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## **A journey of faith and philanthropy: Young volunteer from Perth visits the Orthodox Mission in Southern Madagascar**



On Wednesday the 16th of July 2025, with the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia and in the presence of His Grace Bishop Elpidios of Perth, Anastasia Tahos presented an inspirational talk on her recent trip to the Orthodox Mission in Southern Madagascar. Her talk was given at the Church of Sts Constantine and Helene at the weekly fellowship gathering held there every Wednesday evening.

The room was filled with awe and emotion as Anastasia recounted her incredible experiences with His Grace Bishop Prodrornos of Toliara and Southern Madagascar at the Orthodox mission which operates under the auspices of the Patriarchate of Alexandria.

Anastasia is a young 22-year-old, enthusiastic volunteer at the Church of Sts

Constantine and Helene in the Holy Diocese of Perth. From the 15th of June, she undertook a two-week missionary journey to the growing Orthodox Mission in Southern Madagascar. The trip was coordinated between His Grace Bishop Prodromos and His Grace Bishop Elpidios of Perth. She was inspired to travel to Madagascar following the visit of His Grace Bishop Prodromos to the Holy Diocese of Perth in March this year. During His visit, His Grace delivered a moving talk and video presentation which left a lasting impression on Anastasia and all the faithful. Deeply moved by the missionary zeal, spiritual vitality, and humanitarian efforts unfolding in Madagascar, Anastasia felt compelled to witness and support this sacred work firsthand.

### Education at the Holy Diocese

During her time in Madagascar, Anastasia participated in numerous school graduation ceremonies, including those held at the Diocesan School, which was established with the support of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia and is named in honour of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia.



At each graduation, the students and their families gave heartfelt thanks to God and to His Grace Bishop Prodromos for the opportunity to access education—an immense gift in a region where schooling is often limited. At several of these

events, His Grace personally blessed the graduating students.

Within the compound of the mission, there are primary and secondary schools, an orphanage, and a church, with additional facilities under construction. In the evenings, Anastasia taught English classes to a group of approximately 30 students aged 8 to 35—many of whom attend after a full day's work or study. The program is free of charge and sustained by the Diocese.

### Serving the Most Vulnerable

A significant part of Anastasia's visit was dedicated to volunteering at the Orthodox malnutrition clinic, which serves over 80 children each day. These children are weighed and measured every two weeks and provided with milk powder and other basic nutritional support. She recalled the heartbreaking sight of a child aged 18 months weighing just 3 kilograms—a stark reminder of the dire health challenges faced by many in the region.

Anastasia also assisted in the Orthodox free medical clinic, where volunteer doctors from Greece treat a wide range of conditions including infections, malaria, tuberculosis, hernias, and viruses. These volunteer doctors from Greece also work with local doctors and nurses to provide free medical care. She supported the work of the paediatric team, who, despite limited resources, offered highly effective treatment and compassionate care. The clinic is equipped with x-ray and ECG machines, dental facilities, and a fully operational pharmacy. She also joined a medical team travelling to a second Orthodox clinic located approximately two hours away, where treatment is provided twice weekly.

### Daily Food and Water





Each morning, the local clergy—often joined by Bishop Prodromos—distribute warm milk and biscuits to primary and high school students as part of a vital feeding program. Even during school holidays, children return just to receive this simple nourishment.

Anastasia also participated in food distribution visits to remote villages, where each community typically has an Orthodox church or school, and where journeys of several hours are often required. In one village, she observed the delivery of clean water via a Diocesan water truck—a critical service in areas that may receive rainfall only a handful of days per year.

### A Living Orthodox Witness

Anastasia joined the faithful in prayer and worship at the main Orthodox Church in the Diocese, the Church of the Annunciation, where the Divine Services were conducted in Malagasy and led by local clergy and Bishop Prodromos. The church was filled with over 100 parishioners whose chanting reflected a deep love for Christ and the Orthodox faith.

A particularly moving moment occurred during a visit to a local prison, where Bishop Prodromos delivered words of consolation and spiritual encouragement to

the women inmates, reminding them of God's abiding presence and the Church's love for all her children, even in the darkest of places.

Her visit also included time at the female Monastery of Saint Joseph the Hesychast where the sisters quiet life of prayer supports the missionary work of the diocese.



### Witnessing Simplicity and Gratitude

Beyond structured programs, Anastasia experienced the everyday reality of life in Madagascar. In one village, she witnessed the humble home of a family of six, constructed entirely of sticks and clay and containing little more than a few containers of water. Yet the joy, dignity, and hospitality of the people left an indelible mark on her heart.

In a gesture of love and solidarity, and with support from Australian donors, Anastasia distributed toys, and educational materials to children in schools and

villages. She shared moments of singing, dancing, and play with the local children, forming bonds that transcended language and culture.

## Conclusion

Anastasia's journey to the Orthodox Mission of Toliara and Southern Madagascar was a powerful testimony to the living presence of Christ's love in action. Under the pastoral leadership of His Grace Bishop Prodromos, the Mission is not only a centre of Orthodox worship, but also a sanctuary of compassion, education, and medical care for thousands in need. All services and care offered by the Diocese, are provided to all the locals in need, not just the Orthodox Christians.

As the Orthodox Church continues to grow and flourish in Southern Madagascar, the faithful of Australia are reminded of the deep spiritual and philanthropic bond that unites our Archdiocese with our brothers and sisters in mission lands. Anastasia's experience is a call to prayer, support, and continued awareness of the sacred responsibility we share in spreading the Gospel to all corners of the earth.

At the conclusion of her talk, Anastasia was congratulated by His Grace Bishop Elpidios on behalf of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia for her excellent presentation and missionary journey.

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