orthodox churches function. Currently this consists of four parishes, 17 mission communities, 10 priests, two deacons, and three readers.

Our numbers increased again recently, as I baptized a number of catechumens during a visit to Solo and Boyolali. I have been there a couple of months previously, and had the opportunity to teach a number of new inquirers including several non-Orthodox pastors. Fr. Markus spent

time with them after I left, preparing them for baptism. When I was ready to return, I had a number of newly-ordained clergy join me there, so that they could learn how to perform baptisms themselves.



Please pray for the work in this region. Based on the teaching and evangelism done there, many new missions have been established, in the vicinity of Jogjakarta City (one hour away from Solo City), and in the villages of Tambak, Tlatar, Simo, and Ngemplak in the vicinity of Boyolali City.

New Ministry to Asians in the US

Part of my vision has been to minister both in my native Indonesia, and also to the large number of Asians who live in the US. Having been a US resident for a number of years, I have made many acquaintances who are of Chinese, Filipino, Thai, Vietnamese and Korean ancestry, in addition to Indonesians living in the US. As a US green card holder, I am not allowed to be out of the US for more than six months per year, so I am dividing my time between



Indonesia and the US. While in the US, I continue to stay in touch on a daily basis with the Indonesian

churches and missions, but I also want to establish an Orthodox mission to Asian Americans. For this reason, I will be moving from Columbus, Ohio, where I have lived for most of the last five years, to the Baltimore - Washington metro area effective in the spring of 2007. There are a lot of Asians in that part of the US, and I am looking forward to beginning to spread the truth of the Orthodox Christian faith among them. Please pray for that effort. Also, if you know people that would be particularly interested in supporting this work in the US, or who are themselves Asian-Americans and may be interested in the Orthodox faith, please put them in touch with me.

Support Organization Formed

One of the benefits of our former affiliation was that the Indonesian Orthodox priests received a modest salary. Having come under ROCOR for the spiritual benefit of the church meant losing this support. We have had to rely completely on the support of Grace Ministries, an organization headed by Fr. Gordon Walker, who has been a father figure to me for more than two decades, as well as the occasional donations I received from speaking engagements. Over the last year, Fr. Gordon realized that the work of supporting the the Indonesian Church required an organization dedicated completely to this task, and had the wisdom to put together this new organization, "Friends of Indonesia," to raise awareness and support in the US for the Orthodox Church in Indonesia. Archbishop Hilarion has agreed to be the Spiritual Advisor for this organization, and we are grateful to God for his support and direction. We have a great website, just launched, which has a lot of material on it about the Church in Indonesia - friendsofindonesia.org.

Christians in Indonesia must continually face hostility and sometimes violence. During my most recent visit to St Thomas Church in the capital city of Jakarta, I was celebrating the Divine Liturgy with Fr. Gregory. Drawn by the voices of the faithful singing the words of the Liturgy, the building was surrounded by Muslim

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many nameless parents of the original Twelve Apostles and the Seventy, the influential women of Luke 8:1-3, and countless other supporters of our Lord's earthly ministry and the early Church. Without these people who were in a supporting role, even the Lord and the early Apostles could not have carried out their ministries.

Indonesia is almost as large in total geographic area and in population size it is larger than was the whole Roman Empire in the time of Christ and the Apostles. Viewing the task in the light of these realities we see the enormity of our calling.

As supporters and co-workers with Fr. Daniel we will also be called upon to share in an Apostle's trials and sufferings –if only in our prayers, our giving, and our intellectual and emotional understanding of his work. I urge you to accept the challenge of helping develop a financial base of support for him and the clergy and missions in Indonesia that he is raising up.

He has a vision for a multi-level approach to the task of his ministry, involving personal witness, small-group seminars and presentations, and old-fashioned open air preaching, but also through creating and publishing books, videos, and internet-based materials to those who want to know more about the ancient Christian faith.

In addition, Friends of Indonesia is attempting to help Fr. Daniel begin a

ministry to Asian-Americans during the times he is in the US. For this purpose, he will be relocating to the Baltimore-Washington area, where there are large numbers of Asian-Americans living. We earnestly seek your prayers for this aspect of the ministry.

I believe the evidence is clear that Fr. Daniel has been indeed functioning as a God-anointed apostle since 1988. His fruit speaks for itself. He has led to Christ and the Orthodox Church over 2,000 people. He has raised up sixteen ordained priests and several deacons. With the help of many friends, he raised the funds to send these men to seminary or has otherwise trained them. In addition, he has raised the support to build several church buildings as well as keeping the congregations functional, the poor cared for, and many young children in school. It is now our responsibility, as Orthodox Americans, to lend a strong helping hand.

Please read this newsletter, and go to our website (www.friendsofindonesia.org) to learn more about the specific programs and needs of the Indonesian Orthodox Church. I am sure as you learn more, you will be impressed all the more with how dynamic, resourceful, and fruitful Fr. Daniel and the other clergy have been with the meager resources that they have

been given.

One of his latest efforts has been to establish a "Children's Scholarship Program" to provide basic funding for young children to be able to attend school. At present we have 156 children enrolled in the program including several Muslim children. To be candid, we have not been able to send the last \$6,000 payment for this school year to distribute money to the parents of these children. The program is being supervised by Fr.

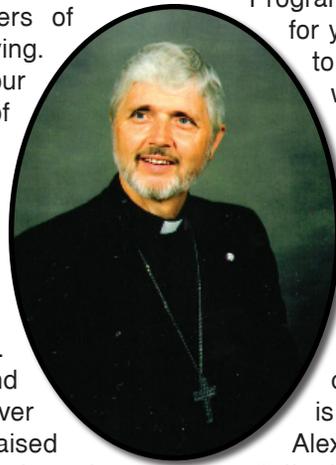
Alexios, pastor of Holy Trinity Orthodox Church in the city of Solo, and another mature priest, Fr. Antonios. I urgently appeal to you especially to help with the immediate need for the Children's Scholarship Program.

I believe Fr. Thomas Hopko was right when he called Fr. Daneil the *Apostle to Indonesia*. None of us could ever do what he has done! But we can pray, give, work and spread the word about this worthy God-appointed and blessed ministry!

THANK YOU for doing all you can, through your prayers, your gifts, and by informing your friends, to become faithful Friends of Indonesia!

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Gordon J. Walker

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radicals demanding its closing. For many months, the liturgy was conducted semi-secretly, with the clergy in the altar area actually whispering the words while the people waited in silence. After some difficult negotiations and payment of money, the Church was allowed to resume normal services. This sort of intimidation and bullying has come to be routine for Christians in Indonesia. Despite this very real pressure and

danger, Indonesians continue to respond with courage and enthusiasm to the Orthodox faith. Recently, I had the opportunity to speak at a revival meeting and seminar on Orthodoxy organized by a group of pastors from various Protestant denominations (Pentecostals, Lutherans, Calvinists, Charismatics, etc) in

the city of Belawan, in northern Sumata Island. One thousand people were present during the event. The people of the newly-formed Orthodox Community of St Sergius of Radonezh from nearby Medan City



Revival in Belawan

were involved with the event. All those present were so spiritually uplifted that they that they wanted the event be prolonged for two more days. Now they plan to invite me again for a bigger, open air event at the city stadium, to which they plan to invite the governor and other important leaders, which will be conducted early next year.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, thank you for your past support for the Indonesian Orthodox Church. During this Advent Season, and as we celebrate the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I humbly ask you to consider doing a number of things that will help

immensely.

1. Please visit our new website (friendsofindonesia.org) and learn more about the country, the culture, and the Orthodox Church's activities in Indonesia.
2. Pray for us, every day. Please use the information on the website about each parish, and pray particularly for our clergy and their families, who are literally giving their lives in service to Christ and His Church.
3. Tell your friends about the urgent task of reaching Indonesia with the Orthodox Christian faith.

Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim country, and Islamic fundamentalist extremism is a constant threat. Ask them to pray for the safety of all Indonesian Christians.

4. Please give generously as God has blessed you. Again, our website as well as this newsletter contains a list of many of the current needs of the Indonesian Orthodox Church.

May your celebration of the Theophany of our Lord be blessed and joyous!

Archimandrite Daniel Byantoro

CURRENT NEEDS

In Indonesia being a Christian almost always means being a second-class citizen. Those who are not Muslims rarely advance in business, are usually passed over for promotions, and live at the lower end of the socio-economic scale. In particular, the clergy who are known Christian religious leaders cannot hold any sort of secular employment, and must rely on the support of their impoverished parishioners.

But the good news in all this is that the cost of living, by US standards, is incredibly low. This means that your prayerful and sacrificial gifts will go a long way towards helping the faithful of Indonesia. Here are a few examples of the specific needs that I would urge you to consider meeting with your donations. The website has a complete list of these needs, as well as more background about the parishes and missions where these needs are occurring.

- \$750 per month for my rental house, office, and car in the capital city of Jakarta. When I am in the US, the office is occupied by one of several priests on a rotating basis, and the house is shared with an Indonesian Orthodox believer.
- \$6,000 to buy several properties surrounding the compound where Holy Trinity Church is located in Solo. This land and the buildings on them will be used to develop a ministry center and possibly for a future monastery.
- \$1,300 to purchase land on which to build a church, in Salatiga City, the location of a brand new mission community.
- \$5,500 to purchase computers for use by each of the 10 priests in Indonesia, as well as fax machines, and some basic office supplies for the rental office in Jakarta.
- \$6000 to purchase a house in Java to be used for a community that does not yet have a place to worship. Because the house is located in a newly built housing complex, it is our plan to open a grocery store in the veranda of the house to provide the Church with income. In order to be able to start this grocery store we will need an additional \$2000.
- \$500 for rental housing for a year for a priest, Fr. Boris, who has been assigned to Simo Village, Boyolali City.
- \$2,000 to pay off an installment purchase of land for a church, in another village near Boyolali City.

Friends Of Indonesia

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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.