

The Greek Priest Building Schools in Africa



Father Antonios Mutyaba is not your usual Greek priest. He is responsible for the education of hundreds of children in Uganda, through the four primary schools and one secondary school he has built.

“Africa is suffering from illiteracy. Education can take Africa out of its misery,” he tells Greek Reporter in fluent Greek.

Father Antonios was born in Uganda and his grandmother was the first in his family who converted to Orthodoxy. Today, more than 100,000 Ugandans are Greek Orthodox Christians and the Church is celebrating 100 years of important work in the country.

Mutyaba first studied Agronomy at the University of Athens as a young man, but his ultimate dream in life was always to become a priest. He finally entered his course of study at the Seminary of St. Matthew in Chania, where he was ordained a priest with the blessing of His Eminence Amphilochius.

"I feel Greek, I dream in Greek, I wake up with a Greek song, I dance Greek. I feel Greek because I love my fellow human beings," Father Antonios tells us.

The priest had met and married his wife Charitini in Greece by the time he had been ordained. Charitini was also ethnically Ugandan but had been born and raised in Greece.

He explained his life's mission by saying "I wanted to come back to Africa and help." Together with Charitini, and with the support of the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Kampala, he has dedicated his life to creating a better future for hundreds of impoverished children.

Thanks to private donations from Greece and Cyprus, he manages all five schools, which provide education, medical care, food and shelter to more than 1,200 poor and orphaned children, instilling hope and dignity into their lives.

Speaking to Greek Reporter outside the primary school he built at Bwetyaba, a town around 40 km (2.5 miles) outside the capital city of Kampala, Father Antonios says the school is completely inclusive: "Students from all tribes and religions are welcomed here."

His aim is to create an environment where pupils not only receive a solid education but learn to do good for their fellow citizens, and themselves as well.

"The more one is educated, the better life becomes on Earth," Father Antonios says. "Human beings must be free. They should not be submissive." And by repeatedly inculcating this ancient concept in the next generation, Greek culture can help Africa, he adds.

"One of the most important Greek values is freedom of thought and resistance to oppression. These are the values we want to instill to our students," he says pointedly.

Many students come from faraway towns to attend the school. Father Antonios has accordingly built a dormitory where orphaned and disadvantaged students can reside during the school year.

Father Antonios is also looking to create sustainable sources of income and food for the schoolchildren, such as the fish farm he built right next to the school.

"We are planning to build more fish farms, which could become a source of income for the kids but also a lesson on nature and sustainable development," he says with

pride.

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