

In Memory of Olga Grigorievna Melnik

*by Adrienne Michailovna Dimskaya
tr Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.*

Our 94 year old parishioner of Most Holy Mother of God Catholic Parish of Vladivostok, Olga Grigorievna Melnik, died on May 31, 1998. She departed in her favorite month, the month of the Virgin Mary.

She was born of Eastern rite Catholic parents, Gregory and Frances Semenyouk, on April 4, 1905, in Lvov, Ukraine. When she was 16 her mother died, leaving her with her elderly father, so she was not able to get a higher education, although she always struggled to achieve her own education, taking an interest in everything. She participated in the work of international Catholic organizations and sang in the church choir. She bravely bore all difficulties as coming from God, never being heard to complain and bearing everything with humility.

In 1927 she married Michael Ivanovich Melnik who was also a Catholic of the Eastern rite. Michael graduated from law school in Prague and worked in the Union of Ukrainian Coops, where he met Olga. In 1929 their daughter Adrienne was born, and in 1931 their son Oleg.

With the beginning of the Soviet power in the Western Ukraine in 1939, Michael was arrested. During the whole cold winter of 1940 Olga, together with other women, travelled to the neighboring city of Berezhani to the prison where her husband was held to pass to him whatever news or information there might be. Soon even that small pleasure was taken from her.

On April 13, 1940 a military convoy transporting horses came also for her. She managed to stop at the roadside chapel to pray. She gave herself and her children over into the hands of the Most Holy Mother of God to whom she had a deep devotion for her whole life. For more than two weeks she and the children were transported in a train stock car to exile in northern Kazakhstan where they had to endure both terrible hunger and icy temperatures in unheated sheds. She had to walk alone many miles under the weak winter sun to neighboring settlements to exchange what remained of their clothes for food so that the kids wouldn't die of hunger. She was able to live through it and save her children only because

During the last years of her life Olga was warmed by the possibility to openly talk to Fr Myron and to pray together with other parishioners. What she had been deprived of for many decades was given to her at the end of her life--she was able to make her confession in her native language to the priest of her own rite, Father Yaroslav, who visited Vladivostok from Kemerovo. Fr Myron visited Olga for several years and cared for her to her last day, bringing her Holy Viaticum and Last Anointing, and helping take care of the funeral arrangements. Fr Daniel held the funeral mass and burial ceremony while Fr

of her firmness of faith in God and in the Virgin Mary, and because of her constant prayers.

She lived in exile five and a half years and was able to return home only after the War, in the fall of 1945. In March of 1941 Michael had been convicted of being an "enemy of the people", given a five year sentence, and sent to the gulag in the North from which he never returned. In 1986 he was "rehabilitated"--his conviction was reversed--but there was no further information about his fate.

Olga never married again. In the terrible years after the War she raised and taught her children, giving both an education. Nobody ever heard from her any complaint about the difficulties of life, but quite the opposite, she always encouraged others with kind words, hope, and faith.

In 1956 she left the Ukraine for the Russian Far East when her daughter asked her to come to Spask Dalnie to help take care of her granddaughter. Then she travelled for a long time to her son, who happened to be in Tyoumen, or in the Crimea. Forgetting herself, she cared for her six grandchildren. Then came her greatgrandchildren--seven--and she give herself to their care, too. The past 23 years she has lived in Vladivostok where she worked cleaning buildings, earning a pension. She retired when she was 84 years old, just a year earlier than her daughter!

She never was without anything to do, keeping herself active and busy, not only the care of her kids, grandchildren and greatgrandchildren, but her caring concern for others reached out to the needs of others. She encouraged everyone, if not materially, then at least verbally. She took care of the sick, and had a huge correspondence with many people. She had an unusually sharp memory into her old age, and was able to do many things, but soon after she retired she lost her eyesight.

Fr Myron and Fr Daniel came to Vladivostok during her last days. When she found out about it she sent her daughter to the parish, even though it was of a different rite, and learned about how the priests and CARITAS visit the sick and elderly at home. She was never able to visit the church after it was opened due to her weakness, but she had frequently gone to the church in the past to pray near its walls. She maintained her contact with her parish through the visits of the priests and of Lilia Timofeevna, the CARITAS representative.

Myron was gone. After such a life the mass could only be spiritually joyful, solemn, and bright. Many parishioners came to the funeral, not just those who knew her. Fr Dan's sermon dismissed our grief and sorrow and brought light to the hearts of all. Fr Dan brought the body to the Naval Cemetery where he blessed the grave. The services of the priests at the end of her life was a kind of a reward for the many difficult years of her life.

Notwithstanding all the suffering and deprivation, she

remained a happy person and an example for others. All her life she prayed for the departed, and now we pray for her.

News Notes

by Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.

- On March 10 I made a hasty getaway to Seoul, Korea. My visa had ended on the 9th while I was on the train returning to Vladivostok from Blagoveschensk so I had to pay a \$50 fine for leaving Russia a day late. Whereas Fr Dan had escaped to Japan, I decided to go to Korea, to visit the Maryknoll missionaries who have worked so successfully there and also to visit Fr Roman Theisen who set up the marriage tribunal system for the Korean bishops. He gave me advice on how to handle several of my difficult marriage cases. We don't have a tribunal yet in Russia. After a week I received my new Russian visa, and returned to Vladivostok on March 15. Thanks to Fr Theisen and the Maryknoll Fathers for receiving me so hospitably. Japan, Korea, China, and Alaska are our neighboring dioceses, and we are grateful for their help for Russia.

- Fr Ignacy Pavlus called me from Irkutsk to say that the new parish of St Joseph in Angarsk has just opened a chapel, but they had no image of St Joseph. I asked him what size of a statue or icon they wanted, and he said, "About a meter-- Would you have one they can have?" Immediately I thought of the statue of St Joseph with the Child Jesus at his side that we received from the Sisters of the Holy Family in California. It is only a meter high! So we packed it up on the Feast of the Annunciation after mass and sent it on its way. It was a joy to give as we have been given to.

I dedicated my sermon on the Feast of the Annunciation to St Joseph, the example of a good father who passed on everything he had to his legal son, even though he was not his physical son. St Joseph gave Jesus legitimacy, a family, a name, a home, a heritage, a kingship, and even a trade. St Joseph reminds us of God the Father, because St Joseph adopted a son and gave him a heritage and a birthright. God our Father also adopted us in Christ, giving us a heritage and a birthright, too. Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary where he became the son of Joseph, and we were conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Church in baptism where we become children of God. Naturally we sent our prayers along with the statue: for the men of Russia and for vocations. Pray and celebrate with us.

- Would you like to help a needy family? There are emergency situations which appear sometimes. For example, our 22-year-old parishioner suddenly found herself in the hospital with a ruptured vein in her head which required open brain surgery. Of course it was expensive and unexpected. A death in the family can also mean unexpected expenses, since there isn't life insurance in Russia. We are starting a Russian Family Emergency Fund to which Russians can apply to get

emergency help. Often they would be able to return the money in time. It is even possible that Russians can donate to the fund, so that it becomes a kind of coop credit union for emergencies and as a hedge against inflation. So far the fund has \$400 to loan.

- Bishop Jersey Mazur has officially established the Catholic Parish of the Annunciation in Arcenyev, and is planning to baptise the first new parishioners on June 7. The new parish is making great progress. Even though there is no church, the parishioners meet every Sunday in a school classroom for a rosary, for reading the Sunday readings, and for catechism class for kids. The catechism class has become very popular and many kinds come who don't have Christian parents. The parish is also working already with CARITAS charity programs, reaching out to the elderly poor and handicapped children around them. Arcenyev is the home of the the Russian military helicopter factory, but there is no work now, and many people--especially elderly--can only try to hang onto their apartments as the last thing of value they own, even though with the depressed condition of the town the dollar value of the apartments are quite small. At least it is a place to live. Everybody has to have a garden and can vegetables or there won't be any vitamins in their winter food. The sick and the elderly who can't manage a garden are in need of help. Congratulations to our sister parish of the Annunciation in Washington DC on the birth of their "daughter parish".

- From Irkutsk on April 30 we received the large casket of relics of St Theresa the Little Flower. The huge casket needed special permission to travel by air. The relics were here for three days of special prayers and then they flew via Moscow to Kazakstan. St Theresa, who is already patron of missions, was also named patroness of the Catholic Church in Russia. The patrons of Russia are St Nicholas and St Andrew. Sunday we will had a special day of prayer to St Theresa, and especially for vocations from Russia.

- Cardinal Glemp, Primate of Poland, is planning to come to Vladivostok in July. He was very surprised and interested when he heard that during the Communist times there was a diocese and a Catholic bishop in Vladivostok. Bishop Slivovsky had been born in Warsaw, and served many years in Kazan before being sent to Vladivostok.

- Please remember in your prayers Mr Dan Pyne from our sister parish of St Jude's in Jacksonville, Arkansas. He was hospitalized with a stroke. For many years already he is one of our "hands" in America. He always helps us with communications, especially if we have trouble getting mail or information to someone. He works as a flight trainer, but his hobbies are religious music, exchange students, and Vladivostok Mission. His health is already improving, so we hope for the best.

- Bishop Mazur has set up five deaneries in our diocese, and Vladivostok is one of them. It encompasses Primorye, Khabarovsk State, Amursky State, and the Jewish Autonomous Region. Yours truly will have the honor to serve as dean.

The New CARITAS Women's Support Center in Vladivostok

*by Marina Viktoreva Yarigina, M.D.
tr by Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.*

[SEVENTY PERCENT OF PREGNANCIES IN RUSSIA
END IN ABORTION, SAYS REPORT

MOSCOW (CWNews.com) - The Interfax news agency reported on Sunday that seven out of 10 pregnancies in Russia end in abortion. More than 2,000 abortions are annually registered among girls under 14, said a report released by the Russian Health Ministry on the eve of the first Mother's Day in Russia. Seventy percent of Russian women suffer from health problems resulting from abortions. Interfax also reported that abortion is the cause of death for up to one third of all mothers.]

Under the sponsorship of CARITAS Primorye, the new Women's Support Center of Vladivostok has been functioning for several months. The need for such a center was clear already a long time ago, because the number of abortions in Russia and in Vladivostok in particular has grown even higher.

Until then it seemed that the only answer to pregnancy was contraception, which has been actively propagandized by the Russian Planned Parenthood Association. They never seem to be concerned about the spiritual nor the health of women--Is it possible to think that it is "caring for women" to propose to them to use contraception which disturbs the normal processes of their body? For Christians this can't be the proper answer.

There is another answer for women, one based on Christian morality and Christian love. This past summer workers from the Crisis Pregnancy Center of Dayton, Ohio came to Vladivostok to conduct a two week seminar. Attending the seminar were members of the Parish of the Most Holy Mother of God and others, including students, physicians, and psychotherapists. Our goal was to save human lives, and to form the base for the future Center at the seminar.

There were difficulties in opening the Center. Bishop Mazur supported us by telling us, "This is a real work of the Church!" He noted when he met with Center volunteers that evil always tries to disturb a good deed, and evil is best countered with prayer.

We found other interested people. For example, we were invited to locate the Center at Birth Hospital #5 where the director answered our need by providing quarters for the Center. Birth Hospital #5 is the only birth hospital in the city which absolutely does not do abortions and which uses every available approach to saving the lives of infants.

Now, thanks be to God, the Center is open and working. The main task of the Center is the spiritual and moral support of the pregnant woman. We must try to help her to feel the

joy of motherhood. We need to help a woman with a problem pregnancy to find peace in her complicated situation, and to help her with her difficulties. If she is in need of social or material or legal aid, we will try to help.

A second work of the Center is the preparation and distribution of information about the harm of contraception and abortion, about the need and benefit of chastity in the case of the unmarried, and about Natural Family Planning for the married. We also hope to establish a hospice for battered or pregnant women who have nowhere to live. We need to unite those who want to cooperate with us in our work. And all of this needs your prayerful support.

We hope to use our experience to begin centers. We pray to our patroness, Our Lady of Guadalupe, for its success. In fact, there needs to be such a center in every city in Russia. But only with God's help and by prayer and by your financial support could we realize such a wonderful dream.

The Gift of a Child

by a member of Most Holy Mother of God Catholic Parish
tr Fedor Batler

[Adoption of a child in Russia is no easy process. It requires medical certificates proving your sound health by the following doctors: a psychiatrist, a narcologist, a physiotherapist, an oncologist, a dermatologist-venerologist, and a therapist. Then there's the certificate of sufficient living space, the conclusion of the children's inspector who supervises the children of your area; the reference from your place of work; the reference of your salary; your application to the Board of Education of the Municipal Administration; your appeal to the court; the presentation of the Board of Education to the court. The court takes into account sureness of the inspector as to maturity of your decision, the opinion concerning the moral character of the candidate, formed during your interview. All the documents are to be submitted through the inspector; and it is the inspector who gives you all the necessary forms of the documents and instructs you regarding the order of their submission. As if that isn't enough, economics are difficult in Russia right now, and life can't be easy for an unmarried young lady who has compassion on a family-less child. This is the story of our parishioner who took compassion on such a little child.--ed.]

It's so nice that I've got a chance to tell you, my friends, how I first met my son. It never ever occurred to me that I could adopt a child. Up to that day I thought that I was destined to be childless.

That day, when I first saw him, I didn't feel anything beyond ordinary compassion for a child who was forced to lose parental care. Compared with the other children he looked diffident and shy, so frightened that someone would look at him that he hid at any necessity to show himself, whether it would be to show a drawing, or to reply to a question, or--Oh, horror!--an offer to play.

How did it happen that he came to our church? One should give thanks to the Lord our God and a nice lady named Nina Sergeevna who took notice of him among the children who were receiving short term treatment at the children's hospital. Afterwards most were taken home by their parents, but he wasn't the only one left behind without maternal care. But the other poor little ones were quite tiny and didn't seem to be his peers. And he, a rather big boy, found before himself the prospect of being sent to the children's orphanage. While he

But we had another trial--studies. I worried that he was going to the first grade without any preparation: He didn't have the experience of being in a group, having never attended kindergarten. I have a job and have to work--Only my evenings are free. The pressure is great and no relaxation for me. But we have to study every evening. As a result the boy

was still at the hospital Nina arranged for him to come to Sunday school as a way to provide some sort of a social life for him.

One day our Sunday school teacher invited the children to a choreographic concert which she organized. A question came up as to how the boy would be able to go to the performance, and I volunteered to take him there. But that very day he wasn't in the hospital when I arrived. I worried about it and so I decided to visit him on the following day. Our strolls became regular. The boy adapted well and became open. But he clearly felt the difference between him and other children that had parents. His little heart needed maternal love.

The day when I felt that need particularly strongly I couldn't fall asleep. The idea of solving the problem insistently pushed into my mind, and the only thing I could count on was my own desire to hear what God wanted to tell me already for a long time. This challenge to my selfishness staggered me. Before that, I never ever solved a problem destroying so many obstacles made of my own fears--fear of not having enough money, of not having strength for such big changes in my life.

And it turns out that there's nothing in the world more logically thought out than a decision of the Lord God. The set of necessary procedures for the official registration of the papers combined with the cloud of ineffective practices of our bureaucratic system I overcame with constant success, whereas under other circumstances this would have aroused in me a squall of stresses. I was even allowed to take the child home before the final decision of the court--after all, time had come for the chap to enter the first grade, and it's very important here to start your education in time.

The court took into consideration that the boy would be better off living in a partial family than in the children's home and gave a positive verdict. The boy's godparents, my new son, and I celebrated the victory and gave thanks to God.

By that time the boy had already been calling me "momma". This happened rather fast. He wanted to call me that way from the very beginning--he only needed to make sure that his position was secure. He repeatedly asked me whether he was given to me "forever", whether he would be taken back to the hospital or to the children's home, or not. After he became convinced that he would not be sent anywhere else and that nobody else had a right to give him orders, he calmed down and started to behave more trustingly and uninhibitedly. Now he laughed so often!

gets good marks, his grades are changing from D's to A's. He's communicative and never gives up. I hope such effect won't be temporary.

In any case, we won't despair, because for each person there is a vocation that is useful to the society and is pleasing to God.

One should follow it with humility and not grumble. Of course, I wonder what his vocation is, and I will try my best to help my son find it.

And the Church helps me to bring up myself and my son by making it possible to keep our spirits firm and not to lose heart on trifles. My task is to bring up the child unyielding to difficulties, generous and honest, and our Russian reality reminds us hourly that the only way to fight it--is to change people's hearts, to long for the ideal. And here Jesus is the best adviser and example for us.

It happens quite often now that I am on the verge of despair, not knowing what to do in response to another misdemeanor of my son. Sometimes he just lies implausibly, sometimes he assumes an "I-don't-understand-what-you-mean" attitude, sometimes he acts like a hooligan. Spanking?--That's not the best. The best would be trying to take it as a challenge to your own love and overcome it with even stronger love and patience. I don't always succeed, but I try.

There's a popular opinion in our society that just now is not the right time to have children, let alone to adopt them! Oftentimes I recall the words of our kind pastor, Father Myron: "When God gives you children he will take care of what you need to bring them up". In spite of the economic crisis.

Everything passes by, but children remain with you, and you give thanks to God who gave them to you.

In 1933 in Ukraine being a teenager I saw people dying of starvation, they were swollen with running ulcers on their legs. People died in the streets. We survived thanks to gophers: we caught and ate them. Once a day we were fed with some meal made of bread in the dining-hall. If you want to be kind,

Dear Editor

tr by Olga Chisko

Dear editor of newspaper "To Defend Life",

[The Vladivostok CARITAS Women's Support Center has started a little newspaper in which they discuss various issues relating to NFP, family success, and the defense of life. This is a letter they received in reply to their first issue. --ed]

Having read your first edition, I've decided to write to you. I have lived a long life. I am 82 years old. I couldn't get a good education since I was born in a poor family of peasants. My mother died early leaving four orphans. We had neither a horse nor a cow in the household. We experienced a miserable childhood being hungry and having nothing to wear. How often I asked myself being a child: "For what was I born?" The poor person always suffers indignity and feels dependence both at work and in the family. So I consider that if one is not able to raise a child and support him emotionally, financially and even physically (if the mother is ill or a drunkard), then why should one should produce the beggarly sorry child. I see how many homeless, hungry children there are living in basements and sewerage pits, begging: "Buy a roll for me." What person will this child grow into? Sixteen years ago a single woman living in our doorway bore a boy. She was 32 at that time. We, her neighbors, helped her a lot. We looked after him at our homes so that she could go shopping or even to work when the child was ill. And now she has been unemployed for four months, since the company she worked for has gone bankrupt. Before, she made both ends meet, but now she gives herself up and listens to reproaches from her son: "For what did you bear me? I want to eat, I have no shoes, etc."

We have to give a shelter to homeless children, to train them, to feed them, but it happens that they even have nothing to feed the deserted child in the orphanage. It may seem to you that you protect children and old people, women and ill persons, widows and orphans. But all these are only words. And what is the reality? Are the old retired people who get a pension of 300 rubles [\$15] a month secure? Are the children living in the streets protected? And often the children in orphanages have a meal only once a day. Now it seems that the state government and deputies believe in God. But how and with what conscience can they get their salaries of thousands of rubles knowing that doctors and teachers must go on hunger-strikes because they have not been paid their salaries in months? Jesus fed four thousand people with five loaves of bread in the desert and cured ill people, but we can't buy medicine because it is terribly expensive.

then please take care of the children, even those born into irregular families.

God bless you.

Parishioner from Khabarovsk

Bishop Mazur and Fr Myron in Blagoveschensk.

Victoria and Yuri Byelozorov with their three boys. Yuri leads many of the children's programs in our region for the Catholic Church, including the children's camps, the youth pilgrimages, and the Far Eastern Catholic Youth Conference. They also serve as a teaching couple for NFP for the parishes of the Far East and for the Women's Support Center. As a biologist, Yuri often is consulted on a variety of issues concerning conception and birth.

Parish children gather after the Easter Mass in the new Parish of the Annunciation in Arsenyev. Thanks to our sister parish of the Annunciation in Washington DC for helping provide support for the new parish.

Children and staff, including Japanese students, from the Children's Camp of 1998. Our Japanese sister parish in Yokohama has helped us develop our camp for four years. Now it is our turn: We are helping to begin the Children's Camps in Blagoveschensk and Comsomolsk-na-Amure.

From Children's Camp of 1998 on the shores of Lake Khanka.

Toys for the Seeing Impaired were supplied by CARITAS to the School for Seeing Impaired Children in Vladivostok.

The American team who came to train the Russian staff of the Women's Support Center and to provide funds for the first year of operation: (l to r) [Fr Daniel Maurer,] Seminararian Ron Williams from Cincinnati Ohio, Mrs and Mr Joan and George Riess and Mrs Dee Baltes of Dayton Ohio, Dr Christopher Kahlenborn of Dillsburg Pennsylvania, [and Fr Myron.] Inset photo: Staff member Mrs Rose Bucher of Renton Washington.