

A day in the life

An OCA priest-chaplain shares his ministry in Afghanistan

On Monday, April 6, 2009, just two days after his arrival at Bagram Air Field for his 10th duty tour in southwest Asia – this time to support the Orthodox Christian personnel in Afghanistan during the lenten and Paschal seasons – the Very Rev. Alexander F. C. Webster, Chaplain (Colonel), US Army Reserve, had the distinct honor of concelebrating with the Orthodox chaplain for the Romanian battalion religious and military honors for a Romanian soldier, Maj. Marcel Tiberiu Petre, killed in action while on a combat patrol.

In Father Alexander's own words, "The rites began with a Fallen Comrade Ceremony – a deliberate vehicle procession of the Romanian flag-draped casket on the main streets of Bagram Air Field from the mortuary to the Enduring Faith Chapel, with hundreds of US and Coalition military and civilians standing at attention along the route, saluting."

At the chapel, the Rev. Bogdan Oancea, Romanian battalion

chaplain, and Father Alexander concelebrated the Orthodox Wake Service before escorting the casket to the flight line.

"There we were joined by another Romanian Orthodox priest-chaplain, who had just arrived from Bucharest, for the Ramp Ceremony and to escort the fallen warrior back to Romania for the church funeral and burial," Father Alexander related. "We chanted the Litany for the Dead over casket in the presence of a Romanian detachment and a US contingent that included a number of general officers before the fallen warrior's remains were taken on



Fr. Alexander Webster [in stole second from left] with Romanian Orthodox chaplains and the CJTF-101 deputy command chaplain render the final salute.

board the aircraft for the solemn flight directly to Romania.

"It was at once sorrowful and joyous, inspirational and sobering – a testament to the true universality of our Orthodox faith throughout the world," Father Alexander added. ■

Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry to hold convocation July 28-30

The 2009 convocation of the Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry (OCPM), an official agency of the Standing Conference of the Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas, will be held at the Crowne Plaza Denver Airport, Denver, CO, July 28-30, 2009.

The convocation will gather the many Orthodox Christian clergy and laity from across North America who are engaged or interested in prison ministry for education, encouragement, worship and fellowship, and a free exchange of ideas.

Hotel reservations at a special rate of \$79.00 per night

are available through July 17 by calling the Crowne Plaza at 303/371-9494. Registrants are asked to mention the Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry when making reservations to obtain the special rate.

Participants may register on-line at www.ocpm-scoba.org/convocation.html. Registration forms also may be downloaded from the site and mailed to OCPM, PO Box 22965, Oklahoma City, OK 73123. The registration fee is \$125.00 before June 15, 2009 and \$150.00 after that date. Financial assistance is available to those for whom the fee may pose a burden.

OCPM's goal is to bring the love of Christ to those who are in prison by providing encouragement, material support, transition and reintegration services, Christian education, spiritual guidance, and the sacramental life of the Church to prisoners and their families.

For further information visit OCPM's web site at www.ocpm-scoba.org. ■