

St Simon of Cyrene Orthodox Mission

Orthodox Church in America

Diocese of NY & NJ

St Simon of Cyrene Orthodox Mission is at the close of her fourth year as the “flagpole” urban mission plant in the Orthodox Church in America. This year as we draw to its close has had its triumphs and loss as is expected in the building of a mission community. Earlier this year, we were recognized for being emphasizing iconography in the African style. It has been my intention to restore the iconographic tradition of the Nubian Church and also to further develop what an urban mission parish should look like in America. The Nubian African Church tradition has truly presented a “catholic”, in the sense of “universal”, tradition of iconography, with the marrying of Nubian, Greek, and Coptic iconography and architecture. Here in the United States our cultural experience is made up by various ethnic groups and traditions. It is here in the One true Church where this truly “Pentecostal” experience should be found in our missional efforts.

With the help of Fr Jonathan Ivanoff, and St Vladimir’s Orthodox Church in Trenton, we were able to complete our panel of Saints of the West and the British Isles. We have begun planning a Young Men’s outreach ministry through fitness and mentoring to minister to the needs of young men. In the past two years I have seen the gross need to facilitate the needed growth and inspiration for our young men. These young men will one day be our leaders, parish council members, and clergy. This missional effort is available to all young men ages 18-30. Through bodybuilding and fitness, these young men will learn accountability, brotherhood, and the discipline needed in order to become sound men.

Within the past month I had the opportunity to meet with His Beatitude THEODOROS II, and to speak with a Ugandan seminarian, about the grave concerns of the Orthodox mission in Africa. My interest is now to offer our help in what capacity I can to priests and deacons in the Patriarchate of Alexandria. When Urban Missions are sound here in the US, I believe missions in Africa will be in a better place with our support. I will be donating five of my vestments, along with a donation of ten vestments, ten cassocks, and three boxes of icons from Church curator Fr. John Perich. One of our families had joined in this effort and will be donating three boxes of icons to this mission support effort.

At this time, my primary concern is the furthering of the commissioning of icons of the Saints of Africa. This week I will be meeting with Benedict Sheehan and four other musicians to discuss the possibility of music for the Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom which would be rooted in the historic tradition of Black church tradition here in America.

On behalf of the mission parish community of St. Simon’s, we thank His Eminence Archbishop Michal and all the clergy, faithful, and benefactors of the Diocese for their prayers, generosity, and support!

Fr Samuel Davis

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