

*Sisters Alicia, Madvi, and Julia being greeted by Fr Dan and the parish just as they arrived from the airport at the end of Sunday mass, August 2, 1998.*

*Most of the participants in the Far Eastern Catholic Youth Conference, July 19-24, 1998.*

*Most of the participants in the Youth Conference, July 19-24, 1998.*

*Participants from Comsomolsk-na-Amure with Fr Ed Schoellmann.*

*The three seminarians, Ron Williams from Cincinnati, Evgenie Peregudov from Vladivostok, and Vitalie Orlovsky from Krasnoyarsk.*

*Traditional champagne at the final dinner.*

*Dr Chris Kahlenborn with young ladies from Vladivostok*

## **Здравствуй Россия! Hello, Russia!**

*by The Sisters of Charity of St Anne*

With these words we greet this corner of the world which is called Vladivostok, a city with nearly a million inhabitants. It is in the Territory of Primorye, in the very Far East of Russia.

**Здравствуй Россия! Hello, Russia!** With these words we express our new experience for the Sisters of Charity of St Anne who had never been here before. After a journey of four hours from Spain, flying over European countries, we arrived in St Petersburg. It first welcomed us with the monumentality and ancient beauty of this most famous city. We visited its most significant places and discovered its streets, canals, and bridges which have earned it the title of "Venice of the North". The visit to the Hermitage where Rembrandt's "The Return of the Prodigal" fulfilled one of our dreams and reminded us of the many people who would like to see what we are seeing. But St Petersburg was not our destination—we had to continue on to Vladivostok—this time a flight of more than ten hours!

From our first moment in Vladivostok we experienced the closeness of many people who made an effort to make us feel at home: Fr Myron, Fr Daniel, Olga, Lilia, Sergei, Andrei, Anatoli, Eugenio, ...so many names which mean help, collaboration, stimulus, for us. All these and many others made us feel bonded to the Christian Community which organizes, shares, collaborates, and celebrates its faith.

The moment when we reach the parish was something unforgettable. Sunday mass was being celebrated, and 13 new Christians were to be baptized. Tears of emotion greeted us from people who can hardly believe their eyes that our religious community would be present among them where, for such a long time, one could hardly even mention the name of God. We were introduced to the Parish, which received and welcomed us with emotion, flowers, gifts, and a welcoming party.

From this moment onward, the church has been a place for us where we can celebrate the Eucharist, have conversations although with broken Russian, where we have Russian classes, and even lunch every day. The apartment which was bought for us is still being repaired, so we spend many hours of the day in the church hall. We note that many people seem to be "at home" in the church hall.

The rest of the day we spend in an "apartment" which is the CARITAS office. There we've improvised a place to put the image of Our Lady of Pilar which the canons of Our Lady's Basilica of Zaragoza presented us. At Her feet our community is based for now, and every day we pray with Her, with certainty that She will give us strength in faith, security in hope, and constancy in Love.

We are getting to know the city little by little. Here we find old, very deteriorated buildings, Soviet monuments of huge figures with hard faces, military men and sailors with childlike faces walking along footpaths in an infinite variety of uniforms, youth dressed in the latest styles, and children, many with fair hair and blue eyes but sad faces. On the main street, Svetlanskaya, there are old, junky streetcars plodding to and fro from the city center which is filled with commercial stalls with flowers, tobacco, fruits, and with buildings needing or under repair.

Vladivostok is a broken, destroyed city which is moving toward recuperation, searching for better wellbeing. It is one of the cities of the great "Imperial Russia" with deep culture and strong traditions, but with regard to human dignity, much remains to be done.

In the city center the Department of Religious Affairs of the government is located, and there we met with the deputy. He had a good welcoming attitude, and expressed his interest that we would collaborate in social works with the government. We hope that his sweet words and desires will be concretized in a definite proposal, which will make our participation in the life of the Russian peoples a reality. They struggle to overcome a closed-up attitude and open themselves to a new history, in which they will be able to fulfill their deepest and most sublime desires.

Well, then...Here we are. We send our greetings to you as the film says, "From Russia With Love".

## A New Hymnal for the Roman Catholic Church In Russia

by Rev Daniel Maurer, C.J.D.

As the liturgical music director of our Russian Far East mission and the founder of the Russian Liturgical Music Society of St Augustine, I find myself turning often to the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, especially its chapter 6 on Sacred Music. This chapter gives the ground rules and sets the tone for the renewal of liturgical music in the Roman rite. Thank God for the Holy Spirit working in the fathers of Vatican II! Without their measured approach to the renewal of the liturgy it would have been hard to imagine how to begin the task of developing the moribund art of Russian liturgical music for the Roman rite. With their insights and guidelines it has been possible to make some important strides in a discipline that was almost nonexistent.

When we arrived in Russia in February of 1992, Fr Myron and I knew of no liturgical music in the Russian language. After devoting many hours each week to this field over the course of the last six years, our Liturgical Music Society of Saint Augustine has recently published a new edition of the *Vladivostok Hymnal* entitled *Veleechit Dusha Moya Gospoda (My Soul Magnifies the Lord)*. It is a collection of over 150 hymns, in a handsome volume bound by expandable plastic rings, to which more can be added as liturgical and musical resources are developed and discovered. On the cover of the hymnal is a beautiful, computer-enhanced photographic reproduction of the icon, *Mother of God of Vladivostok*, which hangs in the transept of the cathedral in Vladivostok.

Not all the hymns in our new collection, not even a majority of them, were composed by our musical society. The work of our society has been much broader: to find, collect, translate and compose high quality liturgical music, primarily for congregational singing, but also for choirs, and to disseminate this music to all the Russian speaking Roman rite parishes in the former Soviet Union. Because we want to share our work with all Russian speaking parishes, we printed 600 copies of the text version of the new hymnal and 200 copies of the 180-page musical accompaniment version. One of each will be sent to every Catholic parish in Russia.

In our search for music suitable for congregational singing, we are guided by Vatican II which said, "Let composers produce compositions which have the qualities proper to genuine sacred music, not confining themselves to works which can be sung only by choirs... but also for the active participation of the entire assembly of the faithful." (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, No. 121.)

An important feature of the music in our new hymnal is this combination of genuine melodic beauty and uncomplicated singability for lay people who are not trained in music. As any

liturgical musician knows, this combination is a difficult and narrow balance to achieve. On one extreme there are many beautiful pieces of sacred music that are completely unsingable to the person in the pew. On the other extreme, there are many banal and childish ditties which pretend to be sacred music that have been foisted upon innocent congregations in the name of simplicity and greater participation. Too often in American Catholic music circles, in the opinion of this author, the music chosen for congregational singing is pleasant enough, but very difficult to sing by all but well trained soloists and choirs. Some of the softer, slower, meditation songs by modern liturgical composers have so many whole notes and dotted half notes tied together that one needs a masters degree to know how long to hold them and the breath support of a fog horn to be able to do it.

Because of the difficulty of much contemporary liturgical music we have tended to choose songs for our hymnal which come from an earlier tradition of metric hymnody. These melodies may not be as appealing to the heart, but their predictability and sing-ability is something that a congregation can use with energy and precision to make a "joyful noise unto the Lord." Virtually none of this type of hymn was available in good, grammatically correct Russian lyrics. Thanks largely to talents discovered and developed among our own parishioners, we now have beautiful Russian translations and some original texts for many old standby hymns including but not limited to the following list:

Abide With Me  
Amazing Grace  
For All the Saints  
How Great Thou Art  
I Know That My Redeemer Lives  
Jesus Christ Is Risen Today  
Lead, Kindly Light  
Nearer, My God, to Thee  
O That I Had a Thousand Voices  
Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation  
Sing With All the Sons of Glory  
The Church's One Foundation  
The Strife is O'er, the Battle Done  
When Morning Fills the Sky

Lest the reader think that we draw too much from the Protestant tradition, we have also collected or translated Russian versions of many traditional Catholic hymns including the following:

*Adoro Te Devote*  
*Attende, Domine*  
*Ave Maris Stella*  
Gift of Finest Wheat  
Holy God, We Praise Thy Name  
*O Filii et Filiae* (Ye Sons and Daughters)  
O Lord, I Am Not Worthy  
*O Salutaris Hostia*  
*O Sanctissima*  
*Pange Lingua/Tantum Ergo*  
*Stabat Mater*  
*Veni Creator Spiritus*

Our best collection of seasonal hymns is for Advent and Christmas. I will never forget our first Christmas season in Vladivostok. We had no Advent songs and only two Christmas carols that we could use, *Adeste Fideles* in Latin and a mediocre Russian translation of Silent Night “borrowed” from the local 7th Day Adventists. Since then, we have found and translated Christmas carols from many national traditions, including Polish, French, Spanish, English, American, German and Lithuanian. Thanks to our own young parishioner, Yevgeny Kustov, among others, we have more Christmas music than we can use. On his own initiative, and refusing to be paid, he translated for us excellent Russian versions of: Away In A Manger, Behold A Rose of Judah (Lo, How A Rose 'Ere Blooming), O Come All Ye Faithful, and O Come, O Come Emmanuel.

Another substantial section of our new hymnal is devoted to Latin hymns and chants from the Gregorian tradition. For a Latin hymn to be included in our hymnal we have a very strict rule, it must have either an interlinear or side-by-side Russian translation with it, so that our Russian people are not just mouthing syllables that they do not understand but can know what they are praying when they sing in Latin. Among the most favorite songs of our parishioners and choir members are the traditional Latin Marian hymns: *Alma Redemptoris Mater*, *Ave Maria*, *O Sanctissima*, *Regina Caeli*, and *Salve Regina*. They also love to sing in the original Latin all the hymns with Latin names in the list of Catholic hymns above.

One area in which we have made less progress is traditional Byzantine Slavonic chant used by the Russian Orthodox Church. This is very difficult to adapt to congregational singing because the genius of Byzantine chant lies in its complex and haunting harmonies, often sung in six parts. But we do use modified and simplified versions of Byzantine chant in simple melodic lines such as the “Lord, have mercy”, “Lord, hear our prayer”, and for a few traditional psalm tones.

Much has been accomplished in the first six years. Now that we have developed a wealth of talent we can look forward to even faster progress. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who were directly involved with the production of the new hymnal:

- Katerina and Tatiana Yankina who re-wrote all the music of the 180-page musical accompaniment edition of the hymnal. Tatiana also did all the typesetting of the text-only version of the hymnal for the congregation
- Anna Gafurova Jones who composed many beautiful settings for the parts of the Mass and other sacraments, including an inspired version of the Litany of the Saints which we sing at baptisms.
- Many parishioners, but especially Victor Anisimov and Yevgeny Kustov, for their outstanding work in translating and composing Russian lyrics for traditional hymns.
- Florence Benson, the grandmother of this author and a retired music teacher, whose major contribution underwrote most of the cost of the typesetting and layout.
- St. Anne's (Porterville, CA) sister parish committee whose

successful fundraising efforts defrayed the additional costs of the preparations of the music and text.

- An anonymous benefactor in the American community in Vladivostok whose major grant paid for all the printing costs of 600 copies of the hymnal and 200 copies of the musical accompaniment.

- Mr. Ray Rzeszut of Anchorage, Alaska who volunteered to donate the binding machine and 500 plastic comb binders.

- Deacon Michael Brown of the Canadian H.M.S. Vancouver who donated an additional 300 plastic comb binders.

Thanks to you, and thanks to all of our benefactors whose support over the years has made this important progress in music quality and quantity possible. In the words of the motto on St. Charles Borromeo's coat of arms, which I like to repeat, “DON'T STOP THE MUSIC!”



## News Notes

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

- The American ship Blue Ridge made a visit to Vladivostok in time for the 4th of July. Besides receiving the American hospitality shipboard, we also received many supplies from the ship. Thanks to Nativity Parish of St Paul, many church supplies were brought to us by the ship. Thanks to Fr Bruce Maxwell of the Chaplaincy Corps, we received surplus church goods from military chapels in the Pacific. And thanks to Mr and Mrs Jeff McCutchen of the Navy base in Japan and to the Salvation Army in Japan, we received many items of humanitarian aid. Included were household goods for the Sisters of Charity of St Anne as they begin to set up their new home in Vladivostok. Before they left port, the sailors took up a collection for us, too. It is always impressive for Russians to see men and women in military uniforms attending church on Sunday, since it was impossible for military people for so long in the Soviet Union to attend church, so the witness of members of the ship was also very valuable to us. Thank you, Blue Ridge and our friends in Japan.

- Lots of people have sent us email asking about the economic crisis. Right now everybody is in shock, and many people are scared. Able young people are again thinking of emigrating from Russia, making use of the contacts they have established during the last years. Meanwhile, we are waiting to hear from our banks about our bank accounts. For Russians--our parishioners--it means that prices are going up--doubling and more--but their incomes haven't changed. So it is a new round of suffering for the poor and for those who haven't received their paychecks in months and months. When people haven't been paid for many months they are owed a lot of money. If you can't pay them, the only way out is to devalue the currency to reduce the debt. Then you can pay people what you "owe" them, while actually paying them only half as much or less! It seems to me that the patience of the people is growing thin. It takes time for people to learn how to be responsible citizens and how to operate a market economy, especially after all these years. At the same time, many public office holders are part of the old regime. "Service" has not been a characteristic of the bureaucratic regimes, nor have the people become accustomed to being able to demand change.

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Money cannot legally be sent by mail to Russia. Donations of money should be sent to:

Vladivostok Mission  
225 Cordova Street  
Anchorage AK 99501 USA

Your donations are tax-deductible. You will receive the required receipt for IRS tax purposes by return mail.

Letters without donations can be sent to:

Most Holy Mother of God Catholic Parish  
Volodarskovo 22  
690001 Vladivostok RUSSIA

Please do not mail packages directly to Russia, since every package mailed to Russia costs us \$50. If you have items that you think we can use, please contact us by electronic mail or fax giving a complete list of items. If we accept your offer you will need official inventory information from:

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Remember  
"Vladivostok Mission"  
in your will.

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in your will.

- 1 - - 2 - - 3 - - 4 - - 5 - - 6 - - 7 - - 8 - - 9 - - 10 -  
- 11 - - 12 - - 13 - - 14 - - 15 - - 16 -

Dear Sister Susan,

Please send the photos, when you are done to:

Mr Jeff Lang  
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Thanks. God bless you. --Fr Myron

## My Two Weeks in Russia

by Christopher Kahlenborn, M.D.

On July 13, 1998, I departed from my home in Ohio to the eastern part of Russia to a city called Vladivostok, which is a port city near Japan, China, and Korea, and for the first few days I stayed at the rectory of Most Holy Mother of God Catholic Church where Fr Myron is pastor. A number of my friends and I came in order to teach a group of Russian women the basic ingredients of starting and running a crisis pregnancy center, of where there is none in the Far East of Russia, and only four in all of Russia. Through the help of the Church eastern Russia now has the start of a crisis pregnancy center.

While I was there I met several seminarians and was especially impressed by a young man who is working at the parish and hopes to go to the seminary next year. I taught the people about the research I was doing on the relationship between abortion, breast cancer, and the pill, as well as the dangers of artificial contraception.

After about three days our gang departed for Khabarovsk--about 500 miles to the north of Vladivostok where a youth conference was to be held. About forty young people attended, mostly women age 17 to 30. It was a wonderful conference with many subjects being covered, such as Bible study, marriage preparation, NFP, the dangers of contraception, alcoholism, *in vitro* fertilization and its moral pitfalls, the first part of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and the link between breast cancer and abortion and hormonal contraception.

As I left Russia, I came away with the following deep impressions, many negative but a few truly wonderful ones.

1. The main problem I experienced is that many Russian people simply do not trust anyone. The problem of theft is rampant--I even had my glasses stolen (What can you do with a pair of glasses not made for you?--fortunately they were returned.) People who work in the rectory even steal from it. Rooms have to be locked at all times. Unfortunately, many of the people have no basic concept of honesty or justice, but the new Christians I encountered were a wonderful exception.

2. Fear of the establishment. Nobody trusts the government; no one trusts the police; and few trust the Russian Orthodox Church. It tries to crush any church within half a light year of its core. Many people told me that the ROC was deeply infested by the KGB and that one could not trust any confession made to a priest because people had confessed in previous years only to be reported to the government. Then, too, it is widely known that the Russian mafia is rampant.

3. Dirt. The toilet bowls look like they come out of the stone age. Cockroaches in the sink, flies in the bowl, no toilet paper, no

paper towels. I highly suspect that the rate of fecally transmitted disease is rampant. Cholera was reported to be in our water supply. My guess is that hepatitis A, cholera, gastrointestinal viruses, parasitic and worm diseases--all transmitted via dirty conditions--are rampant. Government statistics could never be trusted to accurately report the number of infectious diseases from what I saw.

4. Alcohol. Russian men certainly have a problem with this. Drunken men lined the street on one Sunday as friends walked through the streets. A drunken man in a restaurant went up to a waitress and started grabbing her. No one said anything.

5. Women are treated poorly. I am told that a man can slap a woman on the street and receive no punishment even if a police officer has witnessed the entire event. Basically, the fist rules in Russia. Women's shelters do not exist. Women are reportedly widely abused but must tolerate it since they often have nowhere to go.

6. Clothes. The women dress variously. Half of them have very skimpy clothes and the other half dresses conservatively. Even some of the very nice Christian women at the conference were sadly underdressed. I don't know if they realized that dressing in such a fashion simply attracts men who look for the flesh, and not for their hearts and minds. I hope our priests give them a reminder about what should be considered proper dress.

7. The orphans. We visited the "street children" in a building where they were kept after being picked up on the street for being "bad" because they either ran away from home or stole something. These poor kids are the most innocent looking bunch of kids I've seen in a while. They range from 8 to 11 years old, and I was told that sometimes their parents knew that they would be taken away and sent to an orphanage, but they just didn't care. A beautiful young girl named Marina sat quietly at the end of the table. These kids were far better disciplined than 90% of US kids. They stood up when we were introduced, shook hands, said "thank you", and never interrupted. How could their parents abandon them? --Alcohol again appeared to be the main problem, i.e. fathers who drank.

8. Business. It is widely known that it is almost impossible to start a legitimate business in Russia. The government and the mafia come in to "help" you if your business starts to succeed. No wonder people have little incentive.

9. The court system. What court system?

10. The medical system. If you are sick, my thought is, don't go to the hospital! I went to a burn unit...dirty bandages, five people in a room that was 15 x 15 feet. It was 90 degrees in the room. What a set-up for infection! The poor kids looked like orphans. Many of them had been burned by high voltage electric cables.

11. The infrastructure. Dogs eat out of garbage cans. I was told

that there is no problem with littering...companies simply dump their garbage into the river. Few care about their surroundings and it shows. I saw one electric line that hovered 7 feet above the ground--no wonder children gets electric burns.

But what about the good parts? Obviously with all these I found that people under 30 years of age were more receptive to religion. People over 30 were often cynical, but not all. The young Catholics and non-Catholics at the Youth Conference were refreshing. They have to endure ten times as much in order to become a Christian. Some ride two hours in a hot train to go to Sunday Mass. The priests have to endure dirty smelly conditions to preach the Gospel. Fr Myron travels 20 hours on certain days of the month just to offer mass at one of the new parishes about 800 miles away. The Christians have a sweet innocence about them and appear to be more apt to "go all the way to the end" as concerns the hard teachings of the Church on abortion, contraception, and homosexuality. I should add in fairness that the new Christians have not been tested extensively and are still learning the basics of their faith.

I did not like the fact that the Russian Orthodox Church basically is hindering all other churches, but especially those who were not "established" in Russia more than 15 years. Some Catholics I met believe that this is not so bad in that it keeps out the sects and the more aggressive evangelicals. I felt that they would not speak this way if they were the ones who were being left out. In short, I believe that people should be open to all, the good and the evil--let the weeds grow with the grass and let God root out the garden in the end.

It was amazing for me to see the growth of the Catholic Church in the region. It started with just two priests about 7 years ago, and now there are 5 or 6 churches (some of them meet in rented halls) and I would say 400 Catholics. The Catholic faith is not watered down in Russia as it often is in the west, perhaps because the leaders are wise enough to see the wisdom of the Church's teachings and remain true to them.

The land itself is quite beautiful. The train ride from Vladivostok to Khabarovsk showed hundreds of miles of beautiful plains. I think if I lived in Russia I would move to the country. Many of the people have small farm houses or dachas where they go to farm the land in the summer. Frankly, people would starve I am told if they relied only on their incomes--a high salary would be \$5,000 per year--and many people have not been paid for months.

The final highlight of the trip was a four-hour discussion I had with an American man who operated a construction company in Russia and had lived there for three years. His tales of his experiences confirmed my impressions and filled in a lot of gaps for me.

Would I return? In spite of the difficulties, I would return to Russia. It is one of the areas in the world in which at least many of the young people need the hope, love and faith of Jesus Christ, and they are beginning to receive this through the growth of the

problems there has to be some hope, and there is. I must say that the only hope for Russia is for the people to turn to God. There will be no trust, no honesty (and thus no basis for the growth of business) and no joy until the people really trust in God.

Catholic Church in eastern Russia. If I could play a small role in the promotion of that role I believe it would be worth returning for "another round."



## My Impressions of Youth Conference 1998

*by Christina Olegovna Pavlovna  
tr by Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.*

This was the second year for the Catholic Youth Conference which was held in Khabarovsk. Young people came from the whole Far East of Russia. I participated in both year's conferences, so it is interesting to compare them. The experience we gained at last year's conference, which was somewhat experimental, allowed us to better understand the purpose and structure of the Conference, and to judge the kind of people who want to attend.

In my opinion, this year everything was done to be sure that the participants concentrated on getting to know about God and the teachings of His Church. Even the youth who at first considered the Conference as an opportunity to be tourists began to be involved in its serious business. Among the attendants were even non-Catholics and non-Christians, who were drawn into an attitude of participation in the lessons and talks.

But I should begin by saying that the Conference was held in the buildings of the Civil Engineering College to which the participants came early in the morning and stayed until evening. Immaculate Conception Parish in Khabarovsk took care of all our physical needs while Most Holy Mother of God Parish in Vladivostok made the program arrangements. The youth were asked to pay for their own meals, and all other expenses were born by benefactors of the two parish sponsors and especially by Fr Franz Edlinger and the House of Peace of Katzelsdorf, Austria.

Right away in the morning there was daily mass celebrated by one of the priests, of which, thank God, there were three: Fr Myron Effing from Vladivostok, Fr Edward Schoellmann from Khabarovsk, and Fr Benedict Zweber from South Sakhalin. After breakfast we began our work, the form of which reminded me of University lectures. These lasted until lunch, and were usually for all participants and took place in the big auditorium. They covered some very real problems which we all face in today's Russia.

For example, there was a major detailed lecture by the American physician Christopher Kahlenborn. He is well-known in America as a research scientist concerned with the relationship between breast cancer, abortion, and artificial birth control. It was the first time that Dr Kahlenborn travelled to Russia, and I'd like to add that even before the Conference he took part in seminars preparing counsellors for the Crisis Pregnancy Center in Vladivostok. I think that the knowledge that he has accumulated over many years has now become a gift for Russian youth.

Another big problem in Russia is alcoholism. Fr Myron gave an interesting lecture about this disease. It seems to me that about 90% of the problem of alcoholism in Russia comes about because

people consider alcoholism to be like incurable cancer, like a curse from Heaven, and not like a disease which we should treat. Our obligation as Christians is to help alcoholics find healing. The well-developed methods of Alcoholics Anonymous which Fr Myron described should really be of help. One of the members of the Khabarovsk parish shared his personal experiences in this area.

Other topics were Chastity and Life, presented by Yuri Byelozorov and Mr George Riess of Dayton Ohio, The Apostolate of the Laity, by Evgenie Peregudov, Sects and Cults, by Viktor Anisimov, Evgenie Peregudov, and Ronald Williams, an American seminarian from Cincinnati, and The Sacred Liturgy by Fr Myron. The seminarians also spoke about religious vocations. The speakers personally prepared their talks, and for several it was their first public speech and first attempt at evangelization. The theme Evangelization permeated the Conference.

The youth who had participated in last year's conference were the group leaders for this year's conference. In their groups they also served as evangelizers. There were three groups which, besides the leaders, also had experienced motivators. The members of the first and biggest group were the non-Catholics. Their leaders were the seminarians from the Queen of Apostles Seminary in St Petersburg, Evgenie Peregudov and Vitalie Orlovsky. Fr Myron was the motivator. The basic theme of the group was the study of the Bible.

The second group under the leadership of Mr and Mrs Viktor and Natalie Anisimov with motivator Yuri Byelozorov carefully studied Natural Family Planning. Most members of the group were either young married couples or married young people who couldn't bring their spouses to the conference.

The third group were experienced Catholics, lead by Evgenie Balonyov with motivator Fr Edward. The group studied the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

In addition to their assigned topics, group leaders together with their groups prepared for each day's Holy Mass, giving practical working experience of how to help in their parishes at home. The whole system of the Conference worked quite well for such a widely dissimilar collection of young people. One problem we had was that there was a forest fire not too far from Khabarovsk, so the air was smokey all during the conference, and our eyes burned from the fumes.

After a full day of ingesting information, the members went home to the College dormitory. Morning and evening in the dormitory I was able to contribute my share by helping with the Liturgy of the Hours. In the evening we also prayed the Rosary, which was new for some participants. During prayer, those who wanted could go to Fr Myron for the Sacrament of Penance. Even so, after our very full schedule we found time for getting acquainted and for conversation. Singing, fun, and debate never ended until late at night in our rooms. This is the single week of the year when we can meet with our Catholic brothers and sisters from all the parishes of the whole Far East of Russia, not only from Vladivostok, but also from Khabarovsk, Magadan,

Blagoveschensk, South Sakhalin, Comsomolsk, Svobodnie, Arcenyev, Krasnoyarsk, and even with people from St Petersburg and America.

It seems to me, even considering all the other benefits, the Conference is just a necessity when you see how the number of youth has grown in our parishes during these last two years. And these youth now actively communicate with each other. That didn't happen before the Conferences began.

- We had a great experience at the Youth Conference, five good days together with youth from Vladivostok, Blagoveschensk, Khabarovsk, Comsomolsk, Sakhalin, Magadan, and Arcenyev. We studied everything from the Bible, to liturgy, to NFP, to sects and cults, to chastity, to The Catechism of the Catholic Church, which is now available in Russian, even alcoholism, a big problem in Russia. There was also a major presentation of the vocations to married life, religious life, the single life, and the priesthood. Also we studied Pope John Paul's letter on the Apostolate of the Laity. About 40 young people participated, including several young married couples for whom our talks about marriage and NFP were mostly directed. Also participating were a young Catholic physician from Pennsylvania, Dr Chris Kahlenborn, and Mr George Riess of Dayton Ohio's Crisis Pregnancy Center. A seminarian from Cincinnati, Ron Williams, also was there, as were our own seminarians Zhenya Peregudov and Vitaly Orlovsky. The smokey sky did decrease the heat, however--Khabarovsk had been having a hot spell before we came. Next year we will hope for a bigger crowd yet, because we don't have enough time to work with our youth in our parishes the way we should. (See related article.)