

Transcontinental visit of the Archdiocesan District of Adelaide



With the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, His Grace Bishop Silouan of Sinope has devoted some time in recent years to visiting towns in the remote regions of the vast District of Adelaide. Adelaide is the gateway to the Outback, with the District encompassing South Australia and the Northern Territory, and for practical reasons also some remote towns across the borders into New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia. These towns are among the remotest in the country, if not the world, and rarely have had the opportunity to be visited by Orthodox clergy.

Having gained some experience in outback travel with a series of shorter trips (including one that was 2,500km), His Grace with a small team of six people was emboldened to embark on a more ambitious trip to bring the Sacred Mysteries of the Church to the people of Outback Australia. This trip would involve following the steps of John McDouall Stuart - the first European to traverse Australia from the South to the North and back again (in 1861-62) - travelling the full North-South length of the District of Adelaide along the highway named in his honour.

The catalyst for this journey was the baptism of twins of a young Orthodox couple in Alice Springs. Affectionately known as "The Alice", "The Red Centre", or simply "Alice", the town was named after the wife of telegraph pioneer Sir Charles Todd, who was responsible for constructing the overland telegraph line from Adelaide to

Darwin. Coincidentally, it is also the name of the mother of the twins being baptised (“Alik”) – and so it was that “Alice from Alice” became the main contact for this leg of the journey.

Alice Springs has a sizeable population of around 25,000 – a number that would rank it 4th in a list of population centres of South Australia. It is situated between the East and West MacDonnell Ranges, at an elevation of 545m, straddling the banks of the (normally dry) Todd River. It began as a service centre for the pastoral industry in the region, but its economy has now diversified to also include public service, defence, mining and tourism. It is home to a number of famous events like the Henley-on-Todd Regatta (held in the dry riverbed of the Todd) and the Finke Desert Race which attracts competitors from around the world.

Alice Springs is famous for being in almost the very centre of Australia – halfway between Adelaide and Darwin, being nearly exactly 1,500km by road from both. At this distance, it is slightly too far to drive comfortably in a single day – and so a stopover was arranged at the half-way mark of the journey at Coober Pedy, on the evening of Thursday 23rd November 2023. The team stayed overnight and rested, celebrating the Paraklesis in the morning at the local Church of St Nicholas. They were joined by the local monk, Fr John Eslick and a dozen or so locals who made their way to the Church before work that morning – a very pleasing turnout for such an occasion. After the service, the team made its way to Alice Springs, arriving on Friday evening.



His Grace had prepared for two pairs of baptisms at Alice Springs, (twin sisters from one family, and a sister and brother from another) for Saturday 25th November 2023, kindly hosted by the local Roman Catholic Church. To have received four children into Holy Orthodoxy would indeed have been a big blessing,

but what greeted the team on Saturday was beyond expectations – by the end of the day, five Chrismations, four Baptisms, two Weddings and a funeral service – twelve sacraments in all had been solemnised. Truly this was a great blessing from God! This is because many of our faithful living in Alice Springs did not have access to the sacraments of the Church during the most important moments of their life.

The following day, the congregation again gathered for Sunday worship, celebrating Matins and the Divine Liturgy. Around 30 people assembled, many of whom partook of Holy Communion. His Grace addressed the people on the theme of Sunday's Gospel – the story of the rich youth. He warned us of the dangers of material wealth and encouraged people to read the Scriptures, in order that they might gain spiritual wealth rather than material. After the Liturgy was a quick pack-up to continue with the next leg of the journey to Tennant Creek.

In all, this first leg of the transcontinental pastoral journey exceeded all hopes and expectations. It was a journey that was blessed and fruitful, and it was a journey that was completed in just a few days.





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