

## Our Readers Ask

"I'm not clear on what percentage of Russians were ROMAN Catholic before the revolution, and what percentage other rites. And were there other religions?"

--Julie Flynn, Snohomish WA

Dear Julie,

Your question is really quite complicated to answer, because of the definition of "Russian". If you mean Russian citizens, then remember that half of Poland, the Ukraine, and the Baltic countries were at one time "Russia", so the number of Roman Catholics was about 13 million. Are the Volga German Catholics who came to Russia at the time of Catherine the Great to be included in the count? And what about the Russian Catholic Church, which is still in existence, and which is in union with Rome, but it is Eastern Rite and not Roman Rite.

It is clear that from the very beginning of Russia there have been Catholics, even Roman Catholics, especially in the regions around Novgorod, the Ukraine, and Poland. The mass migrations and deportations to Siberia spread the Catholic Church members to all parts of Russia. A very interesting statistic come to us from Father Christopher Zuger, a historian working in Albuquerque, New Mexico: At the time of the second world war there were 700,000 Catholic soldiers in the Russian Imperial Army, and a Catholic Chaplaincy was established to help them! During Soviet times, when the Baltics were part of the Soviet Union, and during Stalinist times, Catholics were sent everywhere in Russia, and they have long since intermarried.

Naturally other religions were also present in Russia, including many native Christian religions which were descended from the Orthodox much like the Protestants were decendents of the Catholic Church in the West.

In Vladivostok there were 22 Orthodox churches, our large Catholic cathedral, a synagogue, a mosque, a Buddhist temple, as well as many Baptist and Adventist communities, and even Jehovah's Witnesses. In 1914, the city was 57% Orthodox, 38% Buddhist, 3% Catholic, which leaves 2% for various other religions.

Naturally such a huge place with such a colorful history as Russia had many religions, even though Orthodoxy was dominant and state-supported. I'm happy to tell you that Father Zuger is working on a book about the Catholic Church in Russia, and it will contain many interesting facts. We'll look forward to its publication.

## **Bishop Donovan Retires**

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

The Most Reverend Paul V. Donovan, D.D., has announced his resignation as Bishop of Kalamazoo for reasons of health as of January 31, 1995. Sunrise readers will remember that in December 1991, just before the Canons Regular of Jesus the Lord came to Vladivostok, Bishop Donovan ordained Brother Daniel Maurer, C.J.D., to the diaconate in his home parish in Benton Harbor, Michigan, for service to the Church in Asian Russia. Bishop Joseph Werth, S.J., D.D., of Novosibirsk had sent Bishop Donovan the necessary dimissorial letter to ask for the ordination.

Since then Bishop Donovan has developed a great interest in the Vladivostok mission, supporting it both financially and spiritually. In a personal letter of July 6, 1994, to Father Daniel, Bishop Donovan wrote, "...we here in the Diocese of Kalamazoo claim you as our missionary and we want to support you prayerfully and in any other way possible to us."

Bishop Donovan, the founding bishop of the Diocese of Kalamazoo, has served in that position for over 23 years since being appointed by Pope Paul VI on July 21, 1971. As quoted in the December 1994-January 1995 issue of the Kalamazoo Diocesan Newsletter, Bishop Donovan stated the reason for his resignation: "I'm not retiring, as I plan to stay active among the people I have come to love. I offered my resignation to the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, simply because my energy levels will no longer permit me to give myself in service to you in the way that I want and to the degree that you deserve."

The Canons Regular of Jesus the Lord wish Bishop Donovan every blessing as he begins this new stage of his priestly and episcopal ministry. We look forward to many years of mutual friendship and support. We also take this opportunity to express publicly our prayerful support and best wishes to his successor, the new Bishop of Kalamazoo, Most Reverend Alfred John Markiewicz, D.D., formerly Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Rockville Center, NY, for a long and fruitful apostolic ministry. Ad multos annos!

## News Notes

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

Scandinavia), Moses the Hungarian (+1043) and his brother Ephraim of Novotorzhok (+1053) Anne of Novgorod (+1051) (a Swedish princess baptized by the English Latin bishop St Sigfrid), and Ingvar/Igor (+1147) another Swede.

### First trip to Nicolaevsk-na-Amure

On December 26 I flew to Nicolaevsk-na-Amure for the first ever meeting with the Catholics there. I also met with Father Nicolai, the Orthodox priest. He told me there are lots of Catholics in the village of Troitskoye (Trinity) about 100 miles from my parish in Khabarovsk. We also met a man who said there are about ten Catholic families in the village of Mago, about 30 miles from Nicolaevsk. How can we begin to serve all these people so scattered over the globe? Pray for vocations!

### The Latest Fad

The latest "fad" here in Vladivostok is for older people to jump in front of cars so that they will be wounded. Then they can enter the hospital and have enough food and shelter for a while. There are no shelters in this city of a million people. We asked Mother Teresa to send sisters to begin to help such elderly and needy. Currently we try to do what we can with what money is available. Many people depend upon us for medicine and emergency help. Our new medical center just received a donation of American medical equipment from Hong Kong, and a Protestant American Missionary who is a nurse has offered to help us in our medical work. We don't have a Catholic nurse to help, but, thankfully, we do have a native Russian Catholic surgeon to help. She took over the medical program as of January 1, and will try to develop it. That will take funds and donations of medical equipment, as well as volunteer help.

### Russian Saints

[A small note from a forthcoming book by Father Christopher Zuger, of Albuquerque, New Mexico.]

Thirty Russians are venerated as Catholic saints; 21 are from the years after schism of 1054 and most are from after the time of the Fourth Crusade and the brutal rupture of Latin-Byzantine communion in 1204. They include some of the most venerated and popular Russian Saints: Abraham of Rostov and Abraham of Smolensk, Anthony and Theodosius of the Caves, Boris and Gleb, German and Sergius of Valaam, Isaiah of Rostov, Michael of Chernigov and Theodore, Sergius of Radonezh, and Theodore of the Pechersky Lavra. Other Saints who come from the time of full unity include Theodore the Varangian and his son John (+984), Olga (+969), Vladimir (+1015) (all Varangians from

## Olympiada Felixovna Tolko

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

December 20, 1994, was an historical day in the lives of two of our parishioners. They entered their parish church for the first time in 65 years!

Olympiada and Cazimira were the daughters of Felix Tolko and his wife, Margarita, who were of Polish heritage and came to Vladivostok with the great immigration of the early 1900's. He was an electrician. Altogether there were five children.

Olympiada was baptised in 1919, and later made her first communion at the Most Holy Mother of God Church when she remembers she wore a beautiful white dress.

Cazimira's clearest memory is of Bishop Slivovski who had been newly consecrated Bishop of Vladivostok in Harbin, China. In 1923 he was received by the parish in Vladivostok amid great ceremony, even though the Far East had already fallen to the Communists. The children lined up to kiss his new ring of office, and Cazimira said he was a stately figure, tall and handsome. The ceremony featured many altar boys in red and white robes, beautiful singing by the choir. The beautiful golden altar of the newly consecrated cathedral shone with sunlight for the occasion.

The Tolko children were students at the parish school, which was located on Skipera Geka Street, down the hill from the new huge brick church which was being built. It was an old, wooden structure that served as a temporary church during the construction of the new one. The future seemed bright for the bustling city and its Catholic community.

The fateful day dawned when the Vladivostok Polish community had suddenly to make a big decision--To flee Russia, or to live with the Communists. It was a very difficult decision for Felix Tolko. Should he uproot his family from the famous city in which the church was making such marvelous gains to try to find a new life in some faraway strange city, as yet unknown, where he would have to go by a ship already overcrowded with people? America? Poland? Australia? Canada?

He decided that he and his family would stay in Vladivostok. It was a big mistake. The Polish community

Then, two weeks later, her niece called me to say that Olympiada was in the hospital, and that she wanted to see me, because she "wouldn't live until tomorrow." I

and the parish church became a ghosttown almost overnight.

With time, the pressure from the Communists became even greater. Under Stalin, it became necessary to forget your native language, force yourself to speak without a Polish accent, get rid of all icons, crosses, Bibles, and prayerbooks, never go to or speak about church, and not speak out against the terrible violations of human rights going on around you. It became necessary to ignore the nighttime roaring of the black automobiles which cruised around the city arresting the "Enemies of the People"-- anybody unusual in any way.

It didn't work. On July 25, 1938, Felix, Margarita, and their son Yevgeny were taken in the middle of the night "for questioning". They were never heard from again. What was left of the family continued to live in terror and fear, while acting on the surface as if everything was normal, so as not to attract attention. Zygismund, their brother, a budding electrical engineer died suddenly of electrocution.

What happened to Felix, Margarita, and Yevgeny? What was left of the family didn't find out exactly until 1994, when records of the repression became open documents. All three were executed on August 15, 1938, together, and their bodies were buried in the mass grave on the hill overlooking Vladivostok where so many other parishioners lost their lives, and where a monument to the slain now stands.

Olympiada and Cazimira rarely left their apartment because the passing years had taken a toll on their health. On December 20, 1994, they came to the church for the first time in 65 years, to see the progress of the removal of the floors which the Communists added after the building was confiscated in 1935, and to advise Fr Myron on what they could remember about how the church was decorated and what kinds of objects were inside. Their fondest memory: the huge crucifix which hung at the entrance of the church, with the large holy water font below. Cazimira remembered that she didn't like the font, because the water was so cold!

Working with these parishioners who have seen such a history and who have suffered so much is always a joy for us missionaries. Naturally, Olympiada and Cazimira cried as they entered the church. What a wonderful gift to give them Holy Communion in the church of their baptismal rebirth after such a life of struggle. Olympiada looked healthier than ever, but said she had been sick. It was a wonderful day for us all.

immediately gathered things for the Anointing of the Sick and took the Blessed Sacrament with me. I found her alone in the hospital, already dying, waiting for me. She had sent her relatives after some things, probably so that she would have

peace while dying rather than hear their grief.

I immediately anointed her, gave her the Apostolic Pardon for the Dying, and gave her Holy Communion. After I finished, I started the Our Father, and she, seeing that the rite was finished, looked toward me as if to say "Thank You", and died. I closed her eyes.

In fifteen minutes her sister and relatives arrived, shocked, but then they began to take care of the body. So I went to the beds of the other patients in the ward, to console them in case they were shocked by the death in their midst. I found the opposite: they were all rejoicing and surprised! One lady said she had seen a miracle that day: never had she seen anyone die so peacefully. She said she was baptized as a child, but had never been to church. Now she wanted to have the priest with her when her time would come.

Russian funerals take place at home, like in my Grandma's day. But, since Olympiada's apartment was too small, the viewing was held on the street in front of her apartment (as is also common in Russia). After we arrived, and greeted the body in the usual way, we went upstairs for mass, and then returned to the street. As usual in Russia, the body in a simple wooden box was placed on the bed of a large truck, and a procession was formed behind the truck. We walked several blocks, and then we got in our cars, and in a little bus, and made our way to the Sea Cemetery for burial.

At the cemetery, the body was buried by the family, without a vault, and the flowers were placed over the mound of dirt. Then, as is the custom, around the grave we all had a toast of vodka and a cookie in her honor. We returned to the apartment for dinner prepared by her friends.

I remember when I first met Olympiada. It was near the mass grave where her parents were buried. At first she was in disbelief when she was told I was a Catholic priest; then she burst into tears as she kissed my hand.

## How to Communicate with Us

FAX: 011-7-4232-26-9616  
E-mail: [INTERNET:myron@catholic.marine.su](mailto:INTERNET:myron@catholic.marine.su)  
Phone: 011-7-4232-26-9614  
011-7-4232-22-4292

Money cannot be sent directly to Russia. Donations of money should be sent to:

Vladivostok Mission  
225 Cordova Street  
Anchorage AK 99501 USA

Letters without donations can 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 have the contents listed on the outside, marked "Humanitarian Aid", and sent to:

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

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Vladivostok Mission  
225 Cordova Street  
Anchorage AK 99501

Vladivostok Mission  
Nativity of our Lord Parish  
1900 Wellesley Ave  
St Paul MN 55105-1617

Address Correction Requested

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## From the Editor

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

Dear Reader, Father Dan had to make a quick trip back to Alaska to find out what was the cause of the attacks of stomach upset he had been experiencing. There, with the help of the Archdiocese and the wonderful Providence Hospital and its fine staff of medical personnel, it was discovered that Father Dan was suffering from gallstones. The operation was a quick one, using modern techniques, and he left the hospital in a day. The first thing he wanted was chocolate--his favorite food, but to which it seemed he had been allergic for some months! Now he is fine, traveling to respond to an invitation from Epiphany Parish in Coon Rapids, Minnesota.

Having Father Dan gone while I try to care for six parishes is quite a challenge, once again pointing to the great need for vocations.

We could do nothing without your help, since we are dependent on donations. May I ask you once again to find donors for us who would like to contribute on a regular basis? We would be happy to add people are interested to our mailing list. We simply must increase our daily income, what with prices soaring here and the work expanding.

Can you remember us in your will?

During Lent I was happy to remind my people that our Lenten fast and devotions are meant to join us with those preparing for Baptism at Easter and throughout the year, praying for the gift of faith and perseverance in faith. Please add Russia to your list of prayer intentions. Pray for faith for the peoples of Russia, and for that wonderful gift of unity between the Churches of East and West, which will surely signal a new age of faith: Jesus prayed for that when he said, "Father, that they all might be one...SO THAT THE WORLD MIGHT BELIEVE."

God bless you. Have a happy summer.

--Fr Myron

## **New Papal Nuncio to Russia is American**

from February, 1995, *Catholic World Report*

While Russian troops were bogged down fighting separatists in Chechnya, December's news also brought the announcement of a new papal nuncio to the Russian Federation. Archbishop John Bukovsky has been named by the Vatican as its representative to the Russian government, replacing the previous nuncio, Archbishop Francesco Colasuonno.

Archbishop Bukovsky, an American citizen, was born in Cerova, in the Slovak Republic, in 1924. Ordained a priest in 1950, he joined the Religious Society of the Divine Word and served as rector of the major seminary in Illinois (Techney). Beginning in 1972, he worked in the Vatican's Secretariat of State, in the Section for the Relations with the States. The new papal emissary speaks Slovak, Czech, English, German, Italian, and French.

Archbishop Bukovsky's assignment to the post makes him the second representative of the Vatican to the Russian government since the creation of the Apostolic Administration for European Russia in 1991.



## Home Visiting with CARITAS nurses

*by Douglas Campbell  
CRS, Vladivostok*

[CARITAS is the Catholic charitable organization somewhat like "Catholic Charities" in America. We want to have an article in the future to tell you about all the charitable work that CARITAS is able to do here in our region, thanks to your donations of medicine, food, clothing, and cash. And with special thanks to Catholic Relief Services, who have guided the development of CARITAS in Eastern Russia. Here is a mini-report. --ed]

In March, I spent several hours accompanying the visiting nurses of the CARITAS MedProgram in Vladivostok. They were delivering foods to clients whom they had visited once already. They were also making first contacts with potentially needy people who had been recommended to them.

The first two women we visited lived in appalling conditions. They were both pensioners, with no relatives, both very sick, and completely destitute. They never leave their apartments, but receive food once or twice a month from the Department of Health. Neither of them has water in her apartment; one is completely without plumbing facilities, living in a 6' by 6' room with her cat. It is clear that these women are not able to take care of themselves.

The people with whom we were meeting for the first time seemed very suspicious, and reluctant to agree to more visits. But once they were a bit more relaxed, they seemed to discuss their needs and circumstances with us fairly openly. Not all were houseridden, but could go out to buy food on their own, or lived with a close relative who could. They all had fairly serious medical conditions, and all require quite a bit of medicine. Two are invalids, unable to get medicines themselves. All receive a 50% discount on their prescriptions, but there are some instances where local pharmacies are unable to provide certain medicines. One woman couldn't afford Vitamin C; another, a diabetic, couldn't get or afford insulin.

I sensed a general fatalism in the people we visited. Even though they need help, they fear intrusion into their lives, and seem afraid of going to the doctor. Then, too, the high cost of food and medicine discourages them. I suspect that a lot of people don't answer the door out of fear: they just double-bolt the door and hope whoever's there will go away.

Bringing food to these really destitute people is important

for their physical survival, and it eases the loneliness and isolation of those without relatives. But could we find volunteers other than nurses to do this? It would free up the nurses for more urgent medical needs, thereby broadening our coverage and outreach to accommodate the thousands in need of this vital service.

## Miracle Picture

by Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.

Sometimes dreams come true! We wanted to find, if at all possible, a picture of the inside of our church in Vladivostok, The Cathedral of the Most Holy Mother of God. But where to find it, since the majority of our parishioners left Russia at the time of the Communist Revolution? Those who stayed had to hide the fact that they were Catholics for the sake of their lives as the murderous government forces searched for "Enemies of the People". So Catholics destroyed their photographs, holy pictures, and prayerbooks, to save their lives.

But surely there must be a photo of a marriage, or some special events. For example, in a book about the Poles of the Far East published in Harbin, China, we found a picture of our Bishop Karol Slivovsky, and of a procession on the street, maybe from the Feast of Corpus Christi, since that was a tradition. Our parishioner Sophia Michaelovna, who was born in 1911, said that she thought she had seen a picture somewhere among the family heirlooms. I asked her to hunt for it. She found it!

Here you see it. It is a picture of her first communion class of about 1921. It is clear that the Monsignor or Bishop seated in the picture is Karol Slivovsky, because the face is the same as the picture from Harbin. Since we aren't sure of the year, we don't know if he was a bishop already or not. If so, then the picture must be from 1923. In the picture he is wearing a purple biretta, purple buttons and a ring. But we suppose that if he were a bishop already, he would surely be wearing his miter. We think the priest in the picture with him is Father Yurkevich. We presume both are martyrs, since we know nothing about what happened to either of them.

When our parishioner Yadviga Frantsevna saw the picture, she burst out in tears--there was her brother Stanislaus, who had been shot by the Communists in 1935! He was seated next to the Bishop, wearing a kind of uniform with gloves. Maybe he was the server at the first communion Mass, or maybe he had also received his first communion.

Who is the priest in the picture? A former parishioner who now lives in Novosibirsk, Elena Antonovna Cherepanova, tells us that the assistant of Bishop Slivovsky was Father Yezhi Yurkevich. She says that an acquaintance of hers from Vladivostok was arrested and sentenced to the labor camp at Dudinka, in the North of Russia. He told that in the camp was a Father Yurkevich, who had lost an eye in the camp.

Since then, our parishioner Lucia Leonovna identified her brother and sister, Henry Leonovich and Viktoria Leonovna in the picture. And we are still showing the picture to our elderly parishioners, and former parishioners, wherever they may be.

What else can we see in the picture? In the background, but out of focus, we see four columns and two arched doorways, which must be the entrances to the sacristy. They have exactly the measure, shape, and location of existing columns and doorways in our present church, so that is where the picture was taken. This offers us proof that a major wall which is currently located in our church building was added later. We presumed this, from the shape of the church, but the Department of Architectural Monuments disagreed with us. Now we have proof--we can remove that wall.

Behind the group is the altar, and above the altar is the beautiful marble cross, which currently is located at the Art Institute. Rumor had it that the cross was from our church, but now we have proof that it was! It is the only cult object we have found from our historical parish. You'll find a picture of the cross at the Art Institute in *Vladivostok Sunrise*, number 4. Of course we have asked the Art Institute to return our cross. They say that it is the only actual piece of worthwhile art in their whole collection(!?) Therefore, to get it back we must trade two color computers for it, so that their students can work with computer art. What shall we do? What would you do? We are still thinking, and talking to the Department of Culture, complaining that our cross was simply stolen, so why should we buy it back!

Also visible in the picture (but more visible in the original than in the reproduction here) is the communion rail, the shape of the sanctuary, and some details of the altar.

There are also two flags in the picture. Probably the left one is the Papal flag, and the right one is probably either the flag of Russia (since the Communists were not in Vladivostok yet at the time the picture was taken), or the flag of the Far Eastern Republic (since the Far East of Russia became an independent nation after the fall of Moscow to the Bolsheviks). A specialist will have to tell us.

Most probably, there he suffered martyrdom, too. Is this the handsome young priest in our picture? She says she remembers him well. We want to send her the picture.

*Historical Photograph Taken within the Cathedral of the Most Holy Mother of God*

1. *Bishop Karol Slivovski, Bishop of Vladivostok*
2. *Probably Father Yezhi Yurkevich*
3. *Sophia Michaelovna Berzhinskaya, who saved the picture*
4. *Stanislauf Francevich, executed in 1935*
5. *Henry Leonovich Smarichevsky*
6. *Viktoria Leonovna Smarichevsky*

## Ask a Busy Man...

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

If you want to get something done, ask a busy man, they say. In the case of our benefactor, Lee Larkey, of Avon, Minnesota, that saying proves true. Lee is an active member of his parish, St Anna's in Santa Anna, Minnesota, an active member of the Knights of Columbus, The Apostolate of Family Consecration, an active pro-lifer, and is involved in many other good works. He is the father of a family, an avid gardener, a tax consultant and accountant, who just recently founded his own business.

Lee and I became acquainted 20 years ago when we both worked in vocations, I as seminary vocation director, and he as diocesan coordinator of vocation work for the Knights of Columbus. He was always first to promote a vocations project, and ready to help in any circumstance. So it was natural for me to think of Lee when we were desperate for help here in Russia, even though we hadn't seen each other for many years.

As soon as my letter reached Lee, he found a way to get on electronic mail, through the mailservers at Saint John's University. He collected books, religious articles, and liturgical vestments from various parishes. He contacted Father Richard Wey, the St Cloud Diocesan Director of the Propagation of the Faith, to ask for help for us, which was quick in forthcoming. He arranged for Father Dan Maurer to speak in several parishes, including his own, to ask for funds for our work, and he cooperated with our generous sister parish of St Mary's, in Little Falls, Minnesota.

At his own expense Lee placed ads in *The Wanderer* newspaper asking for help for our mission. From these ads much good has come for us: Our first full-time volunteer, Valerie Walatka; our new sister parish relationship with Nativity Parish in St Paul Minnesota; additional names for our role of benefactors; and even the printing of our newsletter by the Missionary Sisters of St Peter Claver in St Paul.

When Lee heard that we were having major problems with our heating system, he immediately set to work doing research on how we could rework it. He researched various furnaces, and did a study of how much heat our building needs in the winter. Through his efforts, and those of Rob Flynn in Seattle, we found what we needed and got an excellent price from Dunkirk Radiator Corporation of Dunkirk, New York. Now the new furnaces are in a container on the way to us from San Francisco.

You see that in the present world, mission work can be done in America, for foreign missions, by anyone who wants to get involved and help. Lee is a great example. Mission work doesn't have to be just a matter of donations from the folks at home, but they also make use of the other T's besides treasure: time and talent. Lee has made use of all three for us. He reminds me of the words from the Letter of James, "Show me your faith without works, and I will show you my faith from my works!" (2:18)

Thanks, Lee! Keep up the good work. May others learn from your example.

*Lee Larkey at the right, with Father Richard Wey of the Propagation of the Faith office of the St Cloud Diocese, and Mr and Mrs David Sonnen, our friends from St Paul, Minnesota.*

*This "warrior" is our parishioner Artur Valeriovich, the first parishioner to be baptized Catholic in Comsomolsk-na-Amure.*