

Bits and Pieces

by Father Daniel Maurer, CJD

Bread production is 30% lower this year than last, and only 50% of capacity. But the city is growing by leaps and bounds with immigrants from other areas. The bread lines are getting longer and longer each day, with the "No Bread" signs put out earlier and earlier each day. Meanwhile, some people are making a killing on all the schemes one can think of to sell off the resources of the country to foreigners.

We have begun a Children's Choir in preparation for Christmas. I've been working on Christmas music for the Adult Choir and the congregation. Last year we had only two Christmas hymns, a bad Russian translation of Silent Night, and *Adeste Fideles* in Latin. We recently found eight very nice Christmas carols in Russian, and each Sunday we are teaching two more. Meanwhile the choir is working on four others in two and three part harmony, including a better version of Silent Night. Our organist, Anya, is a musical genius, and our parish is becoming famous in the diocese for good music.

On October 31 we concluded our 8th baptismal class, with seven baptisms and five confirmations, but only the second class for which I did all the teaching. One lady did not show up: her husband had died in Japan on a business trip two weeks earlier, and some of her "friends" told her it was God's punishment for wanting to become a Catholic. But it turned out she merely had the wrong date. She thought baptisms were on the holy day of All Saints, November 1, so she came with her daughter and proposed godparents expecting baptism. A small group of parishioners remained after mass for her baptism and confirmation which was hastily arranged at the last minute.

In November someone gave us some oatmeal and someone else gave us some raisins, so Father Myron baked some soft oatmeal cookies using a recipe he got from St Mathias' Parish in Fort Ripley, Minnesota. They were absolutely delicious--first time in two years in Russia.

New St John's Parish in Bolshoy Kamyen

by Fr Daniel Maurer, CJD

On May 31, 1993, Bishop Werth of the Apostolic Administration of Novosibirsk officially established the third parish of our region, St John the Evangelist in Bolshoy Kamyen, three hours by train east of Vladivostok. The parish includes the better known cities of Hakhodka and Partyzansk, although Bolshoy Kamyen has 65,000 people. In area, the parish is larger than the entire country of the Netherlands. In Catholic population it is much smaller, just 20 members as of October 1.

The name "St John the Evangelist" was chosen for three reasons: Because St John was an apostle, his name emphasizes the apostolic nature of the Roman Catholic Church; He was an evangelist, and much evangelization needs to be done; And a generous donation by our benefactor John Bold from California made possible the purchase of an apartment in Bolshoy Kamyen which will act as both rectory and chapel for the time being.

The first pastor is Fr Daniel Maurer, CJD, who is spending several days a month in the parish, and teaching in the public schools. At every Mass Fr Daniel and the parishioners pray fervently for a resident pastor who will zealously build on the foundation that has already been laid.

The decision to begin work in Bolshoy Kamyen was made in June of 1992 at the invitation of Mr Gennady Krestsoff, a resident of Bolshoy Kamyen and a university student at the Far Eastern University in Vladivostok whom Fr Myron Effing and Fr Dan Maurer met at our language school shortly after we arrived in Russia in February of 1992. He told us that there were no churches of any faith in Bolshoy Kamyen, and he invited us to give a presentation about our Faith to the teachers of the local school system. We were met with a very warm reception and much interest.

When we learned a few months later that the Hare Krishnas had become active in the city and that there was no other possibility for the people to learn about the Christian Faith, we decided to take two days out of our busy schedules in Vladivostok to teach the History of Christianity to five classes in two high schools of Bolshoy Kamyen. We also taught an evening class to adults interested in the Catholic Faith for the entire academic year of 1992-93. Because Fr Myron was already pastor of the parishes in Vladivostok and Khabarovsk (both cities of one million people each), the bishop decided to appoint Fr Daniel as pastor of Bolshoy Kamyen, even though he had only been ordained 7 months earlier.

The first Mass ever celebrated in the city (either Orthodox or Catholic) was the Catholic Mass concelebrated by Frs Daniel and Myron on June 3, 1993, in the City Palace of Culture. It was attended by about 50 people, the majority of whom were Orthodox. The first Catholic baptisms and confirmations were performed by Fr Daniel during the second Mass, on August 5, 1993.

Bolshoy Kamyen was founded during the communist era 55 years ago as a military industrial city. The main industry is still the building and repair of

nuclear submarines for the Russian Navy. There are three large submarine plants in the city, the largest of which employs 35,000 people. Because of the top-secret nature of such production, the city has always been what is known as a closed city. That means that even Russians need a special visa to live there or even to visit. There are military check points on all roads leading into the city, though today the gates are often raised and no one bothers to check incoming vehicles. The special city visas which we received were obtained for us by the principal of one of the high schools where we teach.

Until the economic crisis began about three years ago, the city had the reputation of being very clean and well cared for by Russian standards. No expense was spared for the workers and military officers of the factories and fleet, except the expense for anything having to do with religion. Bolshoy Kamyen was designed to be a show place of the new Godless Soviet State. No provisions of any kind were made for the people to practice any religion except the official allegiance to Marx and Lenin. That was why we decided to begin the work of evangelization there. In other larger cities nearer Vladivostok, such as Artyom and Ussurisk, at least there are active Orthodox parishes where even Catholics can receive true sacraments and hear the Word of God. But in Bolshoy Kamyen there was nothing. Now hundreds of teenagers are attending regular (though only once a month) classes about: the History of the Church; Christian Culture, Art and Science; the Christian View of Marriage; and for the 12th grade English class, the Book of Genesis in English. In addition, about 25 people attend the monthly evening inquiry class with the idea of being received into the Catholic Church in May of 1994.

The new parish has its own organist who teaches the small congregation a new hymn before each Mass. Also before mass there is time for the sacrament of Penance. After Mass the inquiry class meets for its series of 9 lessons in the faith leading up to baptism or reception into the Church and confirmation.

There is much still to do. The faithful need their own priest; they need to find a better place for Mass; they need to be able to receive the sacraments more frequently. Some of the parishioners travel the three hours by train to Vladivostok (and three hours back) for Sunday Mass on the three weekends a month when there is no Mass in Bolshoy Kamyen. We need to furnish the apartment as a chapel and residence for the priest who will eventually serve here full time. They need to know their faith better. Their children need more than one catechism class a month. They need to buy an organ so that Fr Dan does not have to carry the one from Vladivostok on the train each month and so that the organist does not have to practice the hymns on the old out-of-tune piano at the local grade school where he teaches. They need eventually to build a church in Bolshoy Kamyen, and in the distant future (how distant?) to split their huge parish and build new churches in the other five cities of more than 30,000 people located within the present parish boundaries.

You readers of Vladivostok Sunrise have been a tremendous help to our mission with your donations. You can also help the new parish of St John by praying that the Lord will send it a priest. With the spiritual and financial support of American Catholics who have prayed for years for the conversion of Russia, God will draw even more of His children to Himself and His Church. Donations to the parish of St John the Evangelist should be made to "Vladivostok Mission" with the added notation of "for St John's, Bolshoy

Kamyen", and sent to the Anchorage address.

Please pray for vocations for the Russian Missions!

In Memoriam: Dmitri and Anelia Sliparski

by Fr Myron Effing, CJD

Dmitri and Anelia were both baptized in our church in Vladivostok. Dmitri was 10 years old, so he remembered it well. They were both teenagers when the Revolution came to Vladivostok in 1922. They were married in our church, just before it was closed, among the last to be married here by a priest. Their parents had come from Poland at the turn of the century because they had heard that there was free land, but life was difficult, and then came the Revolution.

After being driven from the city, one priest--she can't remember the name--lived with Dmitri's parents in a small village 60 miles from Vladivostok to protect him.

While serving in the army, Dmitri left his faith and joined the Communist Party, for which his father made him sleep in the barn. Dmitri's father died of starvation in the difficulties that followed the Bolshevik take-over of the Far East, and Dmitri's brother was shot by the KGB (then known as the NKVD) during the Stalinist repression for being Polish. Dmitri's membership in the Party saved the lives of his new family.

When we first heard about Anelia, we were told she was now crippled and couldn't come to the priest, so both Father Dan and Father Myron took turns going to her apartment where she was anointed and received communion for the first time in many years--maybe 60. She told us about Dmitri, who was now blind and living with their daughter. Dmitri also received the priest with tears, and received the anointing of the sick and his first communion in many years.

Anelia was concerned for her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren who had never been able to learn about and receive the faith. Meanwhile, recently some had become Seventh Day Adventists, who are anti-Catholic in Vladivostok. Nevertheless, their daughter and her husband, their grandson, and four great grandchildren began to attend catechism classes, and were received into the Catholic Church during the first mass held inside the building--their confirmation being the first sacraments to be held inside it in all these years. Anelia and Dmitri couldn't attend because of their health, but when we visited them later they were in tears to think how marvelously God had provided that their children return to the Faith.

Then Anelia told me she was dying, and would I promise to come to her deathbed or at least have her funeral. I readily agreed, and anointed her the second time. She died while I was in Khabarovsk and I had her funeral on October 19, 1993. Dmitri also told Father Dan he was dying. Father Dan anointed him, and he died while I was in America. Father Dan had the funeral in early December.

Catholic TV Celebrates First Anniversary

by Fr Daniel Maurer, CJD

The third Saturday of October 1993 marked an important milestone in the world of electronic ministry and in the evangelization of former communist Russia. "Poot Ko Christu" (The Path to Christ), the only regularly aired religious television program originating in Asian Russia, a larger area than the continental United States, celebrated its first year of weekly broadcasting.

The need for a television evangelization program was uppermost in the mind of Fr Myron Effing ever since he arrived in Vladivostok in February 1992 to be the pastor of the parish of the Most Holy Mother of God, but the problems seemed daunting. Fr Myron did not speak enough Russian to direct a TV program himself, and there were as yet no Russian Catholics with enough education in the faith with the ability to do broadcasting. To further complicate the matter, there are only three television channels available in this city of over one million people, and one of them receives all of its programming directly from Moscow. And even if air time could be found, what price would it cost the financially struggling mission?

But if God wants something, it will happen. The obstacles melted away much more quickly than anyone could have thought possible, especially given the turtle-like speed of the Russian bureaucracy. It seemed like a miracle when only eight months after his arrival, Fr Effing was able to sit in the "comfort" of his living room (/chapel/bedroom/office/dining room) and watch the first program.

One event especially prepared the way: the conversion to Catholicism of Mr Dennis Bondaryev in June, 1992. Like many young men growing up in Russia in the late communist era, Dennis knew intuitively that there must be more to life than the so called "glories of communism," which were long since faded and falling apart. As a teenager he even joined the fringes of a cautious, incipient group of rebels who promoted any idea that seemed to them anti-soviet. Then in 1991, at the age of 28, his searching soul found partial rest when he came to know Christ and was baptized in the cold salt water of Amursky Bay as a member of the 7th Day Adventists.

Back then, if one wanted to be Christian in Vladivostok there were limited choices. Young men often decided not to become Orthodox because of the perceived capitulation of the official Church to the communist regime. The only other groups of Christians in town were the often courageous sects who had managed to survive the repression by the tenacity of their beliefs and the absence of a visible hierarchical structure which could be suppressed. Many of these groups were actually transplanted to the Russian Far East through the extensive system of slave-labor camps of the Stalin era; in effect Stalin became an agent of Christian evangelization!

Through his association with the Adventists, Dennis read and studied the Bible and other Christian literature. He became a lay preacher and prepared himself to be ordained a deacon. His thirst for knowledge of his faith grew, and he visited other groups of Christians and read their literature--everything he could get his hands on about Jesus, salvation, the Church.

Sects have sectarian mentalities. Dennis soon learned that the group through which he first found Jesus Christ was so narrow in its understanding of the good news of salvation, that they condemned all members of other Christian groups who worship on Sunday. Not only do they condemn them, but they forbid their members to have anything to do with them. To make a long story short (and whose faith journey is not long!) the realization of the sectarian nature of his Christian community precipitated a crisis that eventually led Dennis, and later his family, to become Catholic.

He was just the person Fr Myron needed to start a television evangelization program: a committed Christian with enough of a catechetical background to know what and how to evangelize others. What did it matter that he had no TV experience whatsoever!

The problem of television time was solved during the first visit to the local commercial TV station, commonly referred to as Channel 3. Commercial TV is a relatively new idea in Russia, and there is only one commercial station in our area. They were looking for interesting programming and perhaps even American investors, and more importantly, they decided that a religious program would be a service to the community, so they made us an offer that we could not refuse: a weekly 90 minute prime-time program, every Saturday from 8:00 to 9:30 pm, with the potential of reaching more than half a million households, for the give-away price of \$50.00 an hour. This was only 10% of the normal cost of air time for Channel 3. We signed a contract for a full year.

We still had to provide the programming. Thus began Dennis' search for quality Catholic and general Christian programming, and his growing experience in producing our own local material. We have received programs from Lumen 2000, Alcoholics Anonymous, the Diocese of St Cloud, and Family of the Americas. We have produced three programs of our own religious services and the history and activities of our mission. It has been an amazing adventure, and a learning experience for all involved.

With the second year, broadcasting and production prices have increased dramatically. But "The Path to Christ" has a year of experience in how to solve problems, so we are not worried. The answer is the same as it was at the beginning: pray and work hard, and let the Lord do the rest. We especially pray for the intentions of all our benefactors who have made this first year possible. Thank you for sharing your faith with Russia and for helping millions along the "The Way of Christ"!

We Receive Our Church!

by Rev Myron Effing, CJD

When the Bolsheviks and Lenin came to power, their social program violated the teaching of the Churches. Therefore the Orthodox church was systematically suppressed, its buildings destroyed, and its clergy made to submit or die.

The Catholic church was seen as a foreign organization with loyalties in Rome, so it was cut off from foreign contacts, its largely Polish clergy deported or killed, and its buildings confiscated and put to other uses. In 1935 during the Stalin terrors all our churches in the Far East were confiscated on the pretext that there were no longer any Catholic believers. Many government people today still accept that line of thought, and resist the possibility that all these years there have been Catholic believers biding God's time of release. They expected that a group of people just wanted to get a free building which they could use for business purposes.

But what to do with the archive? The building was modified by the addition of three floors inside and used all these years as an archive. It isn't easy to move all these carefully catalogued documents just because the "former owners" of the building want it back after these many years. Besides that, everybody knows that the building had marvelous acoustics--the best in Vladivostok--and already for ten years a group of organ enthusiasts had been asking for the building. In fact, so successful were they that a director of the organ hall was an officially established government position, and there was a request before the Department of Culture in Moscow to renovate the building as an organ hall, has had been done in Irkutsk and Krasnoyarsk.

The Catholic parish was still small, and could not manage a building of such size, let alone restore it. What kind of resources did the parish have anyway? Everybody knows the Vatican is rich (!), so obviously the Vatican would gladly restore the building, maybe like the great buildings in Rome or St Petersburg. In fact, maybe we should make the Vatican pay really big for the church so that we could have extra money to use on other historical projects!

Besides, what proof do we have that the building should be given to the current parish? Is this "new" parish--after a gap of nearly 60 years--really the proper heirs of the former parish? Surely none of the former members are still alive! (but they could have met them if they came to mass on Sunday.)

And maybe the government built the building in the beginning! After all, wasn't the church in Czarist Russia an arm of the state, and doesn't the building therefore properly belong to the state and not the church?

Such were the arguments against the return of the building. There was one practical argument in favor of its return: the heating system was broken, and there would be no heat in the building this winter so that the archive would have to close, and what would it be worth later when it is already in shambles and the government had no money to repair it?

How did we counter those arguments? We showed that we had the resources

to properly use the building by commissioning an architect to prepare a design for the appearance of the building and the use of the land around the building. In addition, it showed that the building was of more potential benefit to the city as a church than as an archive. Our older members who remember the church and their parents' participation in the parish made affidavits showing that the church was built with private money, and showing that people did not willingly give up participation in church activities, and that many of their relatives were killed because they were Catholic.

We sent people to scour the archives for any information about our parish and church building: Harbin, Tomsk, St Petersburg, Moscow, Nicolaevsk, Sakhalin, Blagoveshensk. From this information we were able to get a fix on exactly which land belonged to the Church, and what the original design must have been.

We reached an agreement with the Department of Culture that if we receive the building we will definitely install a pipe organ and allow the building to be used occasionally for organ concerts (wouldn't that make a good Christmas and Easter tradition?) We also agreed that we would respect the building as an historical monument by not using it for any purpose other than a church, and that when we restore it, we will restore it according to its historical period, and not in a modern way.

We decided to repair the heating system even before we received the building, not only to show that we had the means, but also to safeguard the building so that we could receive it in better shape. In this whole process our engineer Tanya Yankelevich spent many hours walking the streets and going from office to office to find support for our cause, and dealing with the mountains of bureaucratic red tape and endless inefficiencies of chairwarming footdraggers.

One can say we received the building in stages, so it is difficult to give a certain date. That makes celebrating difficult, too. Nonetheless, the archive opened the doors to the parish and we had our first mass inside on October 3, 1993.

New Parish in Khabarovsk

by Fr Myron Effing, CJD

Khabarovsk, a city of a million on the famed Amur River, is named for the explorer of Asia, Yerofye Khabaroff. I have to admit that before I first set foot here in October of 1991 I never heard of it. It is an important manufacturing and international city, with air connections to nearly everywhere, including Anchorage and San Francisco. Before the Russian revolution there were two Catholic parishes here, and a Catholic school. Rumor has it that during the revolution the priest gathered the kids into the church building while the bullets and rockets were flying back and forth over the city as the Red Army faced the White Army. In the end, all the Poles were exiled, one church building was destroyed, and the second, a wooden building, was confiscated in 1935, and converted for use as a clinic for venereal diseases. Floors were built inside, just as in Vladivostok.

I was frequently in Khabarovsk, because it is the airline hub, and I was attentive to any possibility of meeting Catholics. The Catholic Relief Service, working in the food distribution program sponsored by the US government, came to Khabarovsk, but no one called them to say they were Catholic. After about eight months of looking and listening, it happened: Catholic Relief received a call from a Mr Stanislaw Yermak, who said he and others of Polish extraction whom he knew were forming a Polish Cultural Society, and they were interested also in religion. Mark Jones of CRS called me, and I made immediate plans to visit Khabarovsk.

The first crisis was the point that the Polish Cultural Society wanted to sponsor the parish as part of its activity. That is impossible, of course, because Catholics are of all nationalities, and there were already non-Polish American Catholics who wanted to belong to a parish in Khabarovsk, and surely there would be Ukrainians, Germans, Lithuanians, and Koreans, as well! So the parish and the Polish Cultural Society could well work together for their mutual benefit, but they needed to be independent organizations.

It was agreed, and I appointed Stanislaw to be the trustee of the Catholic community, and we made plans for our first sacraments, which were held on January 26, 1993. We asked Bishop Werth for official reestablishment of the parish, to which he readily agreed, issuing the document on February 4. My letter of appointment as pastor is dated February 6, just a year after we received our visas for Russia.

But what to call the parish? The historians disagreed. One said the historical name was "Transfiguration of the Lord". Another said it was "Immaculate Conception". So as not to waste time, we decided to proceed on Transfiguration. If this turns out to be incorrect, we can simply use this name for a future parish in the new city of Komsomolsk-na-Amure instead, which is in the same territory, so the parish would not have to be reregistered with the Government--we could just register a second parish with the name "Immaculate Conception" for Khabarovsk itself.

Registering the parish was another problem: There is more nationalism in

Amursky State than in Primorye, and we didn't want anti-Catholic feeling to jeopardize our registration, even though the Department of Justice was most professional in its attitude. So we decided not to announce the opening of the parish until registration was complete. After the usual bureaucratic process, the Khabarovsk parish was officially registered with the government on October 1, and I appointed the parish board on October 14, naming Stanislaf as Secretary, and Ephrazina Philippovskaya as Treasurer. We placed the first ad in the newspapers of Amursky State inviting people to join our parish, and had the first such public mass on November 7. The ads cost about \$200 per month, but how else can we tell a city of a million that the Church is back? And how else will elderly Catholics find out that they can receive the sacraments again?

And what of the future? We need priests for Khabarovsk, because mass once a month is not often enough for such a huge city with people who want to know about Christ. Did you know that many Protestant organizations are already active in Khabarovsk? There are already several Assembly of God parishes, and even an Assembly of God Seminary! You see how slow our Church is to make steps in Russia.

We need to buy an apartment for the future priests, which will cost about \$35,000. Stanislaf wants to show the Vladivostok TV program in Khabarovsk, too, but who will pay? And here is yet another city without Bibles, prayer books, and Catholic literature!

Then we need to decide what to do about our church building. Perhaps we don't need to receive back a wooden church building which has been so modified, but it depends upon the parishioners--they built the church, what do they want? In any case, we should be able to receive an equal-sized parcel of land near where the clinic is located, in the center of the city, for our future church, so we need to begin preparing documents and working with the city council to receive this land.

So much to do, and there are still more cities without the Church! Pray for missionaries and benefactors, so that we may rise to this sudden and large mission possibility for the Church. Pray for vocations!

Now I am working in Stanislaf's apartment, preparing for their only Advent mass--We will have our Christmas mass here on January 6--I brought some Polish Christmas bread from America, and some little nativity scenes made of cardboard to give in preparation for celebrating Christmas. They haven't seen either before. The temperature outside is -13 degrees Fahrenheit with a strong wind blowing--too cold for reindeer.

Printing Projects in the Works

by Fr Myron Effing, CJD

From the very beginning we haven't had enough Russian literature. 10,000 people have written us to ask for literature, and we send out all we receive. We received 100 Bibles and 200 New Testaments from Aid to the Church in Need, and many boxes of small catechism from the World Apostolate of Fatima. But that wasn't enough. The only answer was to begin printing for ourselves.

We had experience with printing the newsletter. Then we printed several small brochures on alcoholism--one of the major problems of Russia. Then the Legion of Mary printed 50,000 copies of its brochure to give to people on the streets and door to door. Then a French newspaper published by the Emmanuel Communities offered to have us print in Russian and distribute their newspaper. Then Family of the Americas licensed us to translate and print our first full-color production, a booklet about natural family planning called "Love and Fertility"--5000 copies--with which we can begin teaching NFP here in Russia, a land of multiple abortions. Then the Marian Helpers of Stockbridge, Massachusetts, agreed to help us print their booklet about how to say the rosary, because we have received 50,000 rosaries to distribute, but few people know how to say the rosary here in Russia. What will be next?

Some bigger projects are in the works! Catholics United for the Faith have given us full authority to translate, print and publish their series of catechisms for children--something badly needed in Russia. But how can we pay for it?

We want to publish a series of pamphlets answering objections to the faith and promoting the faith among university people. We want to make our series of twelve lessons in the Catholic faith for adults available to a wider audience by advertising them more widely and being able to send printed material to those in the military, in prison, and those in small villages where only Jehovah's Witnesses now send literature. Can you help?

We hope to publish our Catholic hymnal, which will help the church throughout Russia. We need funds for all these projects.

Timeline for the Return of our Church building

February 1990 Archbishop Francis Hurley of Anchorage, Alaska, visits Vladivostok, is told there is a Catholic church building still standing. He is shown the Lutheran church instead.

July 8, 1990 Vicar General Steven C. Moore of the Anchorage Archdiocese visits Vladivostok, signs agreement with the city authorities to investigate how it might be possible to return the church building to the Church, but there is still confusion about which building is the Catholic church.

August 25, 1991 Official first meeting of the Catholic community under Andre Popok. They didn't know about the previous visits of Archbishop Hurley and Father Moore. They did know which building had been the Catholic church.

November 11, 1991 First mass on the street in front of the church building by Father Myron Effing during his visit to Vladivostok, a visit made at the request of Bishop Joseph Werth, newly appointed Apostolic Administrator of the Catholic Church for the Asian part of Russia.

January, 1992 Archbishop Hurley comes to Vladivostok, meets with Catholic community and visits church building.

February 11, 1992 Father Myron and Deacon Daniel Maurer come to live in Vladivostok.

March 10, 1992 Father Myron and Brother Daniel meet with Governor Vladimir Kuznetzoff to ask for the return of the church building. He tells the Krai Archive Administration that they should be able to vacate the building by January 1, 1993.

July 18, 1992 Meeting between American architect Gary Nolen and Russia architect Victor Obertas, who teaches architecture at the local institute and who is a Deputy to the Legislature, to discuss the research necessary to deal concretely with questions about the building.

August 6, 1992 Mr Victor Solovioff, Chairman of the City Council of Peoples' Deputies, succeeds in asking the City Council to vacate any need for the church building on the part of the city.

October 13, 1992 Second official letter to the Governor requesting the return of our building, now that the city gave up an interest in the building.

January 19, 1993 Meeting of the Krai Deputies' Cultural Commission to discuss conditions under which the parish might receive the use of the building. Terms were not acceptable to the parish.

January 28, 1993 Official letter to the Head of the High Council of the Russian Federation Committee for Conscience Questions, asking the government to return the building to the Church. They recommended to the local authorities that the building be returned.

April 7, 1993 The parish begins negotiations with Mr Khripchenko of the Krai Cultural Department about conditions for the return of the building. He is in favor, and we reach an agreement. Meanwhile the governor and mayor are changed, and President Yeltzin issues his decree that buildings are to be returned to the use of believers.

September 7, 1993 The parish participates in debates of the Krai Commission of Culture. Decision is made on a compromise that we will receive the building on "balance", a kind of ownership between "use" of the building and "possession".

September 15, 1993 The Small Council of the Krai legislature voted 21 to 3 to return the church building to the "balance" of the parish according to the agreement worked out with the Commission of Culture. The decision awaited the signature of the governor. Meanwhile President Yeltzin disbanded all legislatures.

October 3, 1993 First mass inside the building. First time the parish was welcomed inside the building.

October 25, 1993 The National Conference of Catholic Bishops of America, working through the Office to the Aid the Church in Eastern Europe, announces a grant of \$30,000 to help the parish with the church building. Archbishop Hurley made the request.

October 29, 1993 The Krai governor, Evgenie Nazdratenko, signs a decree ordering the return of the church building to the balance of the parish.

November 9, 1993 The Head of the Committee for Properties, the official owner of all government property of the Krai, Genadi Tokulenko, issues the order to give the building to the "balance" of the parish.

December 28, 1993 We receive the final signature registering the building on the "balance" of the parish.

December 31, 1993 We receive the keys to the building in the evening, as the Feast of the Most Holy Mother of God begins!

How to Communicate with Us

Donations of money should be sent to:

Vladivostok Mission
225 Cordova Street
Anchorage AK 99501 USA

Letters should be sent to:

Catholic Parish of Vladivostok
P.O. Box 3185
690087 Vladivostok RUSSIA

Donated objects should be sent to:

Vladivostok Mission
Mahoney Exports, Inc
400 Valley Dr
Brisbane CA 94005 USA

More urgent messages can be sent via:

FAX: 7-4232-26-9616
E-mail: INTERNET:myron@catholic.marine.su
Phone: 7-4232-22-4292

Our engineer, Tanya Yankelevich, who for a year and a half has managed all matters relating to the return of the church building--a giant task. She was the first engineer to graduate from her institute taking her exams in the English language. Now that we have received the church, she plans to get an advanced engineering degree somewhere in America.

Father Dan and our friend Frank Romance from St Luke's Parish in McLean, Virginia.

Our young men wait to lead the way for the official entrance into the church.

Father Dan and the choir prepared special music for the occasion, including the Salve Regina in Latin.

Yadviga Francivna and Malvina Stanislavna have the honor to carry the statue of Mary into the church for the first time.

Andre Popok, the founder of the parish, knocks on the door, and is the first to enter.

It's ours, but in need of much work.

First and second baptismal classes in Khabarovsk. Mr Stanislaf Yermak, top, left.

Our TV anchorman, Denis Bondaryev, making the film which is being shown among our benefactors in America.

Anelia and Dmitri's daughter, Ana Dmitrievna, with her husband, son, and grandchildren after their reception into the Church and confirmation.

First baptisms in Bolshoy Kamen, Ekaterina Pavlovna (with flowers) and Edgar Alfredovich (between priests). Confirmed at the same time was Galina Fyodorovna.

Father Dan with his Class in the Bolshoy Kamen high school.

(left) Valentina Demyanovna and her daughter Ludmilla Nikolaevna, Bolshoi Kamen parishioners from the village of Romanovka.

Trustee of the Bolshoi Kamen parish, Genadi Vladimirovich and his wife Olga Viktorovna. Their son, Denis Daniel, in the rug.

Baptismal Classes