



A JOURNAL OF ORTHODOX FAITH AND CULTURE

ROAD TO EMMAUS

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STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

The Renewal of the Albanian Orthodox Church

CHURCHES AND MONASTERIES: Since 1991, the Albanian Archdiocese has rebuilt 83 new churches from their foundations, 5 monasteries and 72 churches/monuments have been restored, and more than 140 churches have been repaired.

CONSTRUCTION OF CHURCH-RELATED BUILDINGS: Also newly built (and staffed) are the Theological Academy complex (with the Monastery of St. Vlash near Durres), the Archdiocesan Center, the diocesan centers of Gjirokaster, Korca and Berat, Holy Cross Boy's High School in Gjirokaster, a girl's dormitory in Vouliarati, the Annuciation Diagnostic Medical Center in Tirana, the spiritual/educational center of Lushnja, a convent for nuns, a guest house in Tirana, youth centers and guest houses in Korca, Elbasan and Kavaja, nursery schools and clinics in other cities, and Nazareth Center – church workshops in Tirana, which include a printing press, candle factory, carpentry shop, and icon and restoration studios.

CLERGY EDUCATION: In the past ten years 125 new clergy, all Albanian citizens, have graduated from the Resurrection of Christ Theological Academy, in addition to the three Orthodox priests who survive from the pre-1990 period.

EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS: The past decade has seen the establishment of 13 new nursery schools and the renovation and furnishing of 10 public high

schools and 6 nurseries throughout Albania. Two “Spirit of Love” Professional Training Institutes have been founded in Tirana and Dervitsani, offering courses in computer science, business management, lab assistance, computerized accounting, iconography and restoration of cultural artifacts, employing 60 teachers for over 400 students.

PUBLICATIONS: The Church’s printing press began publishing the monthly newspaper “Ngjallja” (Resurrection) in 1992. Since then other publications include a monthly children’s magazine, student bulletin, an English-language news bulletin, a youth magazine and many liturgical, spiritual and academic books in the Albanian language.

CULTURE: The Orthodox radio station “Ngjallja” began broadcasting in 1998. Byzantine choirs and music are being revived throughout the country and an ongoing seminar for the revival of traditional church music has begun. Workshops for painting and conserving icons were established in Tirana, and a research group has been appointed to catalogue all existing monuments in Albania.

HEALTH CARE: The Annunciation Diagnostic Medical Center, staffed with Albanian and American doctors, gives health care to more than 6,000 patients each month, regardless of religious affiliation. The Center also operates a same-day surgery unit. Clinics also exist in Kavaja, Lushnja, Korca, and in Jorgucati. A mobile dental clinic provides village care throughout Albania.

YOUTH OUTREACH: Weekly liturgies and Bible studies are held on the University of Tirana campus, boys’ and girls’ summer camps serve over 800 children a year, numerous youth centers have been set up across Albania, as well as a national office to coordinate youth activities. Youth festivals celebrating Orthodoxy and Albanian culture are sponsored throughout the year. Orthodox catechism classes are available to adults and children in every major city and many villages. The international Orthodox youth organization, Syndesmos, has met five times in Albania over the past decade, and during the summer of 2003 the Albanian Church hosted the Syndesmos General Assembly at St. Vlash Monastery in Durres.

RELIEF EFFORTS: During the political/social crisis of 1992, 1994 and 1997, the Church collected and distributed tens of thousands of tons of food, clothing and medicine. In 1999, when waves of refugees fled into Albania from Kosovo, the Church organized help for more than 30,000 refugees in the form of food, clothing, housing and medical supplies. In 2002 the Orthodox Church assisted in restoring homes and other buildings damaged during serious flooding in Lezhe, Berat and Gjirokaster.

DEVELOPMENT: The Albanian Orthodox Church supports agricultural projects in mountain regions, road construction, schools, orphanages, hospitals, institutions for the blind and deaf, and has a developed prison ministry for both men and women (including a prison greenhouse to provide an income to prisoners.) Following the anarchy of 1997, the Church assisted in repairing destroyed university buildings in Tirana and Gjirokaster.

ENVIRONMENT: In March 2002, a post-graduate environmental protection program at the Church’s Professional Training Institute graduated 15 students who had previously completed degrees in biology, forestry and environmental engineering, and instituted programs to protect the eco-system in the Zvernec area, the course of the Vjosa River, the Forest of Llogara, and solid waste management in two cities in Albania. ✚