

## A Memorable Christmas

by Father Daniel Maurer, C.J.D.

Christmas Day 1995 brought the Parish of the Most Holy Mother of God another historic occasion--the first Mass celebrated in the newly renovated upper hall of our church. We could not celebrate Midnight Mass because it is too difficult to travel late at night in Vladivostok, mostly due to the winter elements and bad transportation. So we had to wait until the Monday workday was finished.

Here in Russia December 25 on the modern calendar is nothing special for 99.9% of the population. For religious feasts most Russian Christians, who are called Orthodox, follow the old Julian Calendar. Their December 25 falls on our Jan. 7, which they celebrate as Christmas and which has been an official government holiday in Russia for the last four years.

Christmas Mass brought to our church the biggest crowd since religious freedom returned 6 years ago. The more than 200 people who attended fit comfortably into the freshly painted (almost still wet) second floor church. The choir started singing carols at 5:30 pm and the service began at 6:00 with one of our "old" traditions.

Whenever we celebrate Mass for the first time in a new location two of our older parishioners, who remember the days of pre-communist religious freedom, carry our statue of the Blessed Mother in a solemn procession and put it in a prominent place directly behind the main altar while all present sing a song of greeting to her, since we are her parish allowed once again to celebrate the eternal sacrifice of her Son. Fr Myron began this beautiful tradition when he first visited the city and celebrated the first Mass at the Church in more than 65 years on November 5, 1991. Since then the same statue has been repeatedly carried in procession:

- to our first regular parish Sunday Mass in the Palace of the Pioneers on February 16, 1992;
- to our first Mass in the Trade Union Hall on Christmas Day 1992 when we outgrew our first hall;
- very solemnly to the third floor (now gone) of our church on our patronal feast, January 1, 1994 when the building was first returned to us;
- down to the first floor when we began the major floor removal in November 1994;
- and now--for the time being--up to the second floor which was just made ready by a typical Russian renovation team of paint and mortar ladies a day earlier as we were celebrating the final Sunday Mass downstairs.

The expression "for the time being" is appropriate because we plan to carry our statue once again in the most solemn

procession of all, when we will have finally renovated the entire church and can celebrate our first Mass in the original sanctuary on the first floor where currently the caretaker and Fr Myron's secretary Valerie Walatka have their offices. Only God knows when that will be since, before that can happen, we will need to build a new building for parish offices, social hall, classrooms, storage, living quarters, etc.--everything which is now located on the ground floor where the sanctuary and nave and sacristies once were located before the communist authorities took our building for use as the State Archive in the early 1930's.

After the final Mass downstairs (on Christmas Eve which this year was also the Fourth Sunday of Advent) we asked all the men to help take the seats, altar, tables, organ, etc. upstairs via the new welded, steel stairway which was just completed the night before. A team of ladies stayed through Christmas Eve afternoon to scrape and sweep and mop the floor, and then Fr Myron and parishioner Alexei Kordewmov arranged the chairs in rows that night.

On Christmas morning we set up in front of the altar the beautiful crib scene donated by St Clement's Parish in Dearborn, Michigan (where Fr Dan's cousin Jenny Sinatra is a member). Though donated three years ago, this was the first time we were able to use the crib scene in church because it was the first time we had room enough to display it. (*Sunrise* readers will remember that during last year's Christmas season it was displayed beautifully in a showcase window in the largest department store in downtown Vladivostok on the main street, a first for this most "soviet", meaning traditional communist, city in Russia.) With the crib scene and other last minute Christmas decorations, our new church looked wonderful.

There is still much to be done before the reconstruction and redecoration is complete. It is a much larger space than we are accustomed to, with very high Gothic vaults. The grape-cluster-and-leaf capitals of the large pillars have been beautifully recreated from molds made from the originals whose destruction was fated when the third floor of steel-reinforced concrete was poured around them over 60 years ago. All walls, pillars and ceiling vaults have been painted white for now, but further decoration will be added when possible. The only thing that was not ready for use was the choir loft and large electronic organ (see related story). It was only clear on Saturday December 23 that we would be able to use the upper church for Christmas Mass, and it did not happen easily. Many volunteers helped all week to get the place ready, and we sent out a general appeal for a "subbotnik" (volunteer Saturday). Thanks be to God, many volunteers showed up. Our paid workers also stayed each night of the week until 9 or 10:00 to finish up something important.

So on Christmas evening after the choir sang Christmas carols for a half hour, and after the procession with the statue

of Mary, Christmas Mass began with the entrance of the servers and priests, the greeting and penitential rite. After the *Gospodi, pomiluy* (Lord, have Mercy), we turned up the volume of our tabletop keyboard organ as high as it would go and started to sing *Adeste Fideles* in Latin. It was the first Christmas song that our parish learned four Christmases ago, and is still their favorite.

As we sang, all the children of the parish marched in with lit candles in glass jars, came up to the crib scene in front of the altar, and put the candles in various spots to light up the darkened world of sin with the light of the new born King. The last child in procession placed the figure of the Christ Child in the manger. Then the children sang "Away in a Manger" (beautifully translated by our parishioner Yevgeny Kustov) and melted the hearts of all who were present. After that we all sang the *Gloria* and the Mass proceeded as usual.

The choir sang again during the collection and after communion, and during communion two parishioners played Bach's "Jesus, Joy of Man's Desiring" on organ (keyboard) and violin. After the final blessing everyone ended with a truly triumphant rendition of Handel's "Joy to the World" in Russian which we had only found a month earlier in an old Russian Baptist hymnal published in New York City which was a gift from an Orthodox priest to one of our choir members.

After Mass we went downstairs for tea and goodies to what was only the day before our worship space but what has now become our parish hall.

The grace and peace of this historic Christmas celebration will long live in the hearts of all who were present. May the everlasting grace and peace of the Savior Christ come to all our benefactors who helped to make our celebration possible.

## Musical Miracles

by Father Daniel Maurer, C.J.D.

Here in Russia as we see the once flourishing Catholic Church rising from the ashes of militant atheism, we don't just believe in miracles, we depend on them. They are, after all, more dependable than winning the lottery, and just as exciting when they happen. And usually they happen through the grace-filled generosity of a particular person or group.

Because of the extraordinary generosity of Father Bernard Reiser, pastor, and the parishioners of the Catholic Church of the Epiphany in Coon Rapids, Minnesota, the music program of our parish in Vladivostok is about to take a giant step forward. By the time this article is printed, we will have installed in our newly renovated choir loft the first concert size electronic organ in the entire Russian Far East (an area about one third the size of the US).

As *Sunrise* readers know, Most Holy Mother of God parish in Vladivostok, with extremely limited finances, has worked actively to develop liturgical music resources in Russia from the first Sunday after the arrival of the priests in February 1992. Before our first Sunday Mass we taught our congregation of about 15 people two pieces of liturgical music, the *Sanctus* and a Russian translation of "Holy God, We Praise Thy Name." From such humble beginnings great things can blossom. A major step was taken almost from the beginning when we learned that a member of our first baptismal class (June 9, 1992), Anna Gafurova, was an excellent keyboard musician. Counting on her talent and interest, the parish decided to purchase a Casio table top keyboard with one useable organ voice, and to form a permanent choir.

The search was on throughout the Russian speaking world for more liturgical music of good quality. Lyrical and musical talents miraculously appeared in our parishioners. Musical beauty springs from the grace of God and from the efforts of many people. Success encouraged success. Parishioners Victor Anisimov and Yevgeny Kustov particularly distinguished themselves by composing or translating lyrics in beautifully rhymed and metered Russian for a large number of Christmas carols and other hymns for specific feasts and liturgical seasons. Anna and others composed beautiful melodies and chants for many parts of the Russian Mass and other sacramental rites, including an inspired version of the Litany of the Saints. A copy machine was donated by Ignatius Press of San Francisco, on which the first edition of the parish hymnal, "My Soul Magnifies the Lord," (32 pages) was published in early 1993. Since then, it has grown four pages at a time to its present size of 64 pages and 100 songs.

On a trip to California in November 1993, Fr Myron purchased a more versatile Technics electronic keyboard with multiple organ voices and a limited ability to mix voices together. In August 1994, thanks to the generosity of Fr Ron Gollatz, pastor, and the members of St. Francis de Sales parish in Lake Zurich, IL, especially thanks to parishioner Leo Casciotti of the company, Current Trends in Electronics, in Gurnee, IL, who donated a computer and printer for a music publishing program, the Russian Liturgical Music Society of Saint Augustine was founded with the goal of developing and distributing beautiful liturgical music in the Russian language to all the parishes and religious communities in the diocese and to all bishops of Russian speaking Catholics.

Since its inception, the Society of Saint Augustine has sent more than 60 pages of lyrics with 130 pages of musical accompaniment to its 65 member institutions. It has also produced and distributed to its membership two cassette tapes of Russian liturgical music.

In June 1995 when, after three years of training and experience, our first parish organist married and moved away from Vladivostok, it seemed to be a major setback. But she gave us a going away gift by recommending her newly graduated classmate at the Far Eastern Art Institute, Marina Shuyanova, to become main organist of the parish. Besides being an equally good musician, Marina was inspired to take a full course of instruction in the Catholic faith and was baptized as a member of our parish in December 1995. It will be Marina's privilege to be the first Vladivostok musician to play the new organ, and her responsibility to help develop the parish's music program in the years to come.

With such miraculous progress, and now with the opening of the upper church and the imminent restoration of the choir loft, we are ready for the installation of the large Cambridge 220-II electronic organ manufactured by the Rogers Organ Company of Hillsboro, Oregon, and donated by the Church of the Epiphany. It was the original organ installed when Epiphany's large church was built in Coon Rapids, MN. That church provides seating for well over 1000 people, so the organ had to be able to set in euphonious motion a vast amount of air in the huge interior worship space. The job was accomplished successfully for several years by the organ's six large cabinets of speakers, each producing 100 watts of amplification, and each with its own controls to adjust the speakers to the acoustics of the room. So even before its installation in our much smaller church (seating capacity fewer than 400), we are sure that the organ will be able to be heard very well under our large, resonant Gothic vaults.

The story of how the organ came to be donated to the Most Holy Mother of God Catholic Church in Vladivostok begins with my first visit to the Church of the Epiphany in February 1995 when I was invited to speak at all the Masses and receive the proceeds of a special mission collection. The invitation

was extended by the pastor Fr Reiser, at the suggestion of Epiphany parishioners Mr and Mrs Terrence Kopp who had heard about our Russian mission through Mr Kopp's work at Mother Angelica's Eternal Word Television Network. During my visit I happened to see a large, covered organ console standing in a wide corridor outside the parish gymnasium. Ever since I was a young boy, I have always had a fascination with church organs, so I could not pass it by without asking Fr Reiser, "Why is a large organ standing in a school corridor?" Fr Reiser explained that five years earlier the parish had an opportunity to purchase a pipe organ at a considerable discount, and they still had not decided what to do with the original electronic organ, so there it stood.

As calmly as I could (probably not too successfully), I told Fr Reiser that I knew of the perfect place for the organ. When he saw that I was serious, and that our parish truly needed a real church organ, he immediately offered to donate it. The very next day he called the manufacturers for them to send a professional to see that the organ was still worth donating after five years of standing unused. The Rogers representative pronounced it to be in perfect condition.

The next question was how to get it to California for shipment to Vladivostok. Fr Reiser remembered that he had a classmate with a trucking company. Epiphany parish took care of crating and trucking the entire organ assembly (two-manual console with roll top cover, bench, pedal board, six large speaker cabinets and cables, and two new voltage transformers purchased by Epiphany) from Minnesota to the San Francisco Bay area where it was all loaded into a container and shipped to Vladivostok by our good friends and benefactors Sr and Jr John Mahoney, of Mahoney Export Services, Brisbane, CA.

The organ arrived in Vladivostok in June 1995, but had to wait in a warehouse until the church restoration progressed sufficiently so that potential constructing accidents and clouds of dust and debris would not damage its delicate electronic components. We hoped that we could inaugurate it at Christmas Mass, but a flood in the new boilerroom set our reconstruction schedule back by a month. Now we are looking forward to installation of what has become known as the "Epiphany organ" sometime in mid January.

The inauguration of such a large instrument will be a major event not just for the parish but for the entire city and region. The arrival of the organ has been reported, somewhat erroneously on occasion, by local newspapers, TV and radio programs, and was even carried by Moscow TV news. With all the press coverage the parish has received many calls from people interested to know when they can come to hear a real organ for the first time. As the third largest city in Asian Russia (population about one million) and the only large city on the Pacific coast, Vladivostok is the cultural center for a great number of people, with two symphony orchestras, regular

productions of classical opera, and frequent concerts by visiting performers of international reputation.

For decades the city has wanted to have its own organ concert hall. At one point there were plans drawn up to make our church building, at that time the State Archive, into such an organ hall, but the plans never materialized because the removal of the added interior floors and renovation of the building proved to be too costly. At least two other Gothic style Catholic churches in the vast Asian part of Russia, in Krasnoyarsk and in Irkutsk, were converted at great expense into organ concert halls. Perhaps because the government spent so much on those conversion projects, the local Catholic parishes, which since have been reborn, have not received their church buildings back for permanent use. They are still used primarily as organ concert halls, with the Catholics allowed to have Sunday Mass if it does not interfere with the concert schedule.

When our pastor Fr Myron Effing was involved in negotiations for the return of our church building, beginning almost four years ago, one of the concerns of the city and krai governments, occasionally voiced in the form of strong objections to the proposed return of the church, was that the building should be used for organ concerts in accord with the long standing plans. Fr Myron finally agreed that if they would return our church to us, and when a suitable instrument could be acquired, the Catholic parish of Vladivostok would host some organ concerts for the public. As soon as the Epiphany organ is installed and after it is first used for sacred services, we want to present an inaugural concert, perhaps in the form of a prayer-reflection of sacred music, to introduce the instrument to all organ music lovers in the city.

We are also thinking about other ways that this new treasure can benefit more people than our parishioners. Perhaps we can offer the use of the organ to the Far Eastern Art Institute's faculty of music so that they can form a new department of organ instruction. In that way, and perhaps in ways still to be discovered, generations of Russian Far Easterners can receive a share in what has turned out to be a priceless gift. We and our parishioners will always be grateful for such miraculous generosity to Epiphany and our other benefactors.

## **Pro-Life Evangelization Begins In Vladivostok Abortion Clinics**

*by Valerie Walatka*

The Most Holy Mother of God parish pro-life group "Choose Life" recently received permission to place educational display boards in several women's clinics and gynecological consultation offices around Vladivostok.

The first two displays, "The Miracle of Life vs Abortion" and "Natural Family Planning," were placed in early July in the lobby of a clinic just a few blocks from the church. The panels are colorful and informative, with pouches for flyers on chastity, the "safe sex" myth, Post Abortion Syndrome, and the physical side-effects of abortion. The display on Natural Family Planning (NFP) includes information about our book on the ovulation method, *Love and Fertility*, and how to contact us to get a copy.

Due to a shortage of pro-life materials, initially "Choose Life" was able to make only the two displays. However, a care package from Human Life International has provided posters, pamphlets and other information, allowing the pro-lifers to continue their evangelization efforts in the abortion clinics where they hope to reach more and more women with the gospel of life.

The leader of "Choose Life," Yuri Belozyorov, and his wife Victoria, besides being very familiar with the ovulation method, are currently working with Couple to Couple League to become certified teachers of the Sympto-Thermal Method of NFP. They hope to make NFP classes available in Vladivostok again, our former teaching couple, Adam and Anya Jones, having moved to America to pursue graduate work at Notre Dame University.

Yuri and Victoria are well-known in Vladivostok for their promotion of birth under water: both their boys were delivered under water. Yuri is a licensed Biology teacher in the public schools, and Victoria a geographer. Both are able to witness to their love of God and of nature in their work for life in Vladivostok.

## **World Wide Web Home Page**

Dear Fr Myron,

I am sending you this note from the Holy Mother of God Catholic Church World Wide Web home page. The address for the page is: <http://www.efn.org/~mostholy/index.html>

You will want to let others know of this in your next news letter. The page contains a request to pray for the restoration of the Church, your most current note and needs list, how to contact you by mail, E-mail, fax, phone, how to make contributions of money or supplies. The page also has a picture of the church and an icon of St Mary of Vladyimir.

People can also E-mail you from the page. The page is also linked to other popular Catholic pages including the Vatican home page. I will send you hard copy of what it looks like. There is no cost for the home page.

God Bless,  
Jeff Lang, Eugene Oregon

[Thanks, Jeff. You are constantly looking for ways to help us, and we appreciate it! God bless you. --ed.]

## How to Communicate with Us

	- 3 -
	- 4 -
FAX: 011-7-4232-26-9616	- 5 -
E-mail: <a href="mailto:myron@catholic.marine.su">myron@catholic.marine.su</a>	- 6 -
<a href="mailto:daniel@catholic.marine.su">daniel@catholic.marine.su</a>	- 7 -
Phone: 011-7-4232-26-9614	- 8 -
011-7-4232-22-4292	- 9 -
<b>Money</b> cannot be sent by mail to Russia. Donations of money from America should be sent to:	- 10 -
Vladivostok Mission	- 11 -
225 Cordova Street	- 12 -
Anchorage AK 99501 USA	- 13 -
<b>Letters</b> without donations can be sent to:	- 14 -
Most Holy Mother of God Catholic Parish	- 15 -
Volodarskovo 22	- 16 -
690001 Vladivostok RUSSIA	- 17 -
<b>Packages</b> of donated items (not money or checks) should have the contents listed on the outside, marked "Humanitarian Aid", and sent to:	- 18 -
Vladivostok Mission	- 19 -
Mahoney Exports, Inc	- 20 -
400 Valley Dr	- 21 -
Brisbane CA 94005 USA	- 22 -

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Vladivostok Mission  
225 Cordova Street  
Anchorage AK 99501

Vladivostok Mission  
Nativity of our Lord Parish  
324 Prior Ave South  
St Paul MN 55105-1617

Address Correction Requested

**Remember "Vladivostok Mission"  
in your will.**

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## From the Editor

As we enter the new year, do you want to know what concerns me most? We don't have sufficient resources to do evangelization!

We should count our blessing, of course. Like our full year of Saturday night television broadcasting, now long gone; our Catholic Faith by Mail course which was supported last year by the Koch Foundation of Gainesville, Florida; our ability to at last have enough literature and books to support evangelization, thanks to CARITAS Novosibirsk and to the American Bishops; the success of our pro-life efforts; the growing size of our Vladivostok parish; our new parish in Nakhodka; and the wonderful aid we give to the distressed elderly, thanks to Catholic Relief Services and CARITAS Japan. Not to mention the loyalty and interest of you, our sister parishes and our benefactors, without whom we could do nothing, and whose interest in the restoration of our cathedral in Vladivostok and support for our daily expenses has meant so much to this part of Russia!

So what is the difficulty with evangelization? There are two:

1. We cannot do evangelization without advertising and postal services--both of which have become very expensive! The Catholics scattered from village to village cannot find out about us and the faith if we cannot announce our presence and offer them services. This year, because of the burden of our building and the extra effort we had to put into helping the sick and elderly, we didn't make much progress in evangelization. We can be grateful that Russian citizens have become more wary of cults and sects during this past year, so that the opening for real Christianity is still present. We simply need to advertise. Where will we find the funds?

2. We cannot do evangelization without more vocations--we are already overworked with no relief in sight. For four years we have begged and pleaded with everybody we know to send us priests, sisters, laypeople, who can help us. We do have trained Russian helpers now, but it's not the same as those dedicated by ordination and vows to serve the Lord. We can't be spread more thinly than six parishes in a place bigger than Texas, New Mexico, AND Arizona. Who will come to help us? Our parishes in Khabarovsk, Blagoveschensk, Nakhodka, Bolshoi Kamen, and Nicolaevsk-na-Amure simply cannot do evangelization and survive with only an occasional visit from a priest--they need regular daily service! Where will we find vocations for this need?

In a way the two questions are one question, because we expect that new priests or sisters would bring new financial resources, too. And one might hope that new finances for

evangelization would bring new vocations--even Russian ones--so that new parishes could be founded.

While I was in America in November, I tried to interest the dioceses of Pennsylvania to help us, since they had had a Russian missionary priest for 40 years during the establishment of the Catholic Church in Pennsylvania--Prince Father Dimitri Gallitzin. I've invited a variety of orders of priests and sisters to send us vocations. I'm working with people in Australia and Oceania to send us vocations. But I have five parishes myself, and they need to see their pastor occasionally--I cannot be constantly searching for vocations and resources!

I told my parish in Vladivostok on the Feast of the Most Holy Mother of God, January 1, that in my opinion our greatest need is vocations, and we must surely devote more prayer to vocations in this year of 1996. Won't you join us, dear benefactors, to make this a year of prayer for vocations? And help us find the resources we need for evangelization!

God bless you in 1996. Have a Happy and Blessed Easter. Ask your parish to pray for vocations. Ask your bishop to begin a new vocations program. Ask young men in your parish to become priests and serve in Russia! Yours truly,

Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.

## News Notes

by Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.

It was a great day when our new heating system began to work. Now the three boilers are working great! I've named them Shadrak, Mishak, and Abednigo, after the three boys who were cast into the fire furnace as written the Book of Daniel! It's nice to be a missionary--you get to name parishes and furnaces! I can't remember the name of the angel that was in there with them, but he must surely be the patron of boiler operators! One boiler was a gift from Nativity Parish in St Paul, Minnesota. We'll let them decide which one, but I think it should be Abednigo. Shadrak and Mishak are still waiting for someone to donate them, but they are already working like slaves.

We are trying to stop the leakage of air from the building, but it is difficult with the 70 year old window frames that have a single thickness of glass without glazing compound. It gets 40 below zero on our coldest days of winter. From Nativity Parish we also received a box of 3M patio door shrinkfilm, which we have installed inside the windows to try to conserve even more heat. Our major project this summer will be to really repair the windows, even if they'll still be without stained glass--we can't afford that!

You've noticed the return address on our *Sunrise* is our sister parish--Nativity--in St Paul, Minnesota! One of their projects is to mail our newsletter. The newsletter is being printed in St Paul by the Missionary Sisters of St Peter Claver, thanks to our benefactor Mr and Mrs Terry Kopp. Then Nativity picks it up, collates it, adds the envelope, sorts, labels, and mails it on their bulk mail permit. We are grateful to our brothers and sisters at Nativity for taking this task on themselves, which saves us much time and money. Thanks also to Mr and Mrs Robert Flynn of Seattle who used to do this job for us until they adopted two children! Of course Vladivostok Mission continues to have its volunteer office in Anchorage, Alaska.

When I returned from America, I had to immediately attend to my five parishes, and even baptized and confirmed five new members of our Vladivostok Parish of the Most Holy Mother of God. On December 9 I was in Nakhodka for the parish feastday, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (even though we were a day late!--Russia is big and we can't always be on schedule, even on the Church calendar!) While I was there I had the privilege of having dinner at the home of our new parishioner whose grandfather had been a Ukrainian Catholic priest. He had been arrested, of course, and sent to the gulag in the far North where he died under Stalin as "an enemy of the people". She is a lawyer--now retired--but she told me how she wanted to be a doctor, but was not admitted to medical school

because they wouldn't accept the granddaughter of "an enemy of the people". Pray that these things will never happen again!

Recently I was saddened and upset to hear that an 82 year old Catholic lady here in Vladivostok died, and I didn't know about it. Her friends called me to ask for a funeral mass on the day after the burial! How sad I was not to have known about her before her death so that I could have brought her Holy Viaticum, given her the Apostolic Pardon for the Dying, and anointed her with the Sacrament of the Sick. Her friends said that she had been severely frightened by the KGB in early life, and so she was always petrified that someone would find out she was a Catholic. We never knew about her! This past Sunday, the son of a Catholic came to place a candle for his deceased elderly father who had just died--first time he had been to church. He didn't know we were here. We must advertise! We must find our Catholics!

I was in the city of Irqutsk, 2000 miles away, for the 25th anniversary of the ordination of my neighbor priest, Fr Ignatsy Paulus. Yes, he is my neighbor--this is Russia! We priests almost never see each other, of course, since we are so far away from each other, but Bishop Joseph Werth wanted me to come to Irqutsk for the celebration, even though it was a four hour plane ride--like New York to San Francisco. It did give me the chance to compare our work with the work in Siberia. My general impression is that both the city and our parishes are poorer in Vladivostok than in Siberia. In general, the further you are from Moscow, the worse your conditions. We are the most distant point of Russia from Moscow by air miles--even further than Kamchatka or the tip of Russia near Alaska! (Remember great circle routes, and consider that Russian planes do not fly over China!)

## Alexander “Sasha” Novikov

[From the newsletter of *Healing the Children*, Oregon and Western Washington Chapter, September, 1995]

Four year old Sasha Novikov is truly a miracle. He arrived from Vladivostok, Russia, as an emergency placement (with six months to live) to the home of *Healing the Children* foster parents Jeni and Paul Westburg in Bothell. He had two surgical tubes extending from his abdomen with condoms attached to the ends with shoelaces, green “something” on his skin across his entire abdomen and a rash from head-to-toe. One of Sasha’s kidneys had shut down and the other one was in renal failure.

Jeni reported that at the beginning of Sasha’s stay, doctors weren’t sure there was much they could do to save Sasha. In addition to his kidney failure, Sasha had a detached bladder and blocked urethra. Surgery was expected to last four to five hours and the plan was to give Sasha a urostomy to divert urine to the outside of the abdomen and try to fix up his urinary tract as much as possible. A urostomy would have left Sasha still with a decreased lifespan and he would have had to continue to use bags outside his body to collect urine.

The surgery lasted over nine hours, during which time Dr Richard M. Parker, pediatric urologist, removed Sasha’s nonfunctioning kidney, rebuilt his bladder, reattached it to his remaining kidney and removed the blockage in his urethra. All Sasha’s tubes are out and according to Jeni, “I’ve never been so excited about potty training!” Sasha now is urinating “in the regular way” and is toilet trained during the day. When his last two tubes were removed Sasha said, “Tell Mama. Mama smile, ahhh Mama dance.” A FAX was sent to Russia: “Smile Mama, Dance Mama.” Sasha’s remaining kidney is doing it’s job and if it continues to grow with Sasha, he’ll have a normal life expectancy.

Being a foster family requires a lot of time and commitment. Foster father, Paul, says “1995 won’t be the summer we built the deck...the summer of ‘95 was the summer we saved a child’s life.”

Sasha’s providers include Richard M. Parker, MD, pediatric urologist; Swedish Medical Center in Seattle; Physician’s Anesthesiology Service; Stephen Ross, MD, pediatrician; J. Vincnet Smith, DDS; and Lab of Pathology.

The Westburgs wish to especially thank newly licensed foster family, Nan and Eric Lucke, who were the Westburgs support family. Jeni says the Luckes cooked dinners, helped baby-sit the three Westburg children, cleaned the house and took turns staying at the hospital with Sasha. “We did it as a team effort,” added Jeni.

[CARITAS Primorye and the Catholic Parish of the Most Holy Mother of God were happy to help Sasha and his mom, providing communications with *Healing the Children*, and making translations and arrangements in Russia. The entire cost of the project was borne by *Healing the Children* and its benefactors. One further note: While Sasha was in Seattle for four months, playing with other children, he began to speak English without an accent, and upon returning to Russia, was unable to speak Russian for several weeks! The address of *Healing the Children* is 14021 127th Ave, SE, Snohomish WA 98290.--ed.]

## **Weekly Parish Day of Prayer Expands to Include Benediction**

*by Valerie Walatka*

Last summer Fr Effing designated Thursday as a Day of Prayer for the parish, inviting members of the parish to commit to an hour of prayer at the same time each Thursday, between 7am and 5pm, either at home or in the chapel. The response was encouraging: Within a few weeks all of the time slots for those praying at home were filled. But because of the location of the church, on top of a steep, rocky hill, only a few people signed up for Thursday prayer in the chapel.

On returning from his annual trip to America in late November, Fr Effing worked to fill the vacant time slots for Thursday prayer in the chapel. Already by the first Thursday in December he was able to begin weekly Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament after 7:30am Mass concluding with Benediction at 4:45pm. Attendance at Benediction has varied from week to week, but because the church office workers always come, there has never been fewer than five people. One day nearly 15 people showed up!

In Russia incense has always been a significant part of worship, and for Benediction Fr Effing has five different varieties of incense to choose from, one a gift from the Archdiocese of St Louis, another from his Orthodox friend Fr Valentine. Frankincense from Syracuse, New York, Gloria Incense from Johnstown, Pennsylvania and Trappist Incense from New Melleray, Iowa, were sent to us from unknown benefactors to our Brisbane, California address. The monstrance we use is a donation from the Capuchin Fathers of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and the altar breads were donated by the Cathedral Parish in Anchorage, Holy Family. Our altar wine was donated by the Gallo Winery of Modesto, California. Thanks to our benefactors.

On the Day of Prayer parishioners especially pray for their country and the city of Vladivostok; for fishermen, the military fleet, and those who work on the sea; for seasonable weather and healthy gardens and crops; and for Most Holy Mother of God Parish: for our bishop and priests, for those preparing for Baptism, for Catholic families, for religious vocations and for unity between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

Why did Fr Effing pick Thursday? He said that Friday is already the Day of the Holy Cross for the Canons Regular of Jesus the Lord, and he must often be gone to outlying parishes on Fridays. Thursday is the Day of the Sacred Heart when Jesus himself prayed in the Garden, when he consecrated himself to our salvation, when he appointed his Apostles to the priesthood, and when he gave himself to us in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Maybe our sister parishes who do not have a day of prayer or regular exposition of the Blessed Sacrament would like to join us on Thursday. Please unite with us in prayer on Thursdays, wherever you may be.

*Eric Westburg with Sasha and Anna holding Raenika.*

*As it was, halfway through.*

*Most masonry workers in Russia are women, a result of World War II.*

*The hole where the new boilers were placed.*

*The winning entry in the Children's Christmas Art contest, sponsored by CARITAS Primorye. l to r, Anastacia Potopenko, Director of CARITAS Primorye; Father Dan, Mr Frank Carlin, Director of Catholic Relief Service's Vladivostok office; Irina Michailovna from the Children's Art Gallery, where the contest was held; and Tamara Olofinskaya, translator for CRS. All were judges at the art contest.*

*The baptismal class of Advent. Marina, our organist, is in the center.*

*The Christmas figures before the altar at Christmas mass.*

*The first added floor remains, to allow space for storage.*

*The sacristy of the church, which had been turned into a photo lab, being repaired.*

*Repairing the windows (here covered with a plastic sheet) will be our job for the summer of 1996.*

*The organ box, being unloaded from the container.*

*The first mass in the new space: Christmas, 1995.*

*The Children's Choir at Christmas, 1995.*

*Compare the spaces: The space in the ceiling vs the church with the floor removed, and the congregation one floor lower.*

*Marina Shuyanova at the console of the organ.*

