

## **California Powerhouse**

*by Father Myron Effing, C.J.D.*

As diocesan priests of the Apostolic Administration of Novosibirsk, we don't have a religious order or a mission office to raise money for us. What has developed is some quite remarkable centers of all-volunteer benefactors who help us with our work. We'll introduce them in future newsletters. Let's begin with the "California Powerhouse".

Tom Fitzsimmons of Modesto, California, is a member of St Stanislaus' Parish in Modesto. He is the engineer of our powerhouse, keeping in close touch with us by electronic mail. Tom is from Illinois, having grown up on a farm during the difficult years before the Second World War. He taught agriculture in Arizona colleges before beginning a new career in banking. Then he finished his banking career as administrator of several departments of the First Interstate Bank of California. He developed bank programs for computers, and computers have become his interest in his retirement. He often serves as a special representative of Apple Computers now, and knows their products and services thoroughly.

Tom has become the center of our communications for California. Father Fessio of Ignatius Press and his staff earlier had this task, but his priestly services have been more and more in demand, so Tom has taken over. Readers will understand how important this is for us, because regular mail to us takes three weeks, which means that the turnaround time is nearly six weeks. For a while FAXes cost us \$12 per minute, which meant \$12 per page. With Tom's help via e-mail, our communications times are reduced to days, and our total e-mail bill for a month is \$40--quite a savings of time and money!

Working with Tom are other volunteers who help us, including his wife, Barbara, who also is our hostess when we are in California. Also Father Joseph Terra, whose hobby of making vestments means that we have some beautiful new vestments for our parishes, and not simply the rejects from other parishes. It should be clear that Russia, with 200 parishes now, has absorbed much of the world supply of used vestments!

St Stan's Parish has twice taken up a collection for us, and many parishioners are regular donors. The Pastor, Father John Silva, terrifically overworked, always has time for us. The cloistered Sisters of the Cross of the Sacred Heart of Jesus pray for us, and always encourage us to be patient. Also parishioner Vi Salazar keeps us in communication with our priests friends in the area, and helps us in a great variety of ways.

How could we manage a huge church building with its surroundings without any tools whatsoever? That was the question we had last January. We had a hammer and a few screw drivers

when we left America, but they were stolen. In the building when we received it there was nothing--no hammer, nails, pliers, saws. We found a rusty shovel in the shed out back. Russian tools in general are fine--good, strong metal and good design--when you can find them, which is rarely. How could we even maintain a building, let alone repair it without tools? Father Dan brought two brooms from America. But there had to be another solution. We asked Tom Fitzsimmons if he could ask his fellow parishioners to clean out their garages and give us the surplus tools. It was a start, but not enough. So parishioner Judy Fletcher and her husband David decided it was a job for them--to support the missions. Judy spent her Saturdays going from garage sale to garage sale to find tools for us. Finally, a wonderful collection of tools was ready for shipment to Vladivostok. On these we have relied ever since. See what determination and some creativity will do for the missions?

Michael Ciccarelli of Modesto is a major producer of garden vegetables in this central valley of California where most American fresh produce is grown. He has organized his friends and acquaintances to donate to our mission the excess seeds from his region--this in response to the food shortages in Russia. Hundreds of pounds of the best of American seeds have been shipped to us for free distribution to ready and anxious home gardeners here in Russia. This is a major help, since most fresh vegetables in Russia are grown at home in what might be called "victory gardens". The Russians were surprised at how long carrots are, grown from American seeds!

This is a new kind of mission work, maybe, made possible by electronic mail--A variety of people all over the world working together to support a mission. We are grateful to our California Powerhouse. God bless you.

*From the left, Fr Myron and Fr Terra, Mr Ciccarelli, Barbara and Tom Fitzsimmons, Judy and David Fletcher. Thanks to them for their terrific support.*

## How to Communicate with Us

Donations of money should be sent to:

Vladivostok Mission  
225 Cordova Street  
Anchorage AK 99501 USA

Letters without donations should be sent to:

Most Holy Mother of God Catholic Parish  
P.O. Box 3185  
690087 Vladivostok RUSSIA

Packages of donated items (not money or checks) should be sent  
to:

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

FAX: 7-4232-26-9616

E-mail: [INTERNET:myron@catholic.marine.su](mailto:INTERNET:myron@catholic.marine.su)

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# **The First Pastoral Conference of Novosibirsk**

*by Father Daniel Maurer, C.J.D.*

The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
The Love of God,  
and The Consolation of the Holy Spirit  
Was with us All!

An historic step was taken on October 3 by the newly reborn Catholic Church in Asian Russia, the part east of the Ural Mountains called the Apostolic Administration of Novosibirsk. Priests, religious and lay delegates from every parish and region of the largest geographical diocese in the world met together for the First Pastoral Conference of the Church in the Asian Part of Russia. Our Bishop, the Most Reverend Joseph Werth, announced last March at the Lenten Priests' Retreat that the conference would take place after the fall harvest, so there were six months of intensive preparation. We think it was probably the first time in the more than 1000 year history of Christianity in Russia that such a general conference was held. This does not pretend to be a thorough news account of the proceedings, but a personal reflection on the conference as an historic event.

By all accounts but one it was a huge success. The only thing that did not go perfectly right about it went perfectly wrong. The Bishop broke his leg very seriously in two places two days before the conference was to begin, so he spent the whole time of the conference in the hospital and at home in bed. He will have to be completely inactive for a long time. Poor Bishop, and poor us. We were like sheep without a shepherd, but we managed to make the best out of a less than ideal situation.

The conference was held about 50 miles out of Novosibirsk at a former Young Pioneers summer camp. But the Boy Scouts of America never had it so good as the Pioneers because the Boy Scouts were never an arm of the State. The camp looked more like a university, with at least 12 large buildings, including theater, large meeting rooms and residency halls. All but two of the 53 priests of the diocese were able to attend, and most religious brothers and sisters, the four seminarians (including our two), lay delegates from each parish and diocesan organization, and foreign lay mission volunteers, two hundred people in all. The Papal Nuncio Archbishop Francesco Colasuonno who speaks fluent English was there from Moscow, and the Archbishop of Moscow and the Bishop of Kazakhstan sent representatives. The Holy Father sent a telegram of greeting with his Apostolic Blessing.

There were also representatives from all the major Church aid organizations in the West, including Monsignor George Sauruskas from the American Bishops' Office to Aid the Church in Eastern Europe, and his assistant, Mr Jim O'Beirne whom I had met in McLean, Virginia, two months earlier when I preached for the

support of our mission at his parish. Also represented were the Papal international organization, Aid to the Church in Need, and the German bishops' organization, Renovabis.

One of the representatives from Aid to the Church in Need was an Augustinian Canon Regular from another reestablished order that we had not heard about, the Brothers of the Common Life, from Germany. He knew about us because he had just been to a gathering of orders of canons regular at which our new foundation of canons regular in Vladivostok was a topic of discussion.

Despite the fact that we were not the largest delegation, the Vladivostok-Far East delegation acquitted itself very well indeed, beginning when we first arrived in Novosibirsk on Monday morning, and received word that the Bishop wanted to talk to Father Myron in his hospital room. There he asked Father Myron to take his place and give all the keynote conferences for Tuesday, the first day of the meeting which was a day of spiritual recollection centered on the topic, "What is the Church?" Poor Father Myron had to work all day and night Monday after getting no sleep from an all-Sunday night flight. But on Tuesday he did a great job, mostly in Russian! He was also the main celebrant and homilist for the Mass of the Holy Spirit at noon on Tuesday.

Our delegation put up a very nice exhibition about our parishes and our pastoral work in the large room where all the delegates met for coffee twice a day. The first day there were only two parishes represented, the parish in Prokopyevsk, Siberia, with one poster, and us with seven large well-composed posters of photographs, captions and text tracing the highlights of our parish history and work. Our Alaskan volunteer Valerie Walatka and her Russian assistant Olga had put the exhibit together during the week before the conference and we brought it on the plane with us. As the conference continued, all parishes felt obliged to put up some kind of exhibits, but they were thrown together at the last minute. Ours was the most informative and the best looking.

It was also much commented upon that Vladivostok has provided half of the seminarians for the whole diocese!

Probably the most highly visible input we had was providing all the music for all the Masses. We made a special issue of our hymnal for the occasion. It looked great. On the first evening of the conference I asked for volunteers for a small choir to help everyone sing, and I organized a short music practice for any delegates who wanted to attend every evening before night prayers. Usually well over half of the delegates were there each evening to learn the new songs. The choir practiced some music for the final Mass at the Cathedral of the Holy Transfiguration on Sunday.

Everyone loved the hymns and parts of the Mass that we taught them. Most of it was new to them, things that we have produced here or collected. From the first day requests for copies of all the musical accompaniments of all the songs started to pour in to me and to Katya our organist who was also a delegate from our parish. Thankfully Father Yezhy the chancellor had brought his little offset press that makes a plate and prints from it very rapidly. By

taking all my free time for two days and by staying up late I was able to make and distribute 40 copies of all our music (over 100 pages of it). Everybody was amazingly grateful.

I was surprised to learn than not many in the diocese are doing much production of liturgical music. One organist in Novosibirsk has written some good pieces, and I was able to get copies of her latest work. I told the delegates to the conference that here in Vladivostok we are beginning to organize a Russian Catholic Liturgical Music Society. Everyone signed up, so now I will have my hands full organizing that. But it's great fun, and it sure seems to be necessary.

Earlier in Vladivostok, before we knew it was possible to reproduce the music for everyone, our Vladivostok choir made a cassette tape of 10 of our favorite hymns, and I brought 40 copies of it with me. I made it available at supper on the last day of the conference, and was mobbed by people who wanted one. So I guess we will be making more tapes and sending them to the members of our new society.

There are some powerhouses of Catholic activity in the diocese: the Jesuits in Novosibirsk with about ten priests and brothers. They help in the central administration of the diocese, and in a special mission to the University community in the Novosibirsk area; the Claretians in Kraznoyarsk with five priests and one brother (and three other diocesan priests--all in one city!). They serve over twenty five local prayer communities and run a Catholic printing press; and the Salesians in Aldan with four priests and one brother. They recently built a church, and work full time in the government school system. In addition Novosibirsk has three communities of sisters, and Kraznoyarsk has two.

In contrast, our small mission of two priests in Vladivostok, spread thinly over six parishes, looks puny, but we have many dedicated and talented lay people who help make us one of the most active local churches in the entire country.

The conference ended with Mass on Sunday at the cathedral in Novosibirsk which is still in the process of being built. In preparation they swept the floor and brought in some portable furniture, but the cold Siberian wind was whipping through the glassless windows and the doorless entrance. Still, I think everyone in attendance was warmed by the fire of the Holy Spirit and the holiness of the main celebrant, Archbishop Francesco Colasuonno, the Papal Nuncio to Russia who lives in Moscow.

During the conference Archbishop Colasuonno told Father Myron that every time he sees the Holy Father, the Holy Father asks him if he has visited the parish in Vladivostok yet. (*Sunrise* readers may recall that two years ago in a conversation with our parish secretary, Anastacia Potapenko, the Holy Father called Vladivostok "the end of the earth.") The Archbishop was able to tell Pope John Paul that he has plans to stop off in Vladivostok for a visit on his way to Anchorage when Archbishop Francis Hurley of Anchorage will celebrate his Jubilee in June, 1995. Father Myron told the Archbishop that he is always very welcome to visit

us, and that he should bring the Pope along! It is wonderful to know that the Holy Father is aware of our existence, and still nicer to know that he occasionally thinks about us who are so far away and who love him so dearly.

The First Pastoral Conference of Asian Russia was a great source of grace for all who attended and for the whole Apostolic Administration. What wonderful people the Lord has chosen to help reestablish His Church in Asian Russia! It was a joy to meet them all, to share ideas, concerns, problems and solutions, and to make new friends. My overall impression from getting to know the other priests, religious, and parishes, is that we are well on our way, even though our numbers are infinitesimally small in terms of the general population of Russia. We certainly have energy, good will and talent on our side, and the burning desire to give our lives for the service of God and His Holy Catholic Church.

*The Vladivostok Delegation making its presentation at the Pastoral Conference. The sign reads: "All of you are one in Christ Jesus".*

*Archbishop Colasuonno speaking with Fr Myron at the dinner concluding the Conference.*

*Final Mass of Thanksgiving inside the half-completed new Catholic Cathedral in Novosibirsk.*

# One Floor Removed from Church Building!

*by Father Daniel Maurer, C.J.D.*

*[On October 18, after a lot of consultation, Father Myron decided to proceed with the removal of one of the concrete and steel floors inside our church building in Vladivostok. They were built in the 1930's when the building became the State Archive. The demolition work was made possible by a grant from the American Catholic Bishops' Office to Aid the Church in Eastern Europe, whose work is supported by an annual collection in the United States.--ed]*

How to remove these heavy floors had been an issue from the beginning. While jackhammers seemed obvious, they could not be used because we didn't want to introduce vibration into the building which could crack and weaken the historical church walls. Some suggested a concrete saw, much as used on highways in America, but importing such a saw would be a big expense.

Finally one of the contractor's men had an idea to build a platform on the floor below, and install a hydraulic cylinder which would gradually press on the ceiling above until it broke, keeping motion and vibration to a minimum. They built the equipment, and were ready to test it. The contractor's crew wanted to begin immediately and test their contraption, not waiting for our Saturday parish volunteers to move everything from the third floor to the first. So Father Dan had just one afternoon to move everything out of the sacristy and to take down the sanctuary curtains in order to have things ready for the work crew who would move all the furniture downstairs. The crew also cleared the first floor very well and swept the empty two-thirds of it.

Even before they had all the furniture moved on Thursday, the workmen wanted to begin, so all held their breath and watched as the machine first gradually lifted the entire floor a millimeter, and then it broke through the concrete, punching a jagged hole through the entire thickness. It worked perfectly, and with very little vibration!

The crew worked all day Friday and half a day on Saturday, punching holes in the concrete between the smaller encased I-beams, but by Saturday afternoon when Father Dan was inspecting what they had done, they were using their machine to jack up some of the encased I-beams themselves, which broke up larger sections of the floor faster.

Meanwhile Mass is in the unfinished room on the first floor. We have to keep all the shutters open for light to enter the room, until we can put up electric lights. On Saturday parishioners swept the floor again, put the chairs in good order, cleaned all the pillars and window sills, and the front vestibule. Maria single handedly cleaned all the pillar bases. They were filthy, but now they almost



sparkle. She worked all day.

All in all, the space turned out much better than expected, and on Sunday everyone seemed very pleased, mostly because it is another step toward the fulfillment of their hopes for the church--complete restoration. In keeping with our tradition, we had a little procession with the statue of Mary, candles and flowers into the temporary Mass hall. The congregation was in the new space to welcome Mary by singing the *Salve Regina* as the procession came through the door. Yadviga and Malvina carried the statue again, and Andre carried one of the candles. Regina carried a vase of flowers for the Blessed Virgin and for our benefactors.

*Interior of the Church with the floor half removed. Parishioner Andre Popok who is in charge of the project.*

## HEART TO HEART from Magadan

*by Father Austin Mohrbacher*

*[Father Mohrbacher is our neighbor pastor to the North in Magadan, Russia.--ed]*

The last of the laying hens in the Magadan area are dying of hunger--no feed. With tears in his eyes that is what the director of the last remaining egg farm in the whole Magadan State told my friend Gregory. Eggs will have to be added to the "imported" list. This will surely mean that eggs will cost more now. The hens will be killed, then eaten or sold.

I am reminded of the old question: which came first the chicken or the egg. Perhaps the answer is that both are needed.

What a wonderful gift eggs and chickens are. People have succeeded in raising their own potatoes on small plots of ground near the city to forestall hunger. But eggs need chickens and chickens don't grow as easily as potatoes.

There are other unfortunate spin offs to this story. About two hundred employees will have to start their lives over again with great difficulty. The egg facilities will be quickly stripped of anything useful and they will have to start from nothing.

My heart aches tonight.

## Russian Facts and Figures

*by Rev Daniel Maurer, C.J.D.*

After living in Russia for two and a half years, it is difficult to remember just how little I knew about this country before I arrived.

The Iron Curtain was tall and thick and very opaque. One example of my ignorance I do remember: as I set foot on Russian soil for the first time, in the city of Khabarovsk in February 1992, I could not have named even five Russian cities, and one that I thought was in Russia, Minsk, turned out to be in Belarus. I thought Vladivostok was in Siberia, but it turns out to be in the Russian Far East, a very different region.

Perhaps *Sunrise* readers are like me, and know even less than you think about Russia and Russians.

Did you know...?

- Russia is more than twice the size of the entire U.S.A. (including Alaska), and spans 11 time zones.
- Russia has some of the largest reserves of natural resources of any country in the world, including: oil, coal, natural gas, bauxite, copper, iron, potassium, magnesium, timber, fur and game animals, fish, and perhaps gold and diamonds and other precious and semi-precious gem stones.
- Our Catholic Apostolic Administration (future diocese) of Novosibirsk is geographically the largest in the world, well over twice the size of the 48 contiguous states of the U.S.A. (which have 193 dioceses). It spans 9 time zones compared to 4 in the 48 states.
- The boundaries of our parish of the Most Holy Mother of God in Vladivostok extend to the Primorya State borders, an area of more than 66,000 square miles, comparable in size to the State of Washington (20th largest in the U.S.A.) Within that area, the only other parish is our parish of St John the Evangelist in Bolshoy Kamyen. Its territory is roughly the same size as the State of Massachusetts which has 774 parishes.
- Our parish of the Holy Transfiguration in Khabarovsk is comprised of Khabarovsk State and the Jewish Autonomous Region, a total of 341,000 square miles, or slightly bigger than Texas and Oklahoma together, which have 16 dioceses with 1475 parishes and missions.
- Our new parish of Holy Transfiguration in the city of Blagoveschensk serves all of Amur State, 141,500 sq. mi., bigger than New Mexico.
- In all, we are the only Catholic priests in a radius of 1500 miles on the Russian mainland, and the combined areas of our parishes, 544,000 sq. mi., is larger than all of New England, New York, Pennsylvania and the Midwest put together. Our closest neighbor priest serving on Russian soil is the Korean pastor of St James Parish on Sakhalin Island, about 800 miles away.

Statistics have their use, even if the distances seem mind numbing. But our readers are probably more interested to know how the Russian people live. This is a dangerous area to venture

into because life in Russia is so different from life in America that it is hard even to describe the differences. If I said it was like living on another planet, that would not be too much of an exaggeration.

One major difference is living space. Under the communist system which still determines how the vast majority of people live, the maximum amount of square feet per person was legislated as 85 square feet (like a room 10 ft by 8.5 ft) and strictly enforced, but legal sanctions rarely needed to be applied because apartment construction was always behind schedule, so everyone always had less space than the maximum allowance. Apartments were allotted either by the government housing office or through the company where a member of the family worked, which under the communist system was also a government enterprise, so the whole country is like one big housing project. In Vladivostok there are three general types of housing accommodations:

1. single family, duplex or quadruplex homes. These are usually old, not having been part of the centralized housing plan for many years. Made of wood (usually unpainted) or stucco, they have no running water and no central heat. They are heated from one stove in the kitchen of each unit which burns wood or coal. In the summer, some homes can hook a cold water line up to an outside main, but there is never any hot running water. The toilet is in an outhouse in the back yard. Though by no means comprising a large percentage of the housing stock, these structures are numerous even in the center of the city and predominant in suburban areas. It is a strange sight for an American to see rundown shacks with outhouses right in the center of a large urban area.

2. Communal apartments: These are medium size buildings where two or more families share an apartment with one kitchen and one bathroom, but have their own bedroom/living rooms. I have only been inside one of these apartments, and that was to mediate a fight between the two families that lived there. Such housing is common in Vladivostok, but very much not preferred. They want a place of their own where they don't have to live together with strangers. The standard joke is that in the communal kitchen one housewife washes her mop rag in the soup of the other housewife when she is not looking.

3. Tower block apartments: This is the only kind of housing that has been constructed in Vladivostok during the last 30 years at least. Buildings are from 5 to 12 stories high and from two to 20 stairwells wide. On each floor of each stairwell are four apartments consisting of from one to four rooms each. The number of rooms usually does not include the kitchen or bathroom, so a one room apartment would have one living-bedroom, a kitchen, a bathroom and an entrance corridor. This numbering system has given rise to the common expression, "less-than-one-room apartment", which is what we mean by an efficiency apartment where the kitchen and main room are together. The first time I heard an acquaintance say that she had a less-than-one-room apartment, I asked her why it was less than one room, did one of her walls fall down?

In Vladivostok, many thousands of apartment units, making up a

sizable percentage of the total, are these less-than-one-room apartments. They are called hostels and are grouped together in large buildings with long, narrow dingy garbage-strewn interior hallways. Many of them house single people, but families also live there, as many as five people to a room.

## From the Editor

*by Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.*

Once again we are trapped in the web that time built. I had hoped to finish this newsletter before leaving America last week, but there wasn't time. Then I hoped to finish it before leaving Vladivostok for points north, but there wasn't time. Now I have little hope to get this newsletter to America and get it printed and sent to you, dear reader, before Christmas--It is December 1, and I am sitting in Blagoveschensk in the office of a parishioner marooned by lack of jet fuel. I went from shirt sleeves and sunshine in Fort Worth, Texas, to subzero temperatures here in the Amursky Oblast. So my Christmas greetings probably won't reach you on time once again this year!

This year something new: Fr Janez Mihelcic, S.J., who teaches the Russian language at Sophia University in Tokyo, will come to Russia to take care of my parishes in Khabarovsk and Blagoveschensk for Christmas. There will be Mass on Christmas day itself, rather than half a week later. That should give me the chance for the first time to visit my parishes in Nicolaevsk-na-Amure and Nakhodka. (If there were three of me, and if I were twenty years younger, I'd get a lot more done.)

Meanwhile, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from all of us in Russia to all our friends in America and Europe.

*Thanks to St Clement's Parish in Dearborn Michigan, Mainstreet Vladivostok has its first Nativity Scene this Christmas! St Clement's sent us a large, beautiful set of figures for an indoor nativity scene. GUM Department Store agreed to use a large showcase window for the scene right in downtown Vladivostok. It makes a beautiful "first" for our city (and maybe for all of Asian Russia!) It is a hit already, with many people stopping to see and to wonder. It will remain in place for our Christmas and Orthodox Christmas: January 7.*

*Private wooden homes, without central heat, running water, or indoor toilets.*

*Wood stacked for the winter.*

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*Continued from Page 7.*