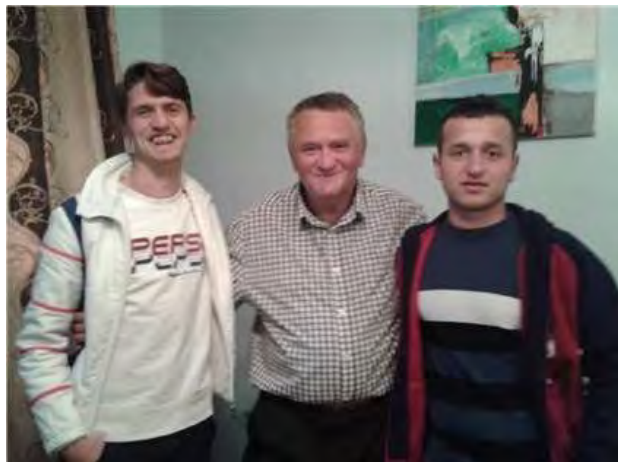


## My Albanian experience November - December, 2013

Bengt de Paulis  
July 30, 2018



**By Mr. Bengt de Paulis, a Swede living with his Blessed Family in Finland**

In the spring of 2013, the Nat. Leader of Finland Mr. Yoshizumi and I discussed what to do to get results in church activities. He also knew my desire for life in a warmer climate.

He suggested I go to Albania to have the experience of that providential European country. I contacted Mr. Gani in Albania and later in the summer 2013 he welcomed me to come to stay some time in Albania.

Travelling is expensive as we all know, so I started researching flight prices. Flying from Helsinki Finland to Tirana Albania would cost about 500€. (too expensive for my budget) Options were Athens for only 50€, and Rome also 50€. (because of tourism I believe) So naturally I choose one of those two options. Athens seemed better since it would only involve a bus trip to Tirana.

I asked if there were members in Athens were I might stay overnight. The **Porfyr** family was kindly welcoming me.

After a beautiful morning flight over Baltikum, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria. I arrived at the Athens International airport. It was a beautiful sunny day, as Finnish mid-summer. What start could be better.

After warm welcome by the Porfyr son Digennis, I experienced the nice hospitality of the Porfyr family. The next approaching weekend was planned as 2 day Workshop in Athens, with Tim Miller and Brother Russel arriving from UK. So Porfyr naturally asked me to stay for that event.

After the WS we travelled to some other members in Athens and celebrated Childrens Day. Next week I boarded the overnight bus from Athens to Tirana which was a gruesome 15 hour ride. – Little sleeping. Finally arriving I was welcomed by Mr Gani and his wife Marjeta.



*Just arrived after 15 hr bus from Athens*



*Members welcoming guests to the UPF event*

That coming weekend was a big event for UPF in Tirana. I was welcomed to take part which was held in a rented hall full of VIP:s and some members. The Albanian TV was there filming the event for the evening News.



*UPF event being filmed in Tirana*

Next coming weekend would an Internal Workshop for members with Ashley and Susan Crosthwaite from UK leading. So half the first week was spent with brother Tani in the Tirana center.



*Tirana center. Tani being very busy lecturing every day, new guests*

The WS was held in Mullet training center, in the beautiful surroundings of countryside outside Tirana. This was a much appreciated WS with the elder Ashley and Susan leading.



*Susan Crosthwaite*



*Ashley Crosthwaite*

Areas like Healing, Marriage life and Church life was covered in the workshop. This was very professional, Susan and Ashley, thank you.

In Albania there are 6 church centers: Shkodra, Tirana, Durrës, Elbasan, Korça, Vlora (western spelling),



*Sister from the Japanese team welcoming us to breakfast at Mullet Training Center*



*Doing the dishes*



*Family Evening*



*Nature outside Mullet Training Center*

Some days after the Workshop, Mr Gani [Rroshi] suggested I go to the nearby city of Elbasan, where Ajet and Greta recently started as center leaders.

Travelling between cities in Albania is made with minibuses (called "furgons") When the minibus is full of people, normally around 10 people off you go. No timetable needed.

Arriving in Elbasan, I was welcomed by Ajet and sister Dajana. The center was about 10 min walk away. There we were welcomed by 3 more sisters Elda, Nexhi and Greta.

The weekly schedule was, 06 HonDokHae, then exercise, breakfast and lectures if guest were coming, or internal guidance by older member Mr Arben.

Witnessing normally in the afternoon after lunch.

Evening meal around 8pm.

Then lecture practicing and end of Day Prayer session.

I had some good results, even I don't speak many words Albanian. Some spoke English, though most not at all or not so good.

With a few Albanian phrases learnt, and by handing them telephone number to center leader Ajet, I could encourage them to call him and find out more.

Some guests I was able to lead directly to the center door where they were introduced to Divine Principle by Greta or one of the other sisters. One man, a strong Christian prayed in the morning to meet someone to witness about Jesus to, so later in the day he met me on the street. I introduced myself and invited him to the center. Some days later I was for the 2nd time approached by him on the street, and then I felt I really had to act on the moment, and led him to the center. He continued to come daily for several weeks, and agreed to go to the January workshop in Mullet. This was a success for me and our center members.



Together with UPF in Elbasan we planted trees in a park. The City Mayor was there and Albanian National News TV covered the event.



*5 Dec we created the first Holy Ground in Elbasan*



*With Mr. Gani reading the instruction and Korean leader Rev Shin performing the Blessing together with members, we had our first Holy Ground well established in Elbasan. Soil from Chung Pyung was planted at the tree.*



Old and New LEK. The Albanian Currency LEK can be confusing for a foreigner like me. When you ask of a price, people answer in the old LEK which is 10 times the New lek. So above you look at a 5000

LEK they say.



*Elbasan Castle. The only field castle in Albania*



*The City of Elbasan with snowy mountains at far away*



*Street Witnessing*



*Mr Arben, the first Blessed Brother in Albania, giving Internal guidance. He has three children; two sons and one daughter, first son is Jacob's child and the two others second generation*



*Country people, very friendly. We got 3-4 kg oranges, and people often invited us into their homes*



*Ms Elda giving Lecture*



*25 year Birthday – Ajet Center Leader*



*Countryside fundraising*



*Every Thursday 4PM CARP meeting, Lecture and then a Game*



*Saying goodbye to Albania – Way back via Macedonia-Serbia-Hungary-Austria-Finland*



*Final view of Albanian beauty – border with Macedonia*

### **Some Reflections:**

Possible conclusions of Albanian Unification Church success:

Past and present poverty – people seeking innovative solutions for better future.

Very strict Communist rule similar to North Korean until recent 1990s created a spiritual vacuum.

An openness to religious traditions = openness to new Thoughts

Muslim 60%, East Orthodox 20%, Catholics 10% living in harmony together.

Young Unification Movement – started in 1990s – inspired

SPIRITUAL CONDITIONS: Prayer, Fasting, Lecture-practice

New members not sent abroad to missions, meaning church centers can be stable and grow.

Good organized Divine Principle lecturing traditions, Daily, 5-day, 15-day...40 day national team (Why not 2, 7, 21 and 40 Day?)

More reasons...I am sure there is...

End.