

PROLOGUE

Within the framework of His divine economy, God has been calling faithful and devoted servants of His throughout the ages and continues to call upon them to this day to sow the Good News of the Gospel in countries whose people have not yet encountered the doctrine of Salvation of the Orthodox Church.

It is my belief that compared to other continents Africa and Asia are behind in the matter of receiving the Word of God. The reasons for this backwardness are many and varied, and we are unable to list them in the scope of this book.

But in recent years, to the great joy of all believers Orthodox Mission has witnessed a reawakening. Certain individuals from Greece and other countries, for the most part independently motivated, have undertaken to communicate the Good News of Salvation to other peoples of this earth.

In this book we shall endeavour to report some instances of the miraculous work of Orthodox Mission in modern times, achieved by Orthodox missionaries at the Mission Centre of Kolwezi in Zaire.

The personality of the first missionary, Father Chrysostom, is already well known. At the age of about 60, he left his pastoral ministry in his home country of Greece in order to travel to Central and East Africa in 1960. Without prior organisation and without fellow workers or any official support from the Church, he spent twelve years performing his missionary work there in very difficult circumstances.

To begin with he stayed and worked in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, before finally arriving in Zaire, in Kolwezi to be precise, in August 1972.

He stayed in Kolwezi three months and taught about one hundred catechumens whom he subsequently baptised. According to the information given to me an elderly Greek from Kolwezi, Father Chrysostom chose to take up residence with a Greek household and converted one room of their living quarters into a small church.

A group of Zaireans from Kananga in the region of the western Kasai, having learnt that the true church of God is the Orthodox Church, came looking for him to ask him to visit their community too. Father Chrysostom went to Kananga in October 1972. He worked there for only two months before finally coming to the end of his life on earth towards the end of December 1972. He was buried in Kananga.

After his death two new missionaries arrived to continue the work left behind by Father Chrysostom: Father Chariton Pnevmatikakis in Kananga and Archimandrite Amphilochios Tsoukos in Kolwezi. The latter of whom was from the Greek island of Patmos and was the spiritual son of Father Amphilochios Makris. He spent five years working in Kolwezi.

He returned to Greece in the summer of 1977 and the work was then continued for two years by Hieromonk Seraphim Parcharidis. He in turn was forced to abandon the Mission in August 1978 having been seriously wounded during the troubles that arose in Kolwezi that year. Seven other Greeks lost their lives in the course of events.

In the month of November 1978, Father Cosmas (Aslanidis) left the Monastery of Saint Gregory on Mount Athos, with the blessing of the Abbott Father George, and came to the Kolwezi mission, where he worked until 1989. It was God's will for him to live only until that year, for he died suddenly in a tragic car accident at the age of 47.

Forty days later, in response to the urgent prayers and appeals of Metropolitan Timothy of Central Africa, the Monastery of Saint Gregory sent Hieromonk Father Meletios to Kolwezi as his successor, and he continues to this day the work of his former brothers with the aid of God's power and blessing.

In the pages that follow, I will endeavour to lay before the friends of Orthodox Mission the miraculous signs attending the history of the mission during the times of Father Cosmas and his current successor. I thought it necessary to put into writing and so rescue from oblivion the various facts and episodes which constitute the recent history of our mission, to the glory of God and the spiritual profit of those who read it and those who may provide financial aid for our work.

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORY OF THE LIFE OF THE LATE FATHER COSMAS

1. How Father Cosmas saved a boy from drowning in a lake.

During a visit to our Monastery, Father Cosmas told me the story of his "plunge" into the lake which is to be found near our Mission's farm in Kolwezi, to save a boy who had drowned there and whose body was lying at the bottom of the lake.

It was during the afternoon. As Father Cosmas was passing the lake, he saw a large gathering of people crying. When he learnt the reason why, he asked them to calm down: "Do not cry. I will dive in and pull him out," he told them. He stepped back, took off his cassock so that he was left in trousers. They showed him the place where the child had slipped and fallen in while fishing. He proceeded to dive in three successive times where the water was about ten metres deep. On the third occasion, he pulled the child from the water. The tears of the crowd turned to songs and dances of indescribable joy to demonstrate their gratitude. And Father Cosmas used to add: "When I served in the Greek navy I was a deep-sea diver. I never expected then that twenty years later I would be able to make use in such a way of what I had learnt in the Navy."

2. Help provided by Father Cosmas on the roads.

Father Cosmas was of the firm conviction that God had sent him to Africa not simply as an Orthodox missionary but as a man of love, to serve all men in sacrifice regardless of race, nationality colour of skin or religion.

Wherever he happened to be, if people needed his help he never stopped to ask whether they were Orthodox or what religion they belonged to, but would help them each according to their need.

As I myself have been able to confirm among the notes of his journal, when on a journey Father Cosmas would frequently stop and use his cable to tow the poor African villagers' pushcarts on the steep climbs up hills and mountains.

When he came across a lorry broken down on the road, he would always ask what the problem was, pull on his working clothes and slide underneath the vehicle to mend it. When it was a case of no petrol, he would hurry back to the Mission to bring fresh fuel supplies.

One rainy day, when Fr. Cosmas had gone with his father, Father Dimitri, to the forest which borders on Lake Lualaba to inspect the tree felling and pay the workers, he met two fishermen on the road loaded with fish. After finishing his work, he stopped to pick them up. When they reached town the passengers were afraid to get out of the car for fear that the soldiers would seize their catch. So Father Cosmas drove them on a further five kilometres beyond the town and left them at the door of their huts.

On another occasion, when he was in Lubumbashi with his father, they passed a man who was lying in the street. Father Dimitri told him to carry on past without stopping. And so they continued until, a moment later, Father Cosmas stopped abruptly and turned back. "What is the matter? Why are you going back?" his father asked. "That man is starving," he replied, "let's give him something to eat and help him back onto his feet." They picked him up trembling, and gave him money to buy something to eat in a restaurant.

It was then that he made clear to Father Dimitri his view that God had brought him here for the benefit of all and not just for the Orthodox faithful. Such scenes were repeated almost every day.

Whenever he had the space, he would pick up all the pedestrians he met, who had often covered great distances on foot with their parcels of produce on their heads, and take them to Kolwezi for nothing. As they journeyed, he would often ask them to sing, and derived great pleasure from listening to their beautiful voices.

3. Journeys on swampy roads.

During the rainy season, which lasts six months, Father Cosmas avoided making journeys. But whenever there was an emergency, no danger or natural impediment was enough to daunt him. During this season flooded roads are often transformed into running streams and his vehicle soon got bogged down, in which case he would tie his car to a tree and by using a winch was able in this way to extract it from the mud. On other occasions, there would be a lot of sand on the road and the vehicle would become stuck. But the intrepid missionary had always his tools about him, including some special sheets of metal furnished with holes which allowed the wheels to engage and find some purchase and so the car could get free of the sand.

4. Parish feasts.

During the eleven years which he spent in Zaire, Father Cosmas baptised some 15,000 Africans and founded nearly fifty five parishes. At the feast commemorating the patron saint of each parish, he used to donate two sacks of maize flour (for making the "bukari" which is the African equivalent of bread) and a whole pig. Whenever he could he used to attend the feast in person. He blessed the food and would share in the eating of the bukari, to the joy of the Africans who were delighted to see a European partaking of their meal.

5. Possessed by a demon.

One of his earliest catechists, N..., remembering his former way of life, had gone to consult a fetishist. But God, who is the Friend of man and desires the salvation of his creatures, allowed the catechist to be possessed by a demon. He remained like this for two days, so teaching his brethren a lesson on the consequences of returning to the old ways and on the evil which results from visiting witch doctors and fetishists. But it was also an occasion for showing them how great is the power of God in this realm, for as soon as Father Cosmas read the prayer of exorcism over him, the demon came out of him.

6. Respect of local authorities towards Father Cosmas.

Father Cosmas was the only missionary in Kolwezi who opened his arms to everybody, and in addition to his indiscriminating goodwill towards all he enjoyed especially friendly relations with the local State authorities. Thus every Easter or Christmas he used to present them with a pig from his farm as a gift, which allowed them to celebrate the feast days with a greater sense of occasion and meant that the Reverend Father earned their love and concern for the well-being of his mission. In this way each time he personally or the Christians in general met with some difficulty, the State representatives acted out of gratitude towards Father Cosmas to help him find a suitable solution.

7. Love of Father Cosmas towards prisoners.

Father Cosmas had a special care for the prisoners of Kolwezi as well as for the sick, the elderly and the variously needy.

Every month he donated food and meat to the prisoners as well as to the lepers of Kanzenze, a large village 60km away from the town of Kolwezi.

At the central prison in Dilala which serves the whole sub-district of Kolwezi and houses more than a hundred permanent inmates in inhuman conditions, he had beds made out of wood for the prisoners, since at that time they used to sleep on the actual concrete floor. Smitten with love for them because of their terrible predicament, he had also offered them plastic cups and some casks which he had painted on the inside for storing drinking water. And at least once a month he would take them food: bukari, meat, vegetables, beans and medical supplies too which he sometimes managed to obtain for them.

This humanitarian work also extended to hospitals and hospices for lepers or for the elderly, since one should bear in mind that the State distributes food in these places only twice a week (bukari and boiled vegetables). The aid continues today through the work of Father Meletios.

8. Translation at the Mission Centre

When Father Cosmas left his monastery at the age of 37 to travel to Kolwezi, he had not thought about the difficulties he might encounter. God had concealed the difficulties from him and had flooded his heart with love for his non-Christian brethren, and he was burning with zeal to reach them with the Gospel. He quickly realised that without books, schools, dispensaries, pharmacies and churches he would achieve little.

He immediately took his pad of paper and wrote down a phrase in Swahili: "What is that?" and beginning with that phrase he embarked on a study of African languages, and of Swahili in particular.

By asking the Africans a number of questions each day and writing down their replies in his note-pad, he was able after a few months to start speaking their language reasonably well, and he commenced a translation of Church books.

With the assistance of local Christians he translated the offices of Vespers (evening service), Orthros (morning service), Compline (prayers before retiring at night), the rite of preparation before Holy Communion, Great Compline (the *Apodeipnon*), the Easter service, the Little Benediction of the Waters (*Agiasmos*), the services for Funeral, Baptism and Marriage, the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete and the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts (*Proagiasmeni*), along with a number of other liturgical hymns of various sorts.

The Monastery of Simonopetra on Mount Athos likewise secured valuable help for the education of indigenous clergy through the involvement of Father Timothy (Hieromonk), who is from Zimbabwe and knows Swahili. He edited in Swahili sermons for the feastdays of the Lord, of the Mother of God and of the saints and sent the collection to the Mission in Kolwezi.

The work of translation has been continued by Father Cosmas' successors, who to date have produced the following editions: the Divine Liturgy (*Kristo*) in Greek and in a local dialect of Swahili, the Gospel (*Evangelio*) and the Book of Epistles (*Apostolo*), the Paraklisi (Rite of Supplication) for the eight musical tones, the Synaxarion of all the saints in the year, the Liturgy of St. Basil (translated into French) and the offices for Great Week (*Ibada ya Juma Mkubwa*) which are currently under preparation. The Triodion, Pentecostarion and, God willing, the Menaia (*Minea*) are to follow.

9. Schools run by the Orthodox Mission of Kolwezi

During his ten years, Father Cosmas worked hard organising the various projects run by the Mission and before his accident he had begun to prepare for the foundation of the "Light of Christ" primary school. Very often people ask themselves what reasons there are for missions to build schools. What profit does the Church gain from these schools? Or in other words of what interest are these schools to the Church, given that the curriculum followed is that laid down by the State and that the children who attend these schools come also from other Christian denominations? We are able to answer this question truthfully and with full

knowledge of the facts, since we have lived a long time in Africa and are well acquainted with the present situation.

The Orthodox Mission was rather late in beginning its apostolic activity as it did in 1972. Prior to this date, other priests had served the Greek community whilst spreading the faith to the natives at the same time; but before 1972-73 there were no missionaries whose sole ministry was to evangelise the Africans of Zaire.

Before the arrival of the Orthodox, Roman Catholics had already been at work as colonisers and missionaries at the same time. They zealously built schools, hospitals, dispensaries and other community centres. During 130 years they have created fifty dioceses stretching right across the Republic of Zaire. The Protestant groups, for their part, began their work in the 1920s and they have worked with the same zealous conviction.

We were amazed to find how much religious influence all the other missionaries have had on the Africans, through education and the provision of medical care to begin with, and subsequently through the medium of religion alone.

The Orthodox Mission, then, followed the same procedures imitating the other missionary groups and addressing the socio-economic situation of Zaire as a way of winning souls.

The situation for the Orthodox was still more acutely problematic since Orthodox children are refused entry into schools of other denominations, and worse still, are even forbidden to play in front of the gates of other schools.

It was for this reason that Father Cosmas founded the "Light of Christ" primary school. This school began functioning in the 1990-91 school year, attended by 250 boys.

Because of the school's expenses, priority was given to Orthodox children, and the remaining places were filled by other children. To guarantee some sort of educational continuity, Father Cosmas' replacement, has also founded a secondary school, the "Light of Christ" Technical Agricultural Institute, at the instigation of Orthodox parents and in response to the numerous demands of our faithful.

As for the country's schools in general, it is true to say that children in the villages stand in great need of some sort of education. Where there are many Christians, the people build schools for themselves out of brick and thatched roofing, using railway sleepers or thick planking for benches. They pay for the teachers themselves out of their meagre salaries, and require the Mission to see to the administration and supply stationery.

It should be made clear that since the widespread looting in September 1991, the Zairean government has halted pay for teachers in State schools for lack of funds. Since then parents have sometimes been going even without their daily bread in order to be able to pay these teachers for their children's education.

The Orthodox Mission, for her part, pays teachers out of the money donated by the Churches of Kilikis and Giannitsa in Greece. Children have only to pay an inscription fee, which is put towards buying stationery and repairing school buildings. In this way in Zaire we provide as far as possible a free education, the fruit of Christian solidarity and of the Greek cultural tradition.

For six years the running of the primary was in the hands of Mrs. Eferpia Maftas-Ilias, a retired secondary school headmistress from Piraeus in Greece. Thanks to her fervent zeal, her experience in education and her sense of organisation, she directed our schools so well that they became the models emulated by other educational establishments in Kolwezi.

10. The sudden death of Father Cosmas

From a human point of view, the death of Father Cosmas has left a great empty gap in the Orthodox Mission of Kolwezi. However, we have come to accept it as the proceeding from the will of God, whose care primarily is to ensure the salvation of souls and only after that to implement Church projects.

The incident occurred as follows: towards the end of the month of January 1989, Father Cosmas had gone with Moise, a Zairean who spoke good Greek, and Kalenga to Lubumbashi to do a number of jobs and serve the liturgical needs of the Greek community there. He began his return journey on the 27th of that month.

It was eight o'clock in the evening as they approached the village of Sofumwango, fifty five kilometres along the road from Lubumbashi to Likasi. At that moment there appeared travelling in the opposite direction an old lorry loaded with sacks of salted fish and carrying thirty-four men travelling from Bukama, 600 kilometres away, to Lubumbashi with their products. The container on the back of this lorry projected approximately one metre to either side. At great speed it passed the Land Rover which was being driven by Father Cosmas himself, and wrenched the left side of it right off. According to what one of our catechumens told me, Father Cosmas died instantly. He had a slight wound on his left cheek.

At two o'clock in the morning his body was transferred to Lubumbashi in the car of Mr. Hampos and placed in a freezer. The doctors and nurses at the hospital were struck by the fact that the cut beneath his eye was still bleeding. Three hours before the accident, there had been a miraculous sign. A Zairean vendor was passing the place and had seen a bearded priest clothed in white rising to heaven. He had stopped and shared the vision with the villagers of Sofumwango. They had all been amazed. And sure enough, three hours after this miraculous vision, the people had realised that the priest who had risen to heaven was evidently Father Cosmas.

11. Father Cosmas' place of pilgrimage.

On the site of Father Cosmas' accident, which plunged not only Zaire's Orthodox into grief but also a large number of members of the civil and military authorities, the Orthodox Mission erected a small circular proskynitari made of metal in which an oil lamp burns before the icon of the Mother of God. It is probably the only shrine of its type in Zaire, and it proved difficult to obtain permission for it from the authorities concerned. For all the Orthodox faithful of Southern Zaire, this site will forever remain a stopping place where they will pause to make the sign of the Cross, to pray and to remember the person and the apostolic ministry of their spiritual father Cosmas, whom they hold to be the light of their life.

The person in charge of lighting this lamp each evening is the catechist who has begun a new parish for the Church in this area, the parish of St. James, and all the villagers are catechumens of the Orthodox Church.

Everybody who passes by the spot is curious to know why there is a light burning there and in this way comes to learn the way in which Orthodox honour and respect those who have sacrificed their life for the salvation of others; it has become a witness of their mission.

12. Father Cosmas' declaration following his death.

Forty days after his death Father Cosmas appeared in a dream to Michel, a former catechist who now worked in the Mission's carpentry workshop, and said to him: "Michel, call Father Meletios and tell him to go to the place where I met my death. If he looks in the grass and dust there he will find a flask of Holy Myrrh which I kept with me for baptisms, and my *epigonation* [i.e. the square piece of material which a priest who is entitled to teach wears at his side] along with a lance for the Proskomidi." Father Meletios and Michel along with other of the brethren went to the place and did indeed find these objects. The lance is now to be found in the Monastery of St. Gregory on the Holy Mountain.

13. Father Cosmas demands that the flask be returned.

The day after Father Cosmas' accident, a Zairean from the area had gone to scour the accident site to see what he could find and evidently came across the Holy Myrrh. Believing it to be vegetable oil, he had taken it home with him to fry some fish. The following night Father Cosmas appeared to him as he slept and told him in severe tones to return the flask to the place where he had found it or suffer a serious punishment. Sure enough some days later the man returned the flask to the place where Father Meletios was to find it.

14. The resumption of catechistic instruction.

While Father Cosmas was still living, the group of catechumens included a certain army officer. Discouraged by Father Cosmas' death, this man decided to stop attending catechism. Father Cosmas appeared to him one night and spoke kindly to him: "Why have you stopped your catechism? Go ahead with it and be baptised." But either out of indolence or because of his excessive grief he did not resume his catechism.

15. The children at the boarding school told us the following...

One day I had asked the children at the boarding school to tell me something miraculous about their spiritual father. They told me that one day as they were going to celebrate Compline (*Apodeipnon*) they were passing his grave and had heard the sound of the censer, like when the priest censens in church. And on other days they have heard the sound of a small bell near his grave.

16. This story was told to us by Zairean priests.

On the last evening of the academic year at our Theological Seminary, 28th August 1991, all we priests, catechists and teachers were going together to the church at 8 o'clock to celebrate Compline. The priests were in front of us and the catechists behind (and the author of this book was likewise behind the rest with certain other co-workers). As we came to the tomb of Father Cosmas the priests exclaimed in

astonishment "What are those lights?" In fact they had seen with their own eyes some luminous rays in the shape of a rainbow rising overhead beyond the height of the trees. I questioned three or four priests and all assured me that they had seen the same thing.

17. The teacher Seraphim Ilunga bears testifies to the following story.

a) Seraphim Ilunga, a faithful believer and teacher at the secondary school in Kamina, told me the following: "Two years after the death of Father Cosmas, in 1991, I was ill. I spent a year away in Kaniama. One day he appeared to me and said: "I see your suffering and have come to heal you." I thought I was in front of the Church of St. George in Kolwezi. Father Cosmas called me:"Seraphim!" and asked me to raise my shirt. And an uncleanness, like dirty water, issued from my chest. I awoke to find that here I was in full health again. I told my wife Temelina what had happened and since that day I have never suffered any illness."

b) On Father Cosmas' final visit to Lubumbashi he had for the last time greeted Seraphim (who was a student in Lubumbashi at the time) and had given him 1,000 zaires. He used this money to buy a book which he still has today. They all attended the priest's last Liturgy. Father Cosmas was gentle and expressed his penitence in copious tears. He went on to urge the Greeks present to repent and told them that he was going to die.

Seraphim went on to say: "When I learnt of his death, I wept. In February 1989 I saw him in a dream and asked him: 'Father Cosmas, are you dead?'

'No - not dead; I am now resurrected. Look in my tomb, I have been resurrected.' In my dream, continued Seraphim, I opened the tomb and I saw him there alive in the tomb."

c) Seraphim also said to me: "In August 1989 my wife gave birth. Forty days later I was wondering what name to give to my child (a boy). That night, Father Cosmas came to me and said:'He should bear the name of Cosmas the Aetolian.'"

CHAPTER TWO

STORIES OF SORCERY (FETISHISM)

1. There is another sorcerer...

While Father Cosmas was still alive, he had come to our monastery one time on retreat and he related to me the following incident: in a certain village which is home to one of our Orthodox parishes, he had succeeded thanks to the backing of the commissioner for Kolwezi to have one of our faithful elected to the post of village chief. It is a fact that all over Africa numerous people practice sorcery whatever their social status may happen to be. Each village chief is the main person responsible within his jurisdiction for all matters relating to the life and well-being of inhabitants: he is in charge of administration, medical care, schools and all ethnic, religious or moral affairs. The result is that all the villagers turn to him for help in any area, including religion.

This Orthodox believer, then, who had been elected village chief, had encountered some problem and remembered the sorcerer in chief in the large neighbouring village, and went to visit him to ask for help. The sorcerer responded though in a familiar way: "I am unable to help you because there is another sorcerer whose power is greater than mine, and I mean the one who baptised you [he was referring to Father Cosmas]. I cannot act against him, I cannot even come near him. Go to him for help, he is greater than me!" Such was the sorcerer's open admission.

2. A child victim of sorcery.

Father Cosmas once wrote to his friend Mr. Constantinos: "I was out visiting our parishes, on the way to the town of Likasi, about 15 km away, when the road was suddenly blocked by a large gathering of people, so I stopped. There were more than 500 people milling about, trembling with fright.

After a while four Zaireans appeared, sweating under the weight of a child's coffin, and behind them followed a crowd of frightened people wailing. They were all walking hurriedly in our direction, when suddenly an invisible force pushed them all violently to the right, so that they were thrust right off the road leading to the cemetery. The ones who were carrying the coffin tried to continue the way they were going, but this invisible force made them spin round two or three times on the spot without however dropping the coffin, as if it were nailed to their shoulders. Then the satanic power bore them towards the houses on the banks of the stream, and then towards the valley and back on to the road, and so on and so on.

I asked three different people about it and they told me it was a case of magic, a case of sorcery. I asked our driver for an explanation and he replied as follows: "Father, ever since I was a child I have heard stories about this magic, but I have never seen it until now. Now I have seen it I can believe that it really takes place. The problem here is that this child's father consulted a sorcerer to find out who cast a spell on his child and killed him. The devil will not allow these people to bear the child to the cemetery until he has first taken them to the man who killed the child. When that man is dead, then they will be free to bear the child to the cemetery."

Father Cosmas asked the driver: "How is it that the coffin bearers do not drop the coffin when it is rocking backwards and forwards like that?"

"They cannot let go of it, it is as if it were glued to their shoulders. And in any case they want to help the father to discover who was responsible for his child's killing. One other time when they did let go, the coffin travelled on all on its own to the home of the people who had cast the spell."

I wanted to recite a prayer so that Satan would leave the people to go on their way, but the catechist who was with me would not let me: "If you read the prayer, Father, the force of the spell will be annulled and the child's father and the rest of the family will be on top of us in no time. They have paid good money for the murderer to be revealed."

So I could see I was caught in a vicious circle of the demons' devising. People were beginning to leave because they were afraid, which cleared the way and meant we were also free to move on.

A few days later, I went through this village again. I wanted to learn the sequel to the story, as I had witnessed with my own eyes the power of the Devil to make people suffer.

This is how the matter ended up: after circling and turning a good many times the coffin finally broke loose and flew up and struck a woman on the head. The woman died instantly and the sorcerer along with various others concluded that she was the one who killed the child. The two corpses were left to lie there for three days, one on top of the other, and it was only with the army's intervention that they were finally taken to the cemetery.

3. Child victims of magic.

Father Cosmas' letter continued as follows:"The day before yesterday, Palm Sunday, I was in Likasi when we found a twelve year old boy, dead, in the grass about 200m from the church. They had used a syringe to extract all his blood for use in various acts of sorcery.

It is common in the same way to find corpses with the heart taken out for sorcerers to perform their evil practices. That happens above all with small children. They are captured and taken out into the open somewhere and they have their hearts torn out even while still alive.

One of our Zairean priests who was in the army to begin with told me how he had seen a woman in the BSRS jail who had said to him (Father R...) that she had been travelling from Kananga to Western Kasai heading for Lubumbashi in her private jet when she had had to land at Fungurume (200km from Lubumbashi) because the fuel ran out. What sort of plane had it been? It was a maize stalk which she had tied under her belly with two chicken feathers firmly attached right and left. The fuel in question consisted of the blood of a baby which the sorcerer had inserted with the aid of a syringe into the maize stalk, so giving it the power to fly and enabling it to transport passengers by night to secret destinations.

Such is the situation here in Africa, my dear Constantine. It is a fact that African magic is alive and well, with terrifying consequences. And most of our Christians still live in fear of the sorcerers."

4. Fetishes discovered in a bar in May 1991.

The story which we are about to relate is a terrible one. It reveals the power of Satan and teaches us by the same token the strength and power of our Orthodox priests.

Father Ph... from Fungurume told us how his son wanted to resort to fetishes that would empower him to grow rich effortlessly. He is a faithful Orthodox and his name is M... He was married and had a bar in Kando, 50km from Kolwezi, where he sold beer. His customers were mostly workers from Gecamines.

One day a fetishist arrived in the village. When he saw how well-kept M...'s house was, he asked for permission to go in and said: "I am a fetishist and I can give you fetishes that will bring in customers who will help you earn a lot of money in little time."

He began performing his conjuring tricks in front of a large number of people. He took a piece of paper which he had first put in his mouth, spat on it, rubbed it and the paper was transformed into a snake. Then this snake became a piece of paper again which subsequently turned into other objects and animals. The spectators watching this performance were all amazed and believed they had a "god" in front of them.

Our faithful believer M... said to him: "I am an Orthodox Christian and I do not know if what you are proposing to me is of God or of the Devil. I will ask my wife first and then give you an answer." His wife said to him that since they had made little profit out of beer sales so far, it would be worth accepting the sorcerer's proposal. Her husband was heavy at heart about the plan and was opposed to it, but in the end he yielded to the pressure from his wife who was not Orthodox and kept saying: "Let us accept some fetishes, you will see what joy they bring us."

So they summoned the fetishist to help them. He took two bottles of water and placed his charms in them, and the water turned the colour of orangeade. He covered one of the bottles with a woman's handkerchief and went and buried it in the courtyard, and he said to the married couple: "That bottle stands for a dead woman from the past who is going to attract people to buy beer in your bar." In the other bottle he placed a photograph of M... and burrowed a hole behind a door in the house in which to bury the bottle. The sorcerer went on to make a little scratch in each of the couple's right hands and smeared it with a magic substance, the rest of which he threw onto the roof of the house. He then took four tree branches and placed them in the four corners of the house. Finally he told them: "These branches you can see here and the fetishes on your roof will protect you from all attempts by any sorcerer to harm you. He will be unable to enter your house, and even lightning will be prevented from striking it. And from now on a lot of customers will be coming to the bar and you will make a lot of money." M... asked what he owed him in return, and he replied that he wanted to be paid in money.

"How much?" asked M...

"I will stay with you for three days and you must give me what I ask for when I leave," was the fetishist's reply.

M... made 500,000 zaires with his barwork on the first day, and the same amount on the following days, so that after three days he had made 1,500,000 zaires.

The sorcerer then said to him: "I am leaving, give me all your earnings from the last three days." He took the money and before leaving said to him: "Be very careful. Sleep with no woman other than your wife, and be sure to touch no dead bodies. Even should your brother die, you must not touch him. Steer well clear of corpses." With these words he took the money and left. M... awaited customers as the days passed, but in vain. Nobody came to the bar. Gloom descended on the house now that nothing was going right and they hardly had even enough to eat.

One day he went to his field and picked a sackful of manioc to take to Kolwezi to sell. With the money he made from selling the manioc he bought a sack of maize. That night, succumbing to the temptation of the Devil, he assaulted another woman and lay with her. He then drank Lutuku (the local alcoholic brew) and became very drunk, and went on to eat a diamba plant (hashish) which made him lose his mind. He went mad and was no longer aware what he was doing. He spent his nights out of doors. Soldiers arrested him and beat him, and children threw dirt at him in the street. He roamed about the streets of Kolwezi crying and shouting, and disturbing everybody. He turned up at the Catholic Mission but was thrown out with a beating.

His father, Father Ph..., was informed about his son's madness and wanderings in Kolwezi, and came to tell us the unhapy tale at the Orthodox Mission, sending three of his sons out to catch M... and tie him up and bring him home to the village of Kisote.

When he arrived home, still bound, M... said to his father: "Dad, when my brothers caught me, I saw a brilliant light like a flash of lightning. I do not think I will die." Father Ph... asked him how he came to be in such a state and his son revealed the whole story. He was taken to the church, confessed, and as soon as the exorcistic prayer of St. Basil was read to him, the unclean spirit fled out of him, and M... left the church in a state of complete calm. He said to his father: "Let's go home and remove the fetishes that the sorcerer left."

Father Ph... obtained the blessing of the priest in charge of the Mission and left for Kando with his son. When they arrived, Father Ph... read the Office of the Little Benediction of the Waters (*Agiasmos*) and removed the bottles and the tree branches, and last of all blessed the house and consecrated it with the sign of the Cross. He removed the photo of his son from one of the bottles and the handkerchief from on top of the other, made the sign of the Cross over the magic solutions and poured them on the ground.

As Father Ph... was tipping out the contents of the bottle containing the fetishes hoarse cries of some ghastly sort made themselves heard. He sprinkled the entire house with holy water aswell as the places where the charms had been laid, and made his son drink some too. His son went on to confess to him: "I wanted to work in obedience to God's will but the Devil deceived me. I will not fall into the same trap again, I will remain faithful to our Church."

Having accomplished this apostolic ministry, Father Ph... returned peacefully to the mission and we glorified God when he told us the story. Nowadays wherever he goes he is able to testify to the greatness of God by telling of the episode and so confirming the faith of Christians in his seven parishes.

5. The Orthodox priest is a fire to the sorcerer.

I have been a priest at the Orthodox Mission in Kolwezi for nearly ten years. I currently serve at the parishes of St. Andrew, St. Thomas, and St. Paraskevi. The story which I am about to tell occurred in the month of August 1990 in the town of Kolwezi.

Father Meletios who is in charge of our Mission had received a request from two Christian families to visit them in order to resolve a problem involving sorcery. The priest in charge decided to send me, in as much as I was Zairean and better understood my fellow countrymen's problems. A 13 year old boy from the Luba-Shaba tribe had been a sorcerer ever since the age of 7. It was his grandfather who had

initiated him into the realms of black magic. This boy lived with his paternal uncle as his parents had thrown him out of the family home. An Orthodox family lived right next door to the boy's uncle.

This child sorcerer had met a sorceress in the town who had said to him: "You are to be my husband and master in sorcery." One day this sorceress sent the child out with instructions to "go in search of food", i.e. to find a victim to kill for the Christmas and New Year (Jan. 1st) feasts. By way of "food" the child sorcerer had found his uncle at home and secretly stolen an item of underclothing which he took to the sorceress. He then went to the Orthodox Christians' house and gave a nyanya (aubergine) to one child of the family and a fish to the other. The two children ate the food because they were hungry, but they experienced a weird taste as if they were consuming raw human flesh. When the first of the children had eaten the nyanya, he lost his spirit straight away.

The uncle of this boy sorcerer is a Protestant Christian belonging to the community of Basantu. He took the child to his community. There they began to pray and the child drew a string with three knots in it from his mouth. He intended to kill three people by means of this string. The pastor asked the child sorcerer what the string signified, and he replied that one of the knots was for his uncle and that the other two were for the two children of a certain family. He then said: "Let's go to the house of these Orthodox Christians." They asked to be allowed to go in. In each of the rooms where the children slept, there was a thick root planted beneath the bed which they tore up, since it was intended to exert a fatal Satanic influence on the children when they lay down to sleep at night. They then went back to the uncle's house.

The parents of the Orthodox family had thought it right in the meantime to summon an Orthodox priest. And so it came about that at Father Meletios' bidding I went to see them. I called for the child sorcerer and we sat down to talk. First of all I asked his uncle: "Do you know about your nephews's problem?"

"Yes, I'm aware that he is a sorcerer," he said.

And I asked the child too: "Are you a sorcerer?"

"Yes, I am."

"Hand over to me all your sorcerer's equipment."

The child replied: "I can't give you that, there is a woman who will be angry and kill me."

I said to him: "No she will not; if you believe in the true God you will not be killed." His hands were bound, so I undid them and said: "Our God loves you and will help you."

The child replied: "We perform our rites in the cemetery at the dead of night."

"How did you begin, and how do you recruit others to your evil practices?"

"We take the underclothes or the thread of a garment belonging to the person we want to cast a spell on, to kill or to recruit to our group."

"So if you touch somebody's clothing you're able to cast a spell on them; is that what you are saying?"

"Yes, it is very easy."

"So if you took a thread or touched my garment you would be able to spellbind me?"

"No, no; not you! There is a fire surrounding you which will burn me if I come near."

I then addressed his parents: "Is your child a sorcerer?"

"Yes, he has been since the age of seven."

"We must help him to escape from sorcery, or his life will be full of difficulties. If today he goes into an Orthodox Christian house, tomorrow it will be somewhere else and the day after he will be in prison. And you will have to pay the State a fine and compensation to the people to whom he has caused harm."

Lastly I called together all the Orthodox Christians in the area, took a list of their names and performed the Office of the Little Blessing of the Waters (*Agiastos*) followed by a reading of St. Basil's prayers of exorcism. I then anointed the two children with myrrh from the Mother of God of Malevi, given to me by the fathers at the Mission. Everybody was glad and gave glory to God. Since then the children have been caused no problems by demons. They attend church, confess and take communion. It should be noted that as soon as he returned home, the child sorcerer completely lost his senses.

This story was told to the author by Father James Banza Kafutakanya.

6. I am unable to pray.

One other time Father James had gone to his village, Lualaba. There he had met an old friend who had become a sorcerer. They talked together about God and Father James proposed that the sorcerer come to church to see how evening prayer (Vespers) was conducted. His friend came to our church and watched everything very carefully from his seat a long way back.

At the end the sorcerer said to his old friend: "As far as I have been able to see, we both share one and the same God. You cense your altar the same as I do, you offer up prayers and I do too. There is no difference."

Father James replied: "All right then, let's go to your 'church' next." But the other flatly refused saying: "No, don't come, I can't pray if you are present. Even before when you used to say that you would pray for me from a distance, I was left powerless. How much more likely is that to be the case if you come to my house!"

One can conclude from this story that the servants of Satan find themselves totally disarmed before the power of God.

7. A young Zairean girl preparing for baptism falls unconscious.

The Church had decided whenever possible to perform the baptisms of catechumens in the villages during the dry season from May to October. So it was that Father Meletios had gone to baptise the catechumens in Fungurume, and had then gone on to the village of Tenke. As Father was performing the exorcism before baptism, a young girl fell to the ground unconscious. The spirit of Satan was testing her because she wished to abandon his bondage and to embrace the faith of our Orthodox Church, so filled with light. A moment later she came to and was baptised along with the others, and so it was that this child dealt the Devil a lash of the whip as she celebrated her baptism.

8. A young boy sorcerer hands over his magic items to the priest.

During the month of September 1994 we left Kolwezi to perform some baptisms in the villages of Kasaji, nearly 350km from Kolwezi. Our first stop was in Mwenye-Kula at St. Catherine's Orthodox Church. I would like to draw attention here to an incident which moved me.

In the evening all the catechumens came for confession. Among them was a 16 year old boy who came to surrender his magic items to Father Cosmas of Kawayongo. On the following day, full of joy and new resolve, he was baptised under the name of Augustine. From that moment the cult of darkness in his life was finished. "All is filled with light!"

9. A Protestant missionary receives a lesson.

In the month of August 1994, all Kolwezi was in a state of commotion over public advertisements, posters and placards throughout the town announcing that "Jesus" would be coming to heal the sick and infirm, the blind and the lame of the whole area.

Thousands of dollars had been spent preparing for the reception of a pentecostal minister who was coming from South Africa to heal the sick of Zaire. The same welcome and festivities awaited him in Lubumbashi where many sick people had followed him in the hope of being healed. The start of this new Messiah's preaching and healing coincided with the start of the services of Paraklisis to the Mother of God which the Orthodox traditionally celebrate during the month of August. Our Rev. Father, Archimandrite Meletios, had given Orthodox Christians advance warning of the arrival of this pseudo-messiah and had forbidden our faithful to go to his meetings even out of curiosity. He had given permission only for two or three Christians to go and listen to what he had to say so as to be able to inform those in charge of the Orthodox Mission.

Each evening the "messiah" would preach in English and two people would translate his words into Swahili in thunderous tones so that people would come up en masse to be healed. In the meantime Father Meletios was in our church of St. George, barely one hundred metres from their place of assembly, celebrating the Paraklisis to the Mother of God, preaching and leading the people kneeling in prayer with the prayer rope (*komboskoini*). The two assemblies were competing to see who would prevail.

The result was made clear the next day, a Sunday evening, from the very lips of this presumptuous Pentecostalist and performer of false miracles. He admitted: "I have been to numerous towns and countries, and everywhere my preaching has met with success, but here in Kolwezi I have been checked for the first time. I have been here for so many days and yet have not managed to perform a single healing. I ask myself why? I think there is some other force present here in your town, Kolwezi, and it has prevented me from 'healing'. I am leaving now, feeling very embittered, and I will not be able to return to your town."

This miracle of Christ and of the Mother of God was thus confirmed by the very admissions of the enemy of Truth. The news was passed on to our faithful on the following Sunday, and they gave glory to God and celebrated the outcome with hymns and chants.

CHAPTER THREE

MIRACLES AND SIGNS FROM THE SAINTS

1. We want the Apolytikion of St. Patapios.

One evening a pious Zairean couple arrived at our Mission centre. I knew them very well because they are assiduous followers of our liturgical Offices and of our catechetical teaching. They said to me: "Father, will you give us the Apolytikion and the Kontakion of St. Patapios?"

"Why's that? And how do you know about St. Patapios?"

They replied as follows: "Recently we have been through a lot of difficulties in our house. We prayed hard at night for God's help." The husband added: "One night I had this vision in a dream. I could see that I was holding tightly onto a rope and walking towards one of our churches without touching the ground, and my wife was walking behind me in exactly the same way. At that moment, a monk came out of the church and said to us: 'Do not be downcast about your problems. Take this Gospel and this prayer rope (komboskoini): read, pray and call upon my name and I will help you. I am St. Patapios.'"

They believed themselves to be receiving an actual gift. The Bible was open at the Gospel according to St. John. So I translated the chants in honour of St. Patapios into Swahili with the help of a Zairean and gave them to the couple with an icon of the saint.

N.B. St. Patapios died towards the end of the sixth century and his body was found in a grotto in the Peloponnese in 1911. His feast day is December 8th.

2. Go into this church...

One morning in May 1994 a Zairean aged more or less fifty arrived at our Mission. I welcomed him and he told me his problem. He seemed troubled and uneasy and said the following: "Father, I am a worker at Gecamines. I fell seriously ill. As the doctors were unable to help me, I asked God to have mercy on me." I asked him to which church he belonged.

"I am a Roman Catholic," he replied. "One night I saw in a dream several priests like yourself wearing shining habits and celebrating the Liturgy in a church looking like yours. One of the priests approached me and said: 'God has heard your prayer but to win salvation you must join our Church. For it is the one true Church'. I do not know you nor the name of your Church. But I have approached you because in my dream I saw priests like you, with beards and black cassocks like yours. I asked other people who told me that only Orthodox priests look like the priests in my dream, and they also told me where to find your church."

I advised him and gave him a book, and suggested to him to come to our church for catechism every Sunday. Since then he has been a faithful member of our church, and has not perished from the grave illness which so afflicted him.

3. This Church is the true Church.

In the month of March 1991, the priest in charge of the Orthodox Mission Centre in Kolwezi, Archimandrite Meletios, had left for Likasi to celebrate the Forty Day Memorial service following the death of a Greek woman called Sophia. One evening, he was walking along the street towards the church of St. John the Forerunner, and a Zairean woman was following him from behind. She drew near him and asked to be excused, and then told him the following: "Father, I am a Roman Catholic Christian. Every day I ask God for guidance towards salvation. One night I had a dream. I saw a priest dressed as you are, with a beard, and his face seemed to be full of light. He came up to me and spoke to me in Swahili, which amazed me as

this was the first time I had seen him. He showed me a church and said: 'Since you plead with tears to be shown salvation, behold, here is the true church where you will find it. Go to this church and the priest will tell you what you must do to be baptised [this would have meant Fr. Augustine].'

Father Meletios listened to her with interest until they arrived at the church of St. John the Forerunner, when the woman suddenly cried out: "This is the church that I saw in my dream!" She broke down in tears of joy and emotion.

4. Where are you going with that luggage you have packed..?

Part of our Mission is a boarding school of between thirty and fifty boys. Their supervisor is a young man called George, a teacher who was baptised in our church a year beforehand. His lifestyle set a good example, he was courteous and obedient, and we thought he might become a priest at a later date.

In the months of November and December 1990 he began to harbour evil thoughts which lingered like dark clouds in his mind, because the Mission had recruited a new Greek supervisor to whom George was subordinate. As he refused to work under this new supervisor, George was deeply unhappy and had begun collecting his things and packing them into three cardboard boxes ready to leave for elsewhere. But he wondered how he would be able to get out. One evening he came up to me and said: "Father, I have prepared my things ready to leave, but today at about five o'clock in the morning an old white priest appeared to me and looked at me very sternly and asked me in Swahili: 'Where are you heading for with that luggage?' I looked at him and was too afraid to say anything. He continued speaking though: 'Be careful, if you leave the Orthodox Church you will see how evil deeds will attend you all your life.' He said that and disappeared." In the evening we went to the church of St. George for prayers. After prayers, we kissed the icons of the saints and George came up to me trembling and said: "There Father, that is the saint who appeared in my dream." It was Saint Nectarios, who died in November 1920, bishop of the diocese of Pentapolis in Egypt: a great saint of our time who performed many miracles.

The boy did not heed the saint's advice however. On 15th January 1991 he stole the Mission car, took his things and went to Lubumbashi, in shame and distress. A week later the Greeks of Likasi caught him at the station as he was trying to have the car transported by rail having filled out all the necessary forms and applications. He was hoping to make for the north of Africa and to carry on from there into Europe.

After this lapse George returned to his former "Church" and greatly suffered. All that Saint Nectarios had foretold for him came true.

5. The Dove and the glimmering flame.

Among the clergy and members of our Mission in Kolwezi is a deacon named L... . He stands out for his great obedience, humility and love of his work.

One day I went up to him and asked: "Father, how did you become Orthodox?"

"I remained unbaptised until 1983. I heard talk of the Methodists and I approached them to begin with. I followed their teaching, but when they proposed baptising me I sensed that my soul was resistant to the idea. I then went to the Pentecostals, but I left them for the same reason. My soul could not find peace anywhere.

"One day as I passed the Orthodox church, my thoughts incited me to enter. It was the first time ever that I had experienced peace and joy within. An inner voice told me that I had at last found the true church for which I had been searching. I asked to see the priest who at the time was Father Cosmas. I attended catechism and a year later was baptised with other brethren. As I emerged from the baptismal font I saw a dove hovering above the heads of the newly baptised and other brethren saw the same thing. Father Cosmas explained that this was the symbol of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon us, just as He had descended at the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan."

"Father L..., how did you become a deacon?"

"Father Cosmas presented me to Archbishop Timothy for ordination. I remember it: as I bowed my head to the altar and the bishop laid his hand on my head and read the prayer of ordination, I felt a sort of burning in my heart like a lit candle or a kitchen fire kindled from glowing coals. I experienced then such joy that I asked Christ never to let this fire be extinguished within me. But after a while the fire grew weaker. Still, an inner voice when I calmed down a bit gave me to understand that this fire would never be completely extinguished and would remain there always as a glimmering flame. And it is that glimmering flame that I experience constantly; sometimes it weakens, but other times it intensifies."

6. I will not leave this place until I am cured.

As we well know, it is by means of faith that a believer can receive the grace of God. God's mighty gift is beginning to become apparent to the young Orthodox believers of Zaire. The story which I am about to tell took place at the beginning of 1994.

Deacon Lazarus' wife was suffering from high blood pressure. We were all afraid because her pressure had reached 28TA and to us it was a miracle that she was still alive. We took her to Lubumbashi to the "Dom Bosco", a modern and well-equipped hospital belonging to the Roman Catholic Church. The doctors there examined her and with the help of treatment managed to reduce the pressure. The situation grew less anxious. But when we returned to Kolwezi her pressure was very high once again. It was now that Maria said to us: "I will go to the church of St. Nectarios [the one next to the Mission's clinic] and I will not leave the place until he has cured me." The woman took a small icon of the saint in her hand, which she had asked for from her husband, and went and took up position standing and praying in front of the large icon of St. Nectarios in the church's icon screen. Her husband, Deacon Lazarus, was standing at her side with the same faith and conviction. They spent the whole night like this praying. In the morning her health was completely restored. St. Nectarios had performed a miracle. Since that day the woman has been hard at work in the fields as before, without any health problems. Glory to God and his Saints for their miracles!

7. Trinitafilia is brought back to life.

One evening in May 1994 I had gone to the village of Musonoi about 4km away from Kolwezi. We have a parish there, SS. Theodore, with a beautiful church built by Father Cosmas. I met Simeon, our catechist, and discussed parish affairs with him. I asked him to tell me whether SS. Theodore help them or not. He replied: "Yes, they help us a lot, Father. You see that young girl over there. She had died and the saints brought her back to life." While we were talking this little girl was busy playing with other girls in the church yard.

"How was she brought back to life? I would like to hear that story," I said to him.

"It was one evening, she was playing outside the church with some other children. She felt thirsty from the hot weather, and left to go home. Outside the house, right next to it, stood a large 200 litre vat half-full of water. The child climbed on top of this vat and cupped her hands to drink from, but lost her balance and fell into the vat, and was drowned. In the meantime the other children were waiting for her to come back, but she did not.

"Not long afterwards her mother arrived back from the fields. The other children told her that they had no idea where their friend was. So the mother set about looking for her child and began to cry. When she went to draw water from the vat, she found her child there already dead. Her cries and wails were indescribable. For my part, " said Simeon, "I urged her to stay calm and to take the child into the church,. If the saints so wish it, they can bring her back to life.

"The mother took the child and went to the church. When they reached the door of the church the child started vomiting water through its mouth. She opened her eyes and asked her mother 'Where are we going?'

"God's saints had performed their miracle. It is impossible to describe everybody's joy. On the following day we celebrated the Divine Liturgy and gave glory to the saints for this miracle."

8. He heard the harmonious chanting of some choir...

The catechist Simeon told me another story of a miracle. One night, at nearly nine o'clock, a woman passed close by the sanctuary of our church. She suddenly heard beautiful chanting emerging from the sanctuary, although she could not see anybody inside. Weak with shock she hastened to the house of the catechist Isaac (who is nowadays the parish priest).

The woman told him the news of what she had heard and asked him to follow her to the church so he could listen to the singing too. They both went and stood by the sanctuary window, but Isaac, the catechist, heard nothing. The two SS. Theodore had therefore allowed only the woman to hear the angelic songs.

9. The two SS. Theodore performed the operation.

"Very near here," said Simeon, "lives one of our parishioners called Vlasios [Blaise]. Two years ago he fell ill and was to be operated for appendicitis. There were two doctors in Gecamines, one a white and the other a Zairean. We know both doctors well and we asked Vlasios to go and visit the white doctor because of his medical knowledge and experience.

"He replied: 'First we will go to church to ask God for help and then we will see.' So he went to church and then went home for the night. The same evening the two SS. Theodore appeared to him and said: 'We will perform the operation and tomorrow you will be healed.' That night they came and took him to hospital on a stretcher and proceeded with the operation. They cut open his stomach, and then sewed it up again in the right way. Then they said to him: 'Now you are in good health again.'

"In the morning when he awoke Vlasios saw that he had been operated on, as he had seen in his vision. He gave thanks to God and to the two saints and since that day he has followed the teachings and practices of our Church."

10. An idolatrous woman...

The two SS. Theodore performed another miracle in the parish of Musonoi, this time in 1993. Simeon the catechist told us the following story:

"In spring 1993 during the fighting between the Katanga and the Kasai tribes, there was a lot of trouble here in Musonoi and a large number of people were killed. A Kasai woman who was an idolater had a child who had been a long time sick with malaria. Her friends and parents were urging her to go to the witchdoctor as quickly as possible before the child died. There was also the problem of how to get away from the area to go to central Zaire which is her tribe's homeland, as the Katanga were driving the Kasai out and pillaging and burning their homes. The idolater said to her parents: 'I have been told that there are Orthodox here and the people who dwell in their church perform miracles. I am going there.' She was referring to SS. Theodore. She therefore took her child who was close to death in her arms and went as fast as she could to the church of SS. Theodore in Musonoi.

"As she approached the entrance to the church her child woke from its heavy sleep, in fine health, and asked to eat. The saints had performed their miracle. The woman went into the church, gave thanks to the two saints and made her joyful news known to everybody.

11. Not here... there is a church.

At the time of the tribal fighting, another miraculous occurrence took place. A group of twenty eight soldiers with an officer at their head had left Kolwezi and were making for the village of Musonoi. They belonged to the Katanga and intended to attack the Kasai. Among the intended victims were many Orthodox Christians from our SS. Theodore parish.

As the group of soldiers came running, machete blades in hand, down the road leading to our church the leader said: "No, not here, we cannot go this way. There is a church." They turned back and went round another way to resume their pursuit of the Kasai. The SS. Theodore had performed yet another miracle and saved our Kasai Christians who lived next to their church.

One ought to note that on the same road before arriving at our church there are also two or three "churches" belonging to Protestant communities, and that the soldiers in question had swept through here unhindered leaving numerous victims in their trail.

12. A pupil at our boarding school told us...

At our Mission boarding school there are a number of children, and one of them, Joseph from Musonoi who belongs to the parish of SS. Theodore, told me the following miraculous story about the saints of his church.

"When I was a small child," he said, "I suffered terrible stomach upsets. One night the Saints Theodore appeared to me and said: 'Do not be unhappy. We will take care of you.' In the morning all trace of my illness had completely disappeared.

"Another time I was playing with other children outside the church while the catechists and faithful parishioners were inside reading Vespers. I was happy enough just playing outside and it never occurred to me to go inside the church to join the others and pray. That night SS. Theodore appeared to me and scolded

me sternly: 'When there are services in church you should go there as the other Christians do and pray. If you carry on playing at those times we will punish you'. I paid no attention to their words and continued playing as in the past. The second time they appeared to me in a dream and asked me angrily: 'Why did you not listen to our advice?'

"I did not answer them and they began to strike me with a whip. In the morning when I woke up the whole of my body was hurting. But because I was young and careless, I continued to play while church services were being held. I received a second violent reprimand from the saints and afterwards changed my way of behaving."

13. Theft at the parish of SS. Theodore.

In 1982 some thieves broke into the church and stole icons, oil lamps and various other items. They discarded the lot out in the bush somewhere, and a year later some children discovered them as they were playing and called Father Cosmas who came to fetch them. They had not suffered any damage in spite of rain, heat, insects etc... during a whole year.

14. Spiritual advice.

In 1987, a parishioner from Musonoi was honoured by a vision of SS. Theodore, as he loved the saints very greatly and prayed to them often with invocations. He saw the saints before him in his house. They radiated light and told him to pass on this advice to other believers: 'Do not drink wine to get drunk, do not harbour ill feeling against anyone, do not commit adultery. Let those who are not Orthodox be excluded from the church.' This man received Father Cosmas' blessing to take the icon of the saints into his house.

15. An angelic threat.

In 1989, a Christian woman had left the church to go back to the city of Gecamines in Musonoi. Another day, later on, she wished to come to church again. This time though she saw one of the SS. Theodore standing in front of the door of the church holding a two-edged sword. She was afraid. The saint reproached her for having disobeyed Father Cosmas' spiritual advice. The woman repented and the saint allowed her to pass. This woman currently lives in Musonoi, and is the mother of the child whom the saints brought back to life.

16. A spiritual punishment.

A worker from Gecamines in Musonoi had drunk a witchdoctor's potion and came to our church intending to murder a Christian. When he arrived at the church entrance he saw a colonel from the army there brandishing a sabre. It was Saint Theodore. He pretended to deal the man a death blow and the latter fell half-dead to the ground. A while later he awoke from his coma and returned home. He fell ill and remained in hospital for eight months. It was the man himself who told his story to our catechist Simeon.

17. The two mounted protectors.

Two religious leaders from the Protestant community called 'Postolo' (Apostles) went into the grounds of our church of SS. Theodore and suddenly saw two riders on horseback, one on a white and the other on a red charger, circling the church to protect it. The Protestants fled. Other Christians had already testified to seeing the same miraculous vision.

18. Our saints are present with us in all circumstances.

When our cantors sleep in the church they can hear during the night the sound of horses coming into the church, entering the sanctuary and then vanishing. This happens especially on the night before and the night after the feast of SS. Theodore each year. On the evening before Christians and non-Christians alike can hear the chant of 'Agios, Agios, Agios...' (Holy, Holy, Holy...). They ask our Orthodox parishioners: "What happens in your church during the night?" When a believer is praying in the church at night, he can often feel somebody come and stroke his shoulders. Every year on the commemorative feast day of SS. Theodore there is abundant rain, a sign of blessing.

19. Rescued from the mouth of the chasm.

One day an Orthodox Christian from Musonoi, a driver in Gecamines, was performing various manoeuvres with his tipper lorry. The vehicle was to fall down a sheer drop but Saint Theodore had caught the driver by his belt and thrown him from the lorry. His companions thought their colleague had died but they found only the empty lorry in the bottom of the quarry. The driver was still at the top and was shouting to them overjoyed. Everybody was wonderstruck by the power of SS. Theodore.

20. Saved by one of the Saints Theodore.

A young girl belonging to our church, Agapie, had been ill a long time before she joined the catechumenate. When she was received into our Church, the catechist Simeon and she prayed with fervent faith. When they entered the church of SS. Theodore the child fell to vomiting during thirty minutes and became very weak. When she lay down to sleep, she saw one of the Saints Theodore who said to her: 'Stand up, your illness is over.' She stood up and felt strong and well. She is eighteen years old and since that time has never had to visit hospital nor suffered any other illness.

21. Healed by the oil from an icon lamp.

A boy called Demetrios had been bewitched by some child sorcerers. He had many warts on his body and on his head and his skin resembled that of a toad. His parents took him to hospital but to no avail. Finally they went to the church of SS. Theodore. They coated the child's body with oil from the icon lamp of SS. Theodore, and the saints healed him. He is now 17 years old and has never fallen ill again.

22. Father Cosmas appears to the children.

On 27th January each year, the anniversary of his death, Father Cosmas appears to the children of Musonoi although only to those aged six or seven. Only in 1996 did he fail to appear to the children and the latter were very saddened.

23. Healed by Father Cosmas.

A boy called Stamatios was ill. His father saw in a dream one night Father Cosmas saying to him: "Do not cry, from now on your child will be healthy and strong." This boy is ten years old and has never been ill since.

24. Signs of birth.

A woman had given birth to five children and had subsequently given birth to none over a period of ten or twelve years. She spent a lot of money on hospitals but without any result. She consulted traditional healers but all to no avail. Finally she approached the Church and sought the intercession of the saints. They took mercy on her and shortly afterwards she gave birth to a boy who was given the name Simeon. That was in 1989 and the child lives to this day.

25. Tragic death.

Our catechist Nicodemus from Mwadingusha told me that when he was baptised in 1980, he was appointed to the role of catechist a year later. But it was a time of troubles and misunderstandings within the church.

"Firstly," his story goes, "I saw in a dream that as I stood in the sanctuary with Father Jacques a long snake with two heads made as if to devour him. I suddenly heard a voice that sounded like the voice of P..., another Christian, calling me: 'Nicodemus, come and help your priest, Father Jacques.' At that moment I awoke with fright.

"On the following day my wife fell ill. Three days later I had a further dream in which I saw the Mother of God with the expression she has on the icon in the church of St. Andrew in Lualaba. The Mother of God began digging a grave in front of the entrance to our house. I went right up to her and asked her to give me the spade so that I could dig too. When I woke up I told my wife none of what I had seen. In the meantime her illness grew worse and the members of our Church committee took her to Kolwezi to Father Cosmas at the Mission. She confessed and I did the same. It was a Saturday so I returned to Lualaba for the Sunday Liturgy, while my wife stayed in Kolwezi. She died during the night. On the next day many priests arrived to lay her mortal remains to rest in Lualaba.

26. Greek inscriptions.

The following miraculous story was told to me by Eskilos Lumbu Malubani, the catechist at our parish of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ in Lubumbashi.

"I was baptised," Eskilos told me, "on 5th November 1983 in the parish of St. Stephen and was married to my wife Kyriakie on 5th April 1983. In 1990 my wife ran away from our married home to her parents in Luena. She had to travel by train. When she arrived at Lubudi Station, a miracle occurred. Some inscriptions in Greek appeared on her right hand. When she reached Luena, her parents were shocked to see her and took their child to the parish church of Luena. Fortunately they found the Zairean parish priest there, Father Agathonikos. When he saw the writing, the woman confessed. She told the priest everything beginning with how she had run away. The priest then told my parents-in-law to do all they could to send their daughter back to her husband as quickly as possible: 'Your child has entertained the idea of divorce and

that is what has caused God such sadness.' The girl's parents were afraid and asked Father Agathonikos for forgiveness. They sent my wife back to me in Lubumbashi without delay. Ever since the day of the miracle we have lived together without a hitch. I saw with my own eyes the writing when my wife returned to Lubumbashi. Two days after her arrival the inscriptions disappeared."

27. Trespassing...

"One day," our catechist Ilias Mukuna Kayombo told us from the parish of Saint Demetrios, "my wife Catherine was arrested in the quarry at Gecamines. My wife is accustomed to go to sell vegetables (sombe, lengalenga...) in the market at Musonoi, and her route takes her as it does everybody through the quarry of Gecamines, as there is a footpath leading through to Musonoi. All the villagers of Tshamundende go that way to reach Musonoi. On October 25th 1988, the eve of the feast of St. Demetrios, my wife was arrested on this path by the industrial security men of Gecamines and taken before a tribunal along with various other people passing through. She had not stolen anything valuable from Gecamines to merit such an arrest. They had simply arrested her for trespassing among the grounds and installations belonging to the industrial group. I went to see Archimandrite Cosmas Grigoriatis who gave me money with which to pay the fine to the Public Prosecutor, and as soon as the sum was paid my wife was released.

"Another time, on October 25th 1990, my wife was arrested again for trespassing on this route which everybody takes without a problem to go to the market in Musonoi. I paid another fine to the tribunal and my wife was released. It is a very strange thing that this arrest occurred on exactly the same date, on the feast of St. Demetrios on a public thoroughfare."

28. The child should die in church.

"One day," our catechist Ilias told us, "my child was seriously ill. That night at one o'clock in the morning he showed various symptoms that told us, his parents, that he did not have long to live.

"When I realised that I said to my wife Catherine that we should go with the child into the church so that he could die there instead of dying in our house. We both left the house very sadly and entered the church. We knelt with the child in front of the icon of St. Demetrios and started praying beginning with 'I believe in one God...' and with 'Have mercy upon us, O Lord...'.
"

"We also anointed the child with oil from the icon lamp of St. Demetrios. And a little later we saw that the child was returning to normal, despite all the hopeless symptoms we had noticed before, and that his breathing was normal again. From that time on the child recovered."

29. A stroke of lightning.

Ilias the catechist told me of another incident experienced by his parish of St. Demetrios in Tshamundende. "In 1987 when Archimandrite Cosmas and Father Kyrillos were still in Kolwezi, there were very heavy rainstorms and the lightning struck our church. We had seen bright flashes all over the village and heard tremendous claps of thunder. Without realising it we were being guided to the place where this remarkable lightning had landed. The rain had started at three o'clock in the afternoon, and at five o'clock I went to the church as usual to celebrate Vespers (*Esperinos*). As I entered the sanctuary I found that the

glass of the window in the centre of the sanctuary was broken, the cross had fallen onto the altar and as it fell had put out the lamp on the Holy Table. But the lightning had caused no other damage in the church."

30. The vision of three women.

In our parish of St. Anastasia we heard the following testimony: a woman parishioner, Mama Stavroula, saw three women in a dream. One said she was called Anasstasia, another Catherine and the other Suzanna. "They explained to me ways of praying." This woman Stavroula followed their advice and prayed for her husband to give up smoking. Sure enough, as of then her husband stopped smoking.

A woman catechumen in the same parish testified that when she joined the Orthodox Church, she heard in a dream hymns being sung in the sanctuary of our church and then saw three women, one in the middle of the church and the others at the side by the chairs. The one in the middle blessed the woman catechumen who in turn woke up and realised that she was in her bed.

31. Outbreak of the Measles.

We acknowledge the help that St. Anastasia gives us in all sorts of areas, but especially that which we received during the measles epidemic in which many children lost their lives when it struck our city between 1980 and 1982. Every day another two to five dead bodies would be added to the total. But St. Anastasia lent miraculous protection to all our Orthodox children: even though some of them were also infected with measles they all recovered without a problem, unlike the children of other religious communities in our city.

People asked themselves why it should be that Orthodox children who caught the disease did not die whereas other children were dying in numbers every day. Being unable to understand the miraculous intervention of Saint Anastasia other parents treated us as sorcerors whilst we, for our part, recognised just how strongly our Church is grounded in truth.

32. Miraculous protection.

During the tribal and political tensions between the Katanga and the Kasai peoples, Saint Anastasia protected all the faithful from the attacks of the military who were looting the homes of a great many people and claiming numerous lives. But not a single one of our believers suffered loss of life or property. On that occasion we were able once more to observe that our Church and our saints are strong, and protect us in all situations.

33. Protected from cholera.

Our catechist in the parish of the Twelve Apostles in Luena informed me of what had happened during an outbreak of diarrhoea and vomiting which had killed a number of people in our village in Luena. We responded by organising a seven day fast in the church involving women and children. We drank only holy water which Father Jacques Banza had given to us. Each morning we would drink some of this holy water, and then prostrate ourselves before the icons of Christ, the Mother of God and all the saints. Because of this not a single member of our church was infected by the disease; none died, all were saved.

Everybody was amazed by this miracle of the Twelve Holy Apostles, and the Roman Catholic Church no less than the Protestant communities wondered why it should be that the Orthodox did not die. It is because we use the *komboskoini* in prayer, and we address petitions to the Mother of God.

34. Who lit this oil lamp?

"On the feast day of St. Eleftherios," our catechist Joseph said to me, "we found the oil lamp already lit in front of his icon, though nobody had interfered. We were all amazed and shuddered with holy fear."

35. An Orthodox priest in Luena.

Every year as Great Week at Easter approaches, the children see an Orthodox priest at the entrance to the village, with a black cassock and beard, stepping out of a car and carrying an attaché case.

36. Miracle after baptism.

Our catechist from Bukama, Abraham Nkule-Ngongo, told us the following story: "In July of the 1994 Seminary year, while we were here at the Orthodox Mission Centre, my daughter, who is called Geargette Mpanga wa Nkulu, fell seriously ill in Bukama. As soon as my wife realised the gravity of the illness she began to regret my absence from home. But she told herself that since the child's father was away in the service of God, there was nothing further she herself could do to secure the child's recovery beyond surrendering to the will of God, praying to the Eternal, the God of Israel, who comes near all those who call on him from a sincere heart.

"Our neighbours had also discouraged my wife by thinking the child to be on the point of death and insisting that she be taken to hospital as quickly as possible. Despite her low spirits my wife left for the hospital. On the way they passed a place where children were listening and dancing to Zairean music on a radiocassette recorder. As my wife drew near the spot the cassette player suddenly stopped playing Zairean music and broadcast instead the Swahili song 'Ninaita Bwana, Bwanauniokowe', meaning 'Lord I call to you, Lord save me'.

"My wife and her younger sister who was accompanying her heard the song and my wife realised that it exactly corresponded to her own prayer; and when they arrived at the hospital the child proved to be cured."

37. A miraculous cure.

"For my part," the catechist Abraham continued, "on December 11th 1995 I was seriously ill with malaria and bronchitis, and had been two weeks in bed without eating or drinking water. During that time I had a dream and saw a man who had been dead since 1993 coming to accost me. I wanted to escape but he was coming straight for me. I finally decided to speak to him and asked: 'Why and how have you come looking for the servant of God when you yourself are a ghost?' He replied: 'Servant of God? What, with all those Orthodox priests wearing black cassocks?' I replied that God is over everything and repulsed him with the sign of the Cross. I said that he was accursed and would die a second death; one week later I was cured.

N.B. All this amply demonstrates that with Divine Power we can fend off the assaults of Satan and that our God performs miracles to uphold his servants.

38. How do you Orthodox pray?

In 1994 in the parish of St. Achilles which belongs to the Katanga region, the house of the subdeacon Akilas Lumeta was robbed in broad daylight with the loss of a brand new article of clothing and a small sum of money. The whole family was out: the parents in the fields, the two children at school and the three youngest out playing. The burglar forced open a window and ransacked all three rooms, opening all the suitcases and scattering clothes all over the floor. On returning in the evening the poor Christian family found this scene awaiting them and realised that the only things taken were those mentioned above. They told the other Christians and their neighbours about it. And that night the subdeacon read the Paraklisis to the Holy Mother of God.

And so many people learnt of the story. Three days later the piece of clothing was found in Bungubungu, some 5km from Katanga, where the robber had sold it. He was reported and arrested. He replied to questioning and revealed how he had committed the theft. When the garment had been returned the robber was pardoned and released as he belonged to the village.

"That same month," continued Father Augustin Mwamba, "another burglary occurred, this time at the house of a catechist of the Roman Catholic Church. The couple had all their new clothing stolen. Having heard about the miracle which had happened to our subdeacon, he came to ask how it was he should pray to God in order to recover his lost goods. The reply was that he should invoke the Holy Virgin Mary. He returned home and did everything he could, with inquiries and investigations, but in vain. Still no result today. Everybody was amazed at how this miracle only held good for the Orthodox." [Told by Father A... from Likasi].

39. Matthew 6. 30- 33

One day in 1994, I was told by Father A... M... from the parish of St. John the Forerunner in Likasi, the Orthodox priest was working the soil behind the church as was usual after Orthros, with the help of his wife and sometimes his children, so as to be able to grow things on that plot of land. On that particular day they had nothing left at home in the way of food! Not even a Likuta (zaire) with which to buy anything. The family was at a loss what to do in order to eat.

As they worked, a European suddenly arrived wanting to see the parish priest. The latter introduced himself (Father A...) and the stranger told him that he had had a dream, and on waking had realised that he must give alms to priests. So he made over the sum of 50,000 NZ to the penniless cleric, who could only praise the Lord Jesus Christ for the mercy and succour he shows towards the faithful.

Father A... describes likewise a case of healing in response to the prayers of an Orthodox priest in a hospital. At the parents' request two babies were cured of the measles, which claimed a high number of infant lives in Likasi in 1991.

40. They two become Orthodox Christians...

"In 1976," I was told by the catechist Joseph Ngalamulume from the parish of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, "I started my career as a catechist in the Orthodox Church. I was put in charge of two

areas: the area of Kambemba and the area of Ruashi. At the time most of the catechumens in these two areas came to the church from a background of fetishism. In my teaching I would tell them that a true Orthodox Christian should fast and pray at all times to prevent the Devil gaining any hold over him.

"On this particular night I had a dream in which I saw a group of about a hundred people behind their leaders coming towards me to attack me. I started running from the village church towards the Ruashi area. Half way down the road I realised that they were constantly gaining on me, and doubled my speed and started shouting threats: 'Get away, you demons, I have nothing to do with you.'

"At that moment I took off and was running through mid air like an aeroplane; they stretched out their hands but could not reach me as I was at least a metre above their outstretched hands. I began cursing even louder, and my wife who could hear all my execrations was so afraid that she woke me up.

"Three days after this incident, on a Sunday, the same people came to church and a large number of them attended catechism to be baptised, having understood that they were powerless before our God."

41. The healing of my daughter.

The catechist Joseph Ngalamulume-Mayi told me another incident which took place, still in Lubumbashi in his parish of Our Lord's Nativity.

"My daughter was seriously ill in hospital, there was no hope for her to survive. I went to church to see the priest, who told me that he was very anxious, and gave me the Crucifix of Jesus Christ and gave me the blessing to use this cross. I went and did as the priest had told me.

"A day later the child was released from hospital, completely cured. God has performed many other miracles for me and my wife, my children and my mother, in cases of illness or of various challenges provoked by the Devil. Other visions are much more difficult to describe, but we can testify that God is all-powerful and compassionate."

42. Holy water.

I was told this story by the catechist Gerasimos from the parish of St. Charalambos in Kambove: "I was staying with my paternal aunt in Likasi. One day I dreamed that one of my aunt's daughters had taken some holy water from my bag. In the morning I went off to the market to sell some second hand clothes, and when I returned to the house I found things exactly as they had been in my dream. My aunt's daughter had removed the holy water from my travelling bag. She said: 'I could not sleep very well because there was holy water in the house, that is why I took it to leave with my mother.'

"Even before this miracle the little girl had already disclosed that she had once swallowed a fetish to fend off sorcerers' assaults, and I had told her that my 'fetish' was nothing other than this holy water. She added that Orthodox priests bless the water in cemeteries which is why the water acquires a miraculous power. I replied that the water is good and is indeed blessed, but inside the church. Since then despite my explanations she has been scared even just to enter the house."

43. An Orthodox priest censures the church...

Our catechist Panayiotis from the parish of St. John the Theologian told me the following miracle which occurred in his parish:

"My wife Marie Mpunga had a bad stomach. The illness caused her a lot of suffering and she wondered what she should do to be cured: 'I prayed in every way I could think of but God did not hear me. I went into hospital more than once but without success. How must my friends pray for them to receive an answer from the Lord?.' She went to see Father Photios to confide her troubles in him, and he urged her to pray without ceasing in order to vanquish the Devil who is always tempting us and testing our faith. Father Photios asked her to fast for three days without eating, only praying. She did as Father Photios asked her. On the fourth day she was still unwell, and after Vespers at seven o'clock she stayed behind in church. She went and stood in front of the icon of the Mother of God and said: 'I ask you to help me just as you have helped other women. I am suffering a lot with my illness, dear Mother of God.' Without feeling anything in particular she moved on to the icon of St. John the Theologian and prayed in the following manner: 'You who are truly the divine Protector of this church, how is it that you defend us and yet I remain ill? Pray for me and intercede with God for Him to help me, sinner that I am, as there is nowhere else for me to turn for refuge. This is why I have turned to you that you may ask Our Lord Jesus Christ for his healing upon me. I have suffered greatly.' With these words she began to cry. She was intending to continue her prayers when she heard the church door open and a priest came in. He headed straight for the sanctuary, took the censer, filled it with incense and began to cense the church. A fragrant smell spread through the whole church.

The woman took fright at this apparition and fled. She told the whole story to Panayiotis, who rebuked her for having run away; she should have stayed in the church to see the miracle concluded. They went to report the incident to Father Photios who likewise remonstrated with the woman for having fled the church, as since an agreeable fragrance had filled the place it was a sign of God's presence. After having this vision the woman felt very well again and became firmly convinced that the saints have power to intercede for us before God.

44. Saint David walks in the Tent.

Our catechist in the parish of Saint Athanasios in Musokatanda recounted the following:

"One Saturday I told our parishioners not to go hunting but to stay in the village so as to take part in the Sunday services. Two of the brethren disobeyed and went off hunting out in the bush. When they arrived they erected a tent and placed an icon of St. David inside. During the night one of them was woken up by calls of nature, and to his great consternation saw St. David walking about in the tent. He roused his friend who saw the same thing. The two were scared and left the tent and spent the night outside. Ever since that day they have ceased to be disobedient to the will of God."

45. A dilapidated house.

Our priest Romanos told me what happened in November 1977 when he was in Fungurume.

"There was very strong rain and a violent wind. I had two children in the house, one of them my nephew and the other my brother-in-law. They are called M... K... and A... I... respectively. At eight o'clock in the morning they got scared of the terrible weather and came into the house. The wind blew all the metal sheeting off the roof and the walls collapsed on top of the children hiding inside. The metallic bed on which they were sleeping was damaged, but the children were alive and well among the ruins. God had brought

about this miracle to protect my children." This occurred in our parish of St. John the Theologian in Fungurume.

46. The refusal to surrender his magic objects.

Father Romanos told me of another incident which occurred in the Fungurume parish of St. John the Theologian:

"In 1985 a catechumen called Sabachila had been attending catechism ready for baptism, but Father Cosmas had told all the candidates that before being baptised they should first bring in all their magic objects and talismans. They were not to conceal anything. All the same Sabachila concealed his magic objects and was baptised.

"Seven months after the baptism, he came to church with all his sorcerer's paraphernalia to see whether God was more powerful than his magic. He went up to kiss the icon of St. John the Theologian but felt a sensation as of an electric current passing through his body, and he fell ill on the spot. It was a Sunday. Nobody knew of his condition as he was too ashamed to tell anyone what had happened.

"After the Liturgy, when he returned home, his condition grew worse and he was taken to the Gecamines hospital in Kakanda. He remained there for six months without any improvement, in fact his condition was deteriorating. One day, a Wednesday at two o'clock, there was a class in the church. Brother Sabachila arrived all meekly at the church and asked to be allowed to speak. In the presence of children, women and several men he said: 'Father, I cannot die without revealing the cause of my illness.' He went on to describe how he had caught the condition in front of the icon of St. John the Theologian.

I asked him to confess before the icon of St. John the Theologian, but he was too afraid to stand in front of it again. Father Cosmas came to Fungurume and gave him the same advice, but he still would not follow it.

Some days later, the Greek doctor Thanos came to warn the Christians. Sabachila had come to him to explain his illness. The doctor had given him the same advice as the priests, and a few days later Sabachila died.

47. A miraculous conversion.

"One Saturday evening," I was told by our catechist Basil from Dilolo, "we were in our parish church of St. Anthony in Kambala saying the prayer of St. Cyprian.

"Outside an unbelieving mother was walking past and heard the prayer. The next day, Sunday, she came to the church and asked to speak to the catechist for a moment. She was given permission and said: 'I had been unwell for three months and was bleeding throughout that time. I went to visit the hospitals and fetishists without success. I even turned to the churches belonging to other denominations but the illness did not stop. Today though I was healed simply by hearing the prayer of St. Cyprian in the Orthodox Church.'" After first being baptised, she and her husband then held a religious marriage. Her husband is the president of the parish committee.

48. The church of St. Anthony was burnt down

Our catechist in the parish of St. Anthony in Kambala told me of a further miracle that took place in his parish.

"One morning in 1985 we found the church burnt down; it had a roof of straw. We did not know where the fire had come from, but fixed it out a second time. But when the catechist came to ring the bell for morning prayer (Orthros), he found the church burnt down and summoned all the Christians. As they were sweeping up the ashes, they came across the intestines of a goat. Nobody knew who had killed this goat, but the catechist Basil asked the Christians to go out in the bush and fetch building materials with which to rebuild the church for the third time. As they returned they saw a dog coming out of somebody's house with a piece of meat in its mouth. It was the owner of this dog who had stolen the goat of one of our Orthodox parishioners and slaughtered it in our church of St. Anthony.

"The owner of the goat reported the thief to the legal authorities. The catechist and members of our parish committee were summoned and asked whether they wished to punish the thief by exacting payment for the damages. They declined to ask for compensation for the church from the thief and told the magistrates that the real owner of the church who did require indemnities was God, not all we catechists and parish committee members. The thief became mad a fortnight after the hearing.

49. A miraculous intervention.

John, the catechist in the parish of St. John Chrysostom in Kabundji, told me the following:

"In 1989 I attended the seminary at the Mission Centre and after seminary I returned home. I had very bad diarrhoea, everybody in the village thought I was going to die. Then at night I had a dream in my sleep. I saw an Orthodox priest who looked like Father Agathonikos who had come to pray for me. He took his epitrachelion (stole) and laid it on my head and prayed for me before telling me that I would be cured. Sure enough I found I was cured as of that moment.

50. A miraculous visit.

John the catechist also told me about a Christian called Panteleimon who was ill. The catechist's wife had seen a priest who looked like Father Photios making for the sick man's house. John the catechist was out in the fields at the time, and on his return he was told that the priest had been to see Panteleimon and that if he wanted he could go and visit him. When he got to the sick man's house he asked if the priest had been to visit. The sick man replied that no, Father had not been but that at a given moment he had noticed a smell of incense burning and had felt a little better. A few days later he was completely better.

51. Work without a blessing...

One Sunday John the catechist was in church when the president of the parish committee announced to the Christians: "I do not want us to pray today, it would be more worthwhile for us to get on with the job of restoring the thatch on the church roof."

John the catechist though asked him to remember that this was a day of prayer, not of work. At this point the old man, Makarios, became angry and made the women and children leave so that he was left only with the men who were to undertake the work. The catechist therefore went by bicycle to see Father Photios

who lives in a village 12km away. He found the priest in the middle of the 'Evlogitaria' in the Matins service.

He went into the sanctuary and reported everything that had passed between him and the president of the parish committee. The priest said that this was not a good way of behaving and that jobs of this sort did not have the blessing to be done on Sundays. That night there was heavy rain and the wind blew away all the straw that had been laid that morning without leaving a single stalk, except for the bamboo poles and transverse wooden battens of the framework.

52. Healed solely by prayer.

Our catechist John Kapila from the parish of St. Athanasios in Musokatanda told me of a similar miracle: his five children had been infected with measles. Their father therefore turned to our Lord Jesus Christ and prayed fervently, with the result that our Lord healed all the children. There had been an epidemic throughout the region of Katanga which claimed the lives of many children.

53. I saw the Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God.

At the monastery of St. Nectarios where we have our clinic and a boarding school for young girls, an 82-year old Greek grandmother was taken into medical care, Mama Christina. She stayed there because there was nobody else to help her apart from the Sisters of our monastery. Her legs were paralysed and she remained on her bed in a sitting position without moving, praying with her *komboskoini*, praying to God to allow her to continue this prayer until the end of her life.

In the autumn of 1994 she told us that she had seen the Mother of God: "I saw Mary Mother of God. I recognised her. I knew who she was. Thousands of people were following her with lighted candles. She calmed me, blessed me and told me to walk." And she really did ask her companions to help her to stand up. They helped her to walk because she had been blind for nearly twenty years. She went round the garden and then returned to her bed without feeling any pain. She currently lives in Lubumbashi with her children. She is glad to receive many of her fellow brethren there and prays for everybody with her *komboskoini* as she awaits without fear the end of her life.

54. Three saints recovered the stolen radio.

On July 9th 1995 our secretary Cosmas went as usual to church with all his family.

That Sunday he had left nobody at home, despite the risk of burglars since he lives 4km from church. When he got home the radio which had been given to him by a missionary was no longer in its place on the sideboard. Everything else was in order in the house except for this radio which had disappeared. He knew which saints would be able to help him to retrieve the lost radio and he said to his family: "We must pray specially every evening to Saints Cosmas, Phanourios and Minas."

Four days later these saints performed their miracle. In the morning when the secretary Cosmas left his house to go to work he opened the gate to see the radio lying among the flowers. He looked to make sure and saw that it was his radio right enough, and in perfect condition. In his joy he proclaimed that the Orthodox Faith is truly great and that the saints really are alive and ready to come to our aid in all our times of need.

55. A new Saul returns to the church.

One January morning in 1991, Father Jacques came into our compound with a young Zairean. They greeted me warmly and Father Jacques said to me in front of the boy: "He wants to become Orthodox. I leave him to you to tell him what you think." Instead of bombarding him with questions I asked the man to tell me his story and how he had come to us. He was thin, serious looking and self-collected, no older than 30.

"I was born in Lubumbashi," he said, "the only son of devout Catholics, and I observed the faith and the teaching of my parents from my earliest years. When I was about twenty I was influenced by the preaching and spiritual allure of Pentecostalism and I joined their community. I loved studying Holy Scripture, and devoted myself to that with enormous zeal. I believed myself to have found the true church and thought I should strive to help others find salvation. My seniors were happy with me and gave me the title of pastor, and then that of preacher for the town of Lubumbashi and its environs. I dedicated myself to preaching the Word of God, and did so not just zealously but fanatically. I thought myself lucky because I was better than others and could force them whichever way I wanted with my interpretations of Scripture. I spent ten years visiting parishes and guiding pastors with my fiery sermons. I never hesitated to speak to people in authority, and it was me who converted the Governor of Lubumbashi from Catholicism to Pentecostalism, as well as various other people.

"One day as I was reading the New Testament I noticed that Christ had given to his disciples certain teachings and duties which we did not observe in our community. For example the power to bind and loose sins granted by the Lord to the Apostles and their successors (*John* 20. 22-23), Communion in the Body and Blood of Christ, Baptism and the priesthood of bishops and clergy within the holy Church. Many questions were roused in my heart, since my sermons failed to take these commandments of the Lord into account. I grew uneasy and began to wonder if the religion I followed was true or mistaken. These questions troubled me so much I was unable to sleep. I stopped preaching and decided to leave without telling anybody.

"I went to Kolwezi and rented a straw hut and did a bit of commerce, just enough to secure me food each day. I had broken off all religious observances, but I would pray thus: 'My God, I know that you left behind one true Church on the earth. The Pentecostalists and others have told me that the early Church has ceased to exist, but how then can one explain the words of the Lord when he says that "the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." (*Matt.* 16.18). Your Church exists then, and is one. Enlighten me that I may recognise it and follow it.' I prayed this way, day and night, without stopping for two years, but without receiving an answer or confirmation of any sort. I was assailed by doubts and clouds of despair were beginning to cover my soul. But God in his goodness saw my distress and was not slow to show me what I was looking for.

"One night as I slept I saw an unknown person dressed in black. It was a European wearing a black cassock and with a long white beard, his countenance was peaceable and his eyes full of love and compassion. He came up and said to me in Swahili: 'I am Saint Nicholas. If you wish to be saved join my Church.' Immediately after blessing me he disappeared.

"I got up in a state of amazement and wondered who this white priest might be who knew Swahili and which his Church was? Who would be able to take me to this Church? I went out and started asking

passers-by which Church Saint Nicholas belongs to. After a good few days of fruitless investigation, God sent me his envoy: an Orthodox Christian woman from the parish of St. George in Kolwezi who had heard about my enquiries and was overjoyed to supply answers to my searches. She led me to Father Jacques who lives there, and Father Jacques brought me to the Mission here today."

Such was the tortuous route whereby this young man found peace, in the bosom of the true Church who is the Mother of all of us. "How great is our God!" He patiently attended catechism up to the day of his baptism.

Today he is firmly opposed to Protestant pastors and makes sure he explains to them how he himself was brought to the Orthodox Church by the hand of God.

A month after our meeting the young man came to see me again to tell me how he was progressing in his new life and here is another incident he described to me: "One evening as I was reading the Epistle of St. James, I suddenly felt a light fresh breeze blowing round me. It entered into me and filled my whole being with joy and spiritual peace. It was the first time I had ever experienced such sacredness, and at the same time I could hear a voice saying: 'Abandon all the heresies of the other communities and follow the Orthodox Church unhesitatingly.' Father, I have no doubt that I now belong to the true Church of Christ. I praise God for the fact that the Orthodox Church is present here in our town, so near us. I thank you, the apostles of the Lord, for coming to our country. Pray for me to follow you for the glory of Christ."

Last year he was baptised under the name of Nicholas. He currently lives in Lubumbashi and works there for God in the bosom of our Church.

56. Double healing of an anaemic girl.

A great deal of humanitarian work goes on at the Orthodox Mission's clinic in Kamanyola at our Monastery of St. Nectarios, which is adjoined by the girls' boarding school. Here I would like to draw attention to just one miraculous incident.

A young girl called Kalumbu was a serious sufferer from anaemia, as she did not have sufficient vitamins or proteins, and was condemned to die before long. Her older sister, Kalliope, who had been baptised long before that with her grandmother, took the responsibility for breaking the news to her younger sister who was not yet baptised. Kalumbu then asked as her final wish to be baptised.

Father Jacques came and baptised her as she wished under the name of Anastasie. The miracle was that as soon as she was baptised, Anastasie was physically and spiritually healed. She rose from her bed and asked for something to eat, and a few days later was discharged from the clinic. Since then Kalliope and Anastasie have maintained close relations with the Monastery of St. Nectarios.

57. Miracle at St. Kyriakos.

In the month of July 1996 I had gone to the parish of St. Kyriakos in the village of Lwankoko towards the end of the maize harvest. Among the women harvesting was a mama called Paraskevi who was originally from Kolwezi. She is large, peaceable and a true Orthodox Christian from our parish of St. Geogre. She is endowed with a simple and humble personality. For a whole week she had been seriously unwell with angina of the throat and was unable to talk, communicating only by lip movements. While she was ill she had prayed to the Archangel Michael and asked him to come to her aid. One morning, on

Tuesday 16th July, she came to see me and we had a conversation. I was amazed to see her speaking when the evening before she had been incapable of it because of her throat, so I asked her: "How is it that you are now talking?"

She replied: "I'm very well today; my throat has opened up and the illness has gone." And she went on to tell me how during the night she had seen a white saint with a white beard dressed in white, who asked her: 'Are you unwell?'

'Yes, I am.'

'From now on your illness is over. Go and tell Father Jacques.'

Mama Paraskevi replied: 'There is no Father Jacques here, only Father Damaskinos.'

The saint said: 'Go and tell him to read the first Psalm of David and the first two verses of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 15.' Then the Archangel departed.

After Mama Paraskevi had told me all this I asked her: 'Which saints have you been praying to since you have been ill, and why?'

She told me that she calls on the Archangel Michael." Because in 1986," she continues, "I gave birth to a boy who was baptised under the name of Pachomios. That year he was seriously ill and close to death. One night a white Woman came close to me and said: 'Take your child to the Archangel Michael.' I replied that I did not know this Archangel. The Woman then said: 'Look at him. He is the one standing over there, go up to him and tell him your concerns.' I went over to him and knelt before him. I placed my child in his very arms. He blessed the child and stroked him and gave him back to me healed."

58. Miracle experienced by an unknown woman, not a dream but a reality.

Praise be to our God from generation to generation. What shall I say of Him? God of wonders and of all peoples. His miracles are numberless beyond all counting.

Unworthy as I am, I pray to be allowed to tell of this miracle which I experienced, in order to intensify the true Orthodox faith in the hearts of my brethren in Christ. On Monday 17th June 1996 at 5 o'clock in the evening, I fell into a coma because of the high levels of sugar which had accumulated inside me. Whilst in this condition, I effected a long and delightful journey to a better world, in which complete happiness and beauty reign. Nature, living things beyond comprehension and sumptuous clothing; all excite wonder. There thorns are not sharp but caressing. The lion does not roar but smiles, and all creatures address their praises to God their King, Master and Saviour: the Lord Jesus Christ. Time would not suffice for the description of all that I experienced whilst unconscious. On Tuesday 18th June at six o'clock in the evening, I came to and recognised my husband and the doctors and nurses who were standing around me in a state of anxiety. As for myself, I was free of care and soothed by all I had seen. I felt joy and peace of heart.

On the night between the 18th and 19th, I woke from my sleep at I do not know what hour of the night and began to live through mysterious scenes in the recovery room where I had been moved on the day following my loss of consciousness, that is to say Tuesday 18th June. The three small micros which were on tables in the room turned into human beings. They were talking about me without a doubt, as a moment later one of them threw a black and white coloured powder over me which covered me from head to foot, except

for the palms of my hands and the soles of my feet. I took a certain amount of it and showed it to my husband the next day when he visited me.

This monstrous creature also had two nets, one of which had been thrown on the floor and was advancing towards my bed but recoiling each time I opened my mouth to tell the nurse on duty what I was seeing. He made to throw the other net over the top of me the better to trap me. It was at this moment that I decided to call on the Name of the Lord and to ask the nurse for the telephone. All this time the three diabolical creatures were mocking me. But I had the time to telephone and ask my husband to come and join me, or if he could not then to pray hard for me as I was being seriously threatened. My husband did not come because visitors are not allowed except for at 6a.m. and 5p.m. but he performed *metanoies* (prostrations) at home.

Suddenly there was an earth tremor. The whole of the room which I was sharing with the other patients began to shake. I then saw the Holy Virgin Mary attended by two other saints whom I failed to recognise. They were clothed in white robes and veils and were standing talking not far from my bed. At that moment the three demonic creatures were confounded and struck with panic.

Afterwards I saw Christ with his crown of thorns, a short distance away but raised in the air. He smiled at me, and his Precious Blood spurting from his head burst into flower on the walls, ceiling and curtains. Each drop of Blood was divided into two. How sweet and beautiful is our Lord God! I then saw our heavenly Mother in all her splendour, smiling at me.

A little later the heavenly beings reappeared to me, still the same except that this time they were black, as we poor Africans are. They were so beautiful in this skin colour, reviled as it is by certain people on this earth!

Then I saw a large sun shedding gentle light and moving towards me. Looking carefully I could see the face of Christ in the sun, smiling at me. I also saw the face of a man with a beard and white hair in the way that God the Father is represented. He too was smiling at me. Finally I saw a large joyful group of people among whom I recognised Father Cosmas rising to Heaven on the right hand and he turned in my direction purely in order to smile at me.

After this vision I saw the figures melt away and turn back into micros. It was morning and the crows were cawing in their usual raucous way. When my husband arrived I told him the entire episode which men of science do not take seriously because they do not understand. On the other hand nor did they understand how I came to be completely cured when I had been in a critical state of health prior to this.

I remained under observation up until midday on Sunday 23rd June, and kept happy by listening to religious chants which nobody else in the room could hear but which I could sing along to when I recognised the chant. Also it was enough for me to close my eyes to see that other heavenly world which so enchanted me but which the others could not see.

When I came out of the recovery unit I went straight home without being processed via the clinic. And on Tuesday 25th June (24th being a holiday) I was well enough to resume work. But, thanks to God, our boss at work gave me some days off to rest as I was convalescing. May God be merciful unto him."

Conclusion: miracles lead to joy in men's hearts because they partake of God's grace which he bestows on orthodox believers. But we should not be content with miracles alone. We should always seek for ways in which to put the Word of God into practice in our lives, in the spirit of God-fearing humility

unto the end of our days. May the Holy Spirit guide us in this troubled world that we too may be present in the glory of the Lord when he returns to judge the world. Amen.

59. A miracle of St. Nectarios and St. Anastasia of Romania at the home of Father Lazarus of the parish of St. George in Kolwezi.

The wife of our priest Fr. Lazarus, mama Maria Ikosa, fell sick with high blood pressure (Ta.28) in 1991 and was miraculously healed by St. Nectarios.

The illness returned to her during the night of 28th/29th October 1996. Her body even became rigidly stiff with it. On 29th Father Lazarus came to see me to report her state of health. I sent the Fathers to pray for her and to ask for the intercession of St. Arsenios of Cappadocia and of St. Anastasia of Romania, as this is the date of her commemorative feast day. The icon of this saint was included among the icons they took with them. The envoys did as they were bidden before returning home. That night the sick woman had a dream: a white bishop who looked like our own Archbishop Timothy of Central Africa appeared at her side and prayed for her.

A young white girl then appeared dressed as in the time of the Apostles. She checked the patient's blood pressure and said: "I cannot heal you without the Bishop's blessing." Having received the blessing, she made a puncture in one of her arms. The Bishop then asked mama Maria: "Are you healed".

She replied: "Yes."

The Bishop asked her a second time: "Are you healed?"

She replied: "Yes."

Once again the Bishop asked her: "Are you healed?"

She replied: "Yes."

Finally the Bishop asked her: "In whose name have you been healed?"

"In the name of Jesus Christ," she replied.

As the Bishop made to leave, mama Maria begged him to stay a little longer as she wished to offer him something to eat. She went out to buy a chicken, rice and some potatoes which she then prepared.

When the Bishop said that he wished to lie down because he was tired, Father Lazarus made it known that there was nowhere suitable for them to offer him to sleep. The Bishop replied that he would spend the night in the priest's bed.

This conversation had been followed by Deacon Daniel and his wife, who were outside and were amazed by the conversation. When they rejoined the others inside the house to find out what was happening, the Bishop explained that nothing is impossible because God's blessing rested on the home of Father Lazarus.

When the meal was ready, the Archbishop shared it with all those present. Then he asked the following question: "Why have you not given Holy Communion to mama Maria?" No reply.

When he rose to leave, mama Maria asked him: "Your Beatitude, what can I give you?" Sister Thecla who was present said: "Give him an icon of the Mother of God." He then left.

N.B. We think 1) that this Bishop was St. Nectarios because he died as a bishop and what is more Father Lazarus' house is situated in the neighbourhood of the church of St. Nectarios, and 2) that the young white girl was St. Anastasia of Romania because the 29th October is her feast day.

60. Go to the Orthodox Church...

One day our leader Father Meletios received a telephone call from a doctor who was director of the Methodist community's maternity hospital, who told him that he wished to come and tell him about an experience he had in a dream.

With our leader's agreement, he came to see me and we were able to talk with each other. He informed me that he was a Catholic and that to his great amazement he had on three occasions had a dream in the course of which he had heard an inner voice saying to him: "Go to the Orthodox Church which is the true religion."

This was the only reason which had impelled him to come to us, and he came confirming his wish to enter our Orthodox Church with all his family: his wife and their five children along with a teacher.

Since then they have been permitted to attend the Liturgy each Sunday and to follow catechism. At the Mission they watch films about the lives of the saints and have received from me books about Holy Tradition with which to strengthen their faith. We wish them salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

CHAPTER FOUR MISSIONARY HISTORY

1. Our Orthodox faith reaches distant Sandoa.

A new parish has been establishing itself since 1993. The important point is to realise how our Faith arrived there, out in the town of Sandoa.

That year the Mission had sent a Zairean priest, Father Romanos, to visit his family there. When the other residents saw him with his black cassock and his beard, they asked him who he was and to which Church he belonged. He answered them and they in turn, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, asked questions about the Orthodox Faith brought to the world by Jesus Christ.

The first to show interest was a bank employee, a Protestant. He gathered information and then went to Kolwezi to meet Father Meletios and find out more. He subsequently took with him some reading matter for catechism and some icons and returned to Sandoa. This man began missionary work without further ado and with extraordinary enthusiasm. He attracted about three hundred catechumens to whom he gave intensive instruction based on all he was reading. He extended his ministry of the word to two other villages and urged the catechumens to build their own churches themselves, in the provisional way which is the norm, made of bricks with grass roofing. All this work was completed within the space of two years. The priest in charge of the Kolwezi Mission visited them on two occasions to help them to embark on their new spiritual life. They underwent the appropriate preparation, and in October 1994, 250 catechumens from three parishes were baptised.

2. The trials of missionary work.

One week before Christmas in 1994, the Mission sent Father Romanos to Sandoa, some 400km from Kolwezi, to celebrate the feasts there from Christmas to Theophany.

During the journey he fell seriously ill with malaria and spent the night at the house of Father Cosmas, the village priest of Kawayongo. On the following day they continued with difficulty their journey to Sandoa. They arrived but it proved impossible for Father Romanos to perform his priestly duties. They sent us a message asking us to send them a vehicle as quickly as possible to transport Father Romanos back to Kolwezi as his condition was very bad. The Mission sent the nurse, Sister Xenia, with two others to Sandoa. It was the rainy season and there was a lot of mud on the road, which had become a running river. They arrived after a journey of eighteen hours and incredible difficulties, the vehicle having become stuck in the mud twice. In Sandoa the newly baptised Christians and the 200 catechumens brought to the faith by the zeal of the catechist T... were waiting and greeted them with great warmth. They helped Father Romanos and then left again straight away without even taking any food for the journey. So ended the adventure in the Zairean jungle.

3. Better to be poor and Orthodox than rich and heretical.

In the village of Luena, 300km from Kolwezi, we have a parish dedicated to the Twelve Apostles. The parish catechist there is one Joachim, who was a teacher at the Methodist primary school until 1993.

The Methodists had pressurised him to enter their "Church" on pain of losing his job. But Joachim, a convinced and devoted Orthodox Christian, resigned himself to the loss of his job with all the consequences that this entailed for his family, in order to keep his Faith. He left the school and began working in the forest making wood charcoal to sell as a means of upkeep for his four children. He has now opened an Orthodox primary school, where he has gathered Orthodox children, and the Mission pays them frequent visits to help with the administration.

Blessed are you Joachim! Jesus Christ will never abandon you, for you are a pillar and a true confessor of Orthodoxy, for Africa in general and for Zaire in particular.

4. Better to be poor and Orthodox than rich and Muslim.

In total the catechists at the Orthodox Mission in Shaba number nearly 150. The Mission does not pay them but it does provide help with their material needs, in the form of medical supplies and other things.

The catechist of Fungurume had had the opportunity to grow rich. Some Muslim missionaries had in fact offered him the chance to become one of their "catechists" with a salary ten times that of an Orthodox priest. But standing firm in his Orthodox faith and with the help of the Holy Spirit he rejected this Satanic proposal. He remained a catechist and continues to work in his field, resolutely holding on to the treasure of the true Faith received from Father Cosmas.

Blessed are you too Panayiotis! The grace of Christ will never leave you helpless, for you have not rejected God in favour of Mammon!

5. Sacred artefacts rescued from fire.

In the village of Tshipaya, where one of our parishes is located, our catechist one day suffered a misfortune. His thatched house was reduced to ashes, because of a fire he had lit to warm the house and on which to cook. Everything he owned was destroyed. Among the ashes though he found a number of items intact, and was surprised that they had somehow managed to be saved; namely a New Testament, a wooden cross and a *komboskoini*, all unharmed by the fire. In this way, in saving these sacred objects from the fire, God gave him great comfort in his misfortune.

CHAPTER 5

TESTIMONY FROM BAPTISMS

1. Maximos Bulungo.

“Before stepping into the water I was afraid and ashamed to be standing in front of all the people around the baptismal pool. But as soon as I climbed the steps up to the font, I felt the fear and shame leave me.

Once in the water as the priest placed his hand on my head to plunge me underwater, I felt a sort of electric current pass into and through my body from the priest’s hand, making me plunge and then rise again. When I emerged from the water I was very happy and felt a complete lightness in my body and in my heart, like somebody laying down a heavy load they were carrying on their head.

When I received the Body and Blood of Christ, I felt a warmth throughout my body, and an inner voice told me that my soul had received Salvation. Then I uttered the prayer ‘Glory to thee, our God...’ in my heart, reading from the book of prayers.”

2. Timothy Kakwata wa Kakwata on 10th June 1996

“After my baptism I felt a tremendous joy. My heart was light within me. I felt that I had been newly created in the truth. I felt I had become a different man and that I carried within me a heart full of love. Since that moment I have loved God very much, as I am now aware of the Truth. I give you my thanks.”

3. Gregory Sahenga Hitshika on 23rd June 1996.

“Having been baptised in 1992 by Father Meletios who was then in charge of the Mission, I thank God for his goodness in setting me on the wonderful path of Orthodoxy. It is the path of truth and the only Church which keeps the Tradition handed down by the Apostles of Jesus Christ into our own times. May the goodness of God be praised!”

4. Meletios Ngandu.

“It was after confession that I felt something had left my body, and felt much lighter. You could say that I was already in Paradise, as my face expressed the change from one world in which we used to live without knowing what we were doing to another world, the world which one inhabits in Christian life. Those were my feelings on the day of my Baptism.”

5. Damaskinos Kalenga Mwangal.

“After my Baptism I experienced a change, a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Immediately after the ceremony of Baptism my heart was filled with a great joy, like that of somebody released from prison, and that joy was followed by a sense of lightness throughout my soul, throughout my body and throughout my spirit, comparable to that felt by a man who is freed from a heavy load that was weighing him down; I felt disencumbered of something that was oppressing me and weighing on my heart. Since my true Baptism I have led my life under the guidance of the Holy Spirit as I am afraid of sinning, as opposed to the life I led as a pagan which made no distinction between right and wrong,”

6. Christodoulos Mutshaila on 23rd June 1996.

“I was baptised on 8th June 1996. When I emerged from the water I felt very light and I later felt the power of the Holy Spirit within me, and believed that from that moment on the Holy Spirit had truly entered into me. Since then I have been guided by him. Everything that I do is guided by God. Now I have become a new creature in Jesus Christ and have learnt patience. Now, by the will of the Holy Trinity, I pray so that my brothers who have not yet been baptised in the Orthodox Church may experience this in their turn. I give thanks for everything in the name of the Holy Trinity. Glory to God. Amen.”

7. Emmanuel Mazeze Mutelo.

“I praise the Lord my God for having helped me to recognise the true Christian Church and the true Faith. Before being baptised I was not living according to the Word of God. When I began attending catechism classes I also began to change bit by bit. Until then I had been in the habit of masturbating, wanted to have sexual relations with girls, I was proud... and afterwards whenever I felt like committing some bad act, an inner voice would say to me: ‘No, do not do that, it is bad.’ I am glad and grateful for all that God has done in my life and I give thanks to Him. Glory to God!

8. Despina Yav Kabey, 17th June 1996.

“After my Baptism, I felt great joy in my heart and when I emerged from the water, my body had become completely light. My brother-in-law saw that my face looked like a little girl’s and was greatly taken aback by it. On the Sunday, the day after my Baptism, somebody who is not a member of our Church was amazed when she saw me and said that I had changed and become a new creature. Even the voice inside me was asking where this change had come from but I could not give an answer.

“On the day of my Baptism a photograph was taken of me and my family and when I looked at this photo I was amazed at the radiance of my expression. I believe that this light revealed the presence of God in my body.

“From that day to this I have been always joyful. This all testifies to the presence of God in my heart. When I went up to receive Communion, I felt a great joy such as I had never felt before in my life.”

9. George Ngoy wa Kasongo Mutenekwa.

“I was baptised on 7th January 1995. I am an English teacher at the ‘Light of Christ’ I.T.A. in Kolwezi. I received my spiritual instruction about the true Orthodox Church to begin with through the Headmistress Mrs. Efterpia Maftas-Ilias, and then from our Archimandrite Meletios, who taught me that

man cannot find Salvation other than in the bosom of the Church of Christ and not outside it, and also in general from the various sermons I heard in church.

“This principle, that Salvation can only be found within the Church, I had already heard when I left the Roman Catholic Church. I had joined the Protestants. One day a Catholic priest had also said that nobody will find their soul’s salvation if they remain Protestant to the end of their life.

“And so I decided like Joshua to join the true Church along with all my family, to serve God in the bosom of the Orthodox Church. I even brought my sister-in-law who was baptised under the name of Despina Yav Kabey along with the rest of my family. The children baptised that day were: Christine Kabamba who was 10 years old, Irene Maloba who was 8, Nicholas Ilunga who was six, and John Nshimba who was 3. My wife Ngombe was baptised and took the name Myrianthe.

“After Baptism I felt great joy throughout my body, my whole body was released from its heaviness and became very light, and this joy brought with it total inner peace. The joy is indescribable, I find it impossible to make others understand how I felt.

“I felt as if a fire had been kindled in my heart from my love of always going to church. Every time the chants and the Liturgy would produce a great joy in my heart. In my spirit I see our Monks as Angels when they celebrate the Liturgy. This is a small version of the great joy I felt after my Baptism.

“At the same time though this joy has been a source of temptation to me on the part of the Devil trying to make me fall after my Baptism. But God has made me victor on each occasion so far. The joy that I have described was quite unknown to me in the days when I belonged to other ‘Churches’ before becoming an Orthodox Christian.”