

As most of you know, we began dialoguing with Bp. Mike Quigley probably over a year ago, and those conversations eventually developed to the point that he determined that he wanted to establish an EOC mission parish there in Brookfield, MO. I began doing Zoom catechism classes earlier this year with him and several other interested people, and that has gone well. Finally, a mission parish was formally commissioned this past weekend. This is my report of that blessed event.

First, a little background about Bp. Mike and the ministry that he has been doing for many years. He served as a military chaplain for a number of years and also has a heart for the most needy and often neglected in our society. A number of years ago he began to have a vision for connecting together many para-church subculture chaplains/ministers. He, together with others, formed a ministry group that was eventually called the Kodesh Mishkan Ministry Group (KMMG). I believe Kodesh Mishkan is Hebrew for Holy House or Holy Dwelling. This ministry group is governed and directed by a clergy board and has 2 primary branches, the KMMG Seminary and the Emergency Services Corps. The ESC connects some 700+ chaplains nationally and internationally, many of whom minister to the most troubled or roughest subgroups of our society, such as bikers, addicts, goths, prostitutes, punk rockers, homeless, etc., as well as other more traditional avenues for chaplaincy such as policemen, firemen, hospitals, jails and prisons. In addition to that, another aspect of the ministry also provides disaster relief and chaplaincy during small and large tragic events, from a personal house fire affecting a single family to the 9/11 terrorist attack affecting the whole country. They initially did this in partnership with the Red Cross, but that organization's recent insistence that their volunteers affirm anti-Christian values caused them to pull away on their own. They have works in Uganda, Africa as well, and our own Bp. Jacinto is working on connecting with their bishop there, Bishop Hallan.

This is their mission statement listed on their Facebook Page:

"Kodesh Mishkan Ministry Group is a subculture ministry facilitation group. Our mission is to train, equip, coordinate and deploy well-trained, effective, Christian Para-Church Ministers, Pastors, Chaplains, Teachers, Evangelists, and Lay Volunteers, in support of their individual ministries to particular factions of society in the US and Worldwide." This post accompanies that statement: "You are now entering the mission field! Your mission, should you decide to accept it, is to find the divine icon of God that exists in every human being, no matter how badly damaged or deliberately obstructed it may be, and to honor it in service to Christ, our Lord."

Each location has its own unique ministry emphasis and is made up of volunteers and "tent maker" ministers from different Christian traditions. In Brookfield, MO, where Bp. Mike is at and where we established the mission parish, they secured a big, old downtown building that is owned by someone else, but Deacon Dan took over the management of the building. They were allowed to make the front, lower level of the building their own, which they have renovated to include the KMMG office, chapel, large dining hall, kitchen and a couple extra rooms.





The rest of the building and upstairs includes 2 wings of apartments. A few apartments still have tenants, but most have been vacated and left in bad condition with a lot of debris and other items laying around. They are working to clean out these rooms, trading labor for their rent, and the hope is to eventually take over the whole building and turn the upstairs into a

semi-monastic retreat center. For the downstairs area that they have already renovated, the goal all along was to operate a soup kitchen for the hungry and host occasional events or a coffeehouse in the large hall, and that dream began to come to fruition while we were there. They had the ribbon cutting on that Saturday and offered several meals to the public. This downstairs area is called the St. Porphyrios Mission, named for an Orthodox saint who was a chaplain and ministered to the needy.



They also had the ribbon cutting this past Saturday for the St. Tabitha Thrift Store, which they just began setting up in the past month or so in a building next to the current building described above. The thrift store will help provide funds

to run the mission center. Our ladies from St. Paul EOC who were with us (Kathy, Ruth Ann, Virginia) worked hard on Friday to help get the thrift store organized and cleaned and ready for business, then they helped run it on Saturday. I believe that, between people coming in to buy stuff while they were still working on it on Friday, and people coming in for the official opening on Saturday, it took in over \$500!



All of that is just to give you a flavor for the setting into which the mission parish is being established. The idea of establishing an EOC mission parish came about because a couple of years ago the KMMG governing clergy realized that

they needed to establish core beliefs that they were going to operate from. Bp. Mike had already begun a journey toward orthodox Christianity, and that influenced the direction that they ended up taking, which eventually brought Mike into contact with us. But also, at the same time, he was beginning to recognize the need that he himself and his wife had to have a local parish that expressed orthodox beliefs and practices. While initially he was looking to us for camaraderie and a source for sound doctrine, he found that everything we were about clicked with his own vision, especially in regards to our tendency to bridge together many aspects of the faith that encourage ecclesial unity rather than division and sectarianism. He and I have grown to really love and appreciate each other and have a mutual respect for what each of us brings to the table. So, as mentioned earlier, we entered into dialogue last year. He and his wife, Elizabeth, have been here to our church twice, and now I have been there twice, this time with Kathy, the Crums, and the Jensens.

After almost a year of getting to know each other better, and after 3 months of catechism, it was time to take the next step, which was to establish them as a mission parish. Fr. Leo and Dn. Patrick and I did liturgical training and led services while our ladies helped in other ways, and the whole weekend was a rich blessing, expressed as such from both sides. In the midst of Divine Liturgy we did the Service for the Commissioning of the Mission Parish.



They will begin doing abbreviated versions of our Vespers and Divine Liturgy from here on out while they labor at building the parish. We provided a few of the practical things that they needed to get started at well – service booklets, censer/stand, and we loaned them our portable icon triptych to use for a few months while they work on building one of their own. The hope is that eventually the mission will grow beyond provisional status and into a full-fledged parish. All kinds of signs are there that it will. Dn. Dan is Bp. Mike's right hand man, and he is the one doing a lot of the renovation work. Elizabeth is gone a fair bit right now doing traveling nursing, but she wants to do that because that is helping to fund some of the projects in these early days. Ben Eagen, who currently lives in Burlington, IA, plans to move there to join them in the near future. They are all as fresh and real as they come, but with integrity and a passionate love for the Lord and for helping people. And they are thrilled about being connected with us. May the Lord bless this new mission parish and all the ministries that they are involved in, and bless them with every needed grace!