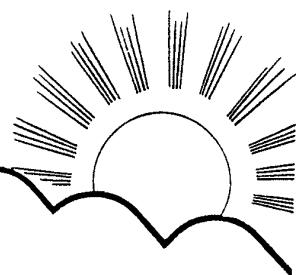


Vladivostok Sunrise

Most Holy Mother of God Roman Catholic Church + Vladivostok, Russia

Issue Number Thirty Three May 1, 2000



Special Jubilee Issue

2000th Anniversary of the Annunciation

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

March 25, 2000--The Jubilee of the Annunciation and of the Incarnation. With medical advances and the threat of abortion we now understand better the reality and the importance of the Incarnation which took place 2000 years ago. In the womb of the Virgin, Jesus became the New Covenant between God and man, the Light come into the world, and the God who put on our human condition. Already in the womb he was Emmanuel. In the third millenium of Christianity the Feast of the Annunciation will hold even greater weight than Christmas, because Christmas was a mere passing from one mode of life in this world to another for the Christ, but at the Annunciation began the great event which continues to this day: the Incarnation of God. The salvation He brought needed to be proclaimed to the whole world, and that required, not only his death on the Cross, but also his incarnation and birth into the society of his time, so that he could inherit the titles of Priest, Prophet, and King.

Here are some of the highlights of our celebration of this great jubilee in Vladivostok:

1. Representatives from all of the Far Eastern parishes from Magadan to Nakhodka, from Petropavlovsk to Blagoveschensk were present because during the week the Diocesan Conference

for Catechists was held in our church in Vladivostok.



Members of the Conference of Catechists.

2. Bishop Mazur came from Irkutsk to go through the Jubilee doors of our church, and to make it a Jubilee church where pilgrims could gain the Jubilee indulgence. It gave us the opportunity to complete new doors for the church to replace the old barn doors of the archival era of the building.



Representatives of neighboring parishes carrying their jubilee crosses through the jubilee door.

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3. Bishop Mazur brought a relic of the True Cross which will be placed in our church as a perpetual memorial of the Jubilee year. The relic will be carried to all the parishes of our deanery as they celebrate the Jubilee year. Each parish also received a Jubilee cross, and each family of our deanery will receive a small Jubilee cross for their home.

4. We unveiled and Bishop Mazur blessed the Jubilee window, the first of our stained glass

windows. It is the image of the Annunciation. The outer frames and glass were donated by the German Catholic organization *Renovabis*, and the stained glass and inner frame were donated by Mr and Mrs Terrence Kopp and family of Minnesota.



The Kopp Family: Top L to R: Terry, Debbie, Angela (13), Stephen (3), and Christopher (10). Bottom: Jennifer (12), Fr. Myron holding Gabriel (7 mos), Matthew (9), Monica (7), and Alexandra (5)

Mr Kopp and two of his children were present for the dedication. It was my honor to pull aside the cover to expose the window for the first time to public view. Five other American benefactors also came to Vladivostok for the occasion.



Fr Myron stripping the covering from the new window.

5. We produced souvenir candles with the image of the window on it. We are using these candles as a means of evangelization, encouraging parishioners to give the candles to friends and family with an explanation of the great jubilee of the Incarnation. After Bishop Mazur blessed the candles, we used

them to renew our baptismal vows on the great feastday.



Renewal of Baptism Vows



Mr Kopp and children.

6. Then Bishop Mazur confirmed eight of our parishioners. The Holy Spirit imaged in the window made incarnate the Word in the womb of the Virgin. The same Spirit sent by the Word through the hands of the bishop produced new fruits in the hearts of these believers.

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Confirmation.

7. The Parish of the Annunciation in Arsenyev sent a busload of its parishioners to Vladivostok for the big event, and Bishop Mazur called them forward for a special blessing on their parish feastday.



Deacon Vladimir announces the Gospel of the Annunciation.

8. Our parish choir prepared special music for the mass, including a new hymn to celebrate the Incarnation written by one of our parishioners, and, especially wonderful was the Magnificat sung in Byzantine style.

9. After mass, we had a formal dinner at Dalzavod Cafeteria where we usually feed the poor on a weekly basis. The food was delicious. This was the first formal dinner the parish has had since Fr Dan's ordination in 1992.



Dinner was at Dalzavod Cafeteria, shown here during the conference.

10. In the evening our parish treated our guests with a special Annunciation Presentation. We retold the story of the Annunciation from the creation of the world to Mary's pregnancy using actors, our choir, a professional choir, our parish children, dancers from the choreographic school, and our parishioners who are artists and specialists at the Art Institute. To me it was the highlight of the day: The sight of the children's ballet doing an imitation of the angels in heaven was just too much, and I couldn't hold back the tears!



Archangels Michael and Gabriel in conference with God. The Trinity was represented according to the famous icon painted by Rublov.

Thus we celebrated the 2000th anniversary of the day when our patronness became the Mother of God. And we remembered to pray for you, our dear benefactors, who make it all possible.

How to Communicate with Us

In Russia:

Phone: (011-7)-4232-26-96-14

FAX: (011-7)-4232-26-96-16

E-mail: myron@eastnet.febras.ru

daniel@eastnet.febras.ru

CARITAS@mail.primorye.ru

Internet Russian language: <http://www.catholic.ru>

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Most Holy Mother of God Catholic Parish

Volodarskovo 22

690001 Vladivostok RUSSIA

In America:

Phone: (651)690-5139

FAX: (651)690-5139

E-mail: RussianMission@juno.com

English language:

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Donations in kind. If you have items that you think we can use, please contact Mrs Sandra Sonnen at the Mission Office in St Paul giving a complete list of items. If we accept your offer, you will need official inventory information from her, too, for Russian Customs.

News Notes

by Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.

- On April 19 I had the funeral of one of my parishioners Andre Kalinicheno. He and three others were killed in a head-on collision with a drunk driver. He left a young wife and two children. Andre was one of the "dads" at summer camp, so he was well known by our children. Two months ago I blessed his marriage to his wife, Larisa. Several years ago I had the funeral of his younger brother who was accidentally shot by his military officer. Only one brother remains to me again the necessity to work more vigorously on alcoholism and drug addiction programs. Lack of priests, lack of trained lay people, and lack of facilities hold us back. How can we find the people and financial resources to carry out new work?

The New Stained Glass Window in the Church of the Most Holy Mother of God

By Ivan Chornishov
tr by V Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.

The new stained glass window of the Church in Vladivostok is stunning in its beauty and in its seemingly otherworldly striking colors. The Virgin Mary sits with her head bent toward the Holy Scriptures. She is ready to accept the Word into herself. Her whole image is light, as if a tiny little breeze would be enough to lift her like a tuft of cotton fluff. This lightness images her spiritual humility. It is as if she is again saying the words in the Gospel, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord."



The artists who produced the window, Alexei Ivanovsky and Vladimir Ivanov, together with the director of the project, Andre Udovichenko.

In front of Virgin stands Archangel Gabriel, announcing her unusual vocation. In his hands he holds white lilies, symbols of purity and innocence. Above these figures the viewer sees two other angels who watch with gratitude the scene of the Annunciation unfolding. Between them the Holy Spirit is represented in the form of a dove with a bright halo. His rays reach and consecrate the one who is to become the mother of the savior and the mother of the whole reborn human race.

The whole composition breathes lightly and cleanly, just as it must to be a work of art to represent the important moment in human history in which God mercifully decided to become incarnate in our fallen world. The Virgin miraculously becoming the Mother of God is the embodiment of purity and holiness for Christians, an example of humility before the highest decision of the Creator. It is exactly that feeling which the artists managed

to catch when they created this beautiful window with their own hands.

The artists Alexei Ivanovsky and Vladimir Ivanov came to our Russian Far East from Belarus where the window was made, although the final assembly took place in Vladivostok. They said that they never saw the whole window in one piece before the assembly in Vladivostok, it being too large for their shop. They had to photograph the separate parts and paste the pictures together to get some idea of the whole. So the window was put together from small fragments of glass into larger sections and then sent across the border to Russia. That wasn't simple either because the import-export laws between Russia and Belarus are always changing, and because the border crossing took place during the difficult time of the Chechan Conflict so that the customs agents had to minutely examine every item. With God's help the window arrived at the Eastern border of Russia and the final process of mounting the window began.

Maybe the mounting went very quickly, but the whole process leading to that stage has a four-year history. Alexei came to Vladivostok for the first time five years ago, and a year later his firm was invited to participate in the renovation of the Church of the Most Holy Mother of God. It was then that idea to do the windows occurred, but it was necessary first to do some work on the building itself so that it would be fit for divine worship, and only then one could do the windows. But what should they be like? Where to find appropriately similar ones? The Church itself is neogothic, and the nearest examples of such churches were in Poland. So that would be the best place to look for examples, and that is what was done. "We studied various Polish churches," recalls Alexei, "but we also had to draw inspiration not just from churches, but also we felt the influence of the style of painting of Botticelli of the 16th century. The basic source of inspiration was the Biblical text of the Annunciation itself.

"The first version of the window which we showed Fr Myron had Mary standing, but that wouldn't square with the second proposed window, which will be placed opposite the Annunciation in which Mary would appear under the title Mary Mother of the Church, and would be surrounded by the apostles. Since the number of human figures would be greater, but each of smaller size than on the Annunciation window, there might be disharmony between the windows. So we decided to picture Mary sitting, because it would reduce the size of her image. After the first version we made a second, and then finally the third version was finally approved for the window." So we see that the planning period also had its interesting moments, as did the actual window construction.

"We decided to use the Tiffany method of mounting the glass," says Alexei, "because that technology gives us the possibility to play with the distances between mosaic pieces of glass, and because it is different from other methods in that the glass is soldered into place along its whole length, which adds to the strength of the window.

"We ordered the glass itself in Poland," Vladimir comments. "It is a rare type of glass—Opal." It isn't produced in Belarus nor in Russia—not even in Europe! They make this glass only in the United States, and it comes from there to Europe and Poland." The problem is that it is not always possible to obtain the necessary quantities of the rare glass, so of course the artist cannot use that glass for the whole stained glass window, but combining it with other glasses produces the beauty which parishioners can admire after the 25th of March, the date of the uncovering of the window on the Feast of the Annunciation. Thanks be to God that such a great feastday will be commemorated with the unveiling of such a wonderful piece of art the beauty of which will accompany the prayers of parishioners into the next millennium.

Et Incarnatus Est! Music and the Annunciation in Russia

By Rev Daniel Maurer, C.J.D.

Every feast that we celebrate liturgically in Russia brings with it the challenge of finding good, appropriate liturgical music. This is even more of a challenge now that we are celebrating the feasts of the great Jubilee Year 2000.

Last year Fr Myron decided that the principle feast of the Jubilee Year for our parish in Vladivostok would be the Annunciation on March 25, 2000 because that was to be the day that the Universal Church would celebrate the 2000th anniversary of the Incarnation of the Word of God. The Incarnation is the definitive intervention of God in human history and the one of, if not THE central mystery of our faith. The feast of the Incarnation is also the day on which the Virgin Mary became the Most Holy Mother of God, which is the name of our Vladivostok parish.



Parish children portray the animals in paradise with Eve.

Even with many months to plan the liturgy it was a daunting task to look for enough suitable music. Our parish only knew one hymn related to the story of the Annunciation by the Angel Gabriel to Mary. It is sung to the delicately beautiful melody of "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming" ("Behold, a Rose of Judah"). The first verse, translated from the Russian, would be something like this:

Rejoice, O Mary, shining star,
You enlighten us always with beams of grace.
Immaculate and pure,
You are the most holy Mother of Christ the Savior."
The next verses go on to recount the events of the Annunciation: St Gabriel's greeting, Mary's amazement and her humble acceptance of the will of God; and the importance of the God-Man who is to be conceived by Mary through the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is beautiful, but one song is not enough for a two hour liturgy. What else was available for the Annunciation? The most common prayer of Catholicism, after "The Lord's Prayer", is intimately connected to the Annunciation. The first lines of the "Hail Mary" come from the mouth of St Gabriel as he greeted the young girl who would become the Mother of God. For our big feast we chose to sing the most common Gregorian chant version of the "Ave Maria" in Latin. Under the expert guidance of our new choir director, Svetlana Naumova, the parish choir gently raised this favorite, ethereal, melodic prayer to Mary as Bishop Mazur prepared to bless the new stained glass window.



St Mary, considering whether to say "yes" or "no" to Gabriel.

Now what? Soon I remembered that the Annunciation is also the Incarnation, and that opens up the possibilities to vast quantities of superb liturgical music centered on the mystery of the Word of God-become-flesh. But most of the music about the Incarnation is not in Russian. Help! Again Svetlana came to the rescue. I mentioned to her that the words of the Creed

might provide a starting place: “For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man.” Sure enough. Two years ago, before she became a believer, she had to sing a solo for her final examination from the Vladivostok Music Academy (high school) from a beautiful “Credo” composed by Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) for full choir and solo. The part that she was assigned to sing was exactly the part mentioned: “*Et Incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Mariae Virgine, et Homo factus est.*” I had never heard the Haydn version before, but when she brought it to church the next day, I thought it was one of the most beautiful renditions of the *Credo* that I had ever heard. And even better than that, on first glance, the music proved to fit perfectly the Russian translation of those same lines from the Creed. That has never happened before in my eight years of commissioning translations of hymns into Russian from Latin, English, Spanish, French, Polish, German, Italian, and Chamorro-the native language of Guam.)



The Spiritual Choir of Vladivostok provided time for reflection on the Annunciation.

But was it too complicated for our non-professional parish choir? Svetlana assured us that we could do it. And we did! It was our choir’s first experience singing in four-part harmony. The reason that we could now divide into four parts was because Svetlana has attracted enough new singers among the men of the parish that we were finally able to split them into tenor and bass sections. It took less work than I thought, and all the choir members liked the piece as much as I. We chose to sing it after communion for the feast day mass. When the director of the non-liturgical evening program heard the choir practicing the *Credo*, she asked us to sing it during the evening performance. We were happy and proud to be asked, and we readily agreed.

Another memorable musical moment in the solemn liturgy was from the Byzantine musical tradition of the Russian Orthodox Church. A few years ago at a concert in Novosibirsk I heard a beautiful rendition of the *Magnificat* sung in Russian by a church choir in the oriental chant style. I had asked for a copy of the music, and with our newfound experience and confidence we decided to get it out and try it. It seemed easy to learn the tightly packed four-part harmony,

including a grand part for bass voices. It was perhaps the most powerful and moving piece of the Mass. We used it to fill in the silence during the lighting of the souvenir Annunciation candles before the renewal of baptismal promises. We knew that the crowd would be big and that the candle lighting would take a long time, so the choir was ready with the *Magnificat*, the words that Mary used to proclaim the Gospel to her cousin St Elizabeth shortly after the Annunciation at the Visitation.



Angels from the Choreographic School

After the service one of our Russian guests, a Catholic layman and professor of theology from the Ukraine who was here for the Catechetical Conference, told Fr Myron that he broke into tears when he heard the strains of that famous Russian Byzantine *Magnificat*. He said that in his career as one of only two Russian Catholic lay theologians, he has had occasion to visit very many Catholic parishes in Russia, and that in his opinion, our parish has done the best job of inculturating the Roman Catholic rite with the liturgical cultural sensibilities of the Russian people.

Most of the other music of our great feast day liturgy was dictated by the Liturgy of the Mass itself: the *Gloria*, responsorial psalm, verse before the Gospel, prayers of the faithful, *Holy, Holy, Holy*, memorial acclamation, great amen, *Our Father* and *Lamb of God* were all sung in Russian by the entire congregation.

Last and most difficult, the greatest musical challenge of the day was to find a closing hymn that everyone could sing and that would be weighty enough to express all of the joy and awe of our parishioners and guests on that memorable Jubilee feast day. Three weeks before the mass I still had no such hymn. I had scoured my sizeable collection of hymnals in English, Russian and Spanish. Nothing. Again I was surprised to find how few hymns there are about the Incarnation. In some protestant hymnals I found some lyrics about the “Word of God” but by that phrase Protestants seem almost always to mean the Bible, not the Incarnation. And we needed a particular kind of hymn with the following requirements: a rousing melody; at least three verses that a large congregation can sing with gusto; a melody easy enough and predictable enough so that the singers do not need a masters degree in music, a hymn in which the melody of all the verses is the

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same and where the composer does not throw you any unexpected curves.

In desperation I mentioned to Svetlana that we needed lyrics to such a hymn about the Incarnation. She surprised me by offering to try to compose one. Based on years of experience I was skeptical. It is a very complex task to write good hymn lyrics. Besides sound theological content and simple, inspiring phrases, there are rules of rhyme and meter which must be strictly adhered to. Hymnodic poetry for metered melodies differs from poetry written to be read. In the latter, the author can take more liberties, but in the former everything must be very tightly compact. For hymns the words and ideas themselves must be simple since the very process of singing does not give you time to pause and ponder, whereas in poetry, the ideas and words can be highly complex and even convoluted.

At the time she offered to help, Svetlana was not yet baptized. She was a catechumen in our RCIA program. But we needed a song, so I was happy to let her try. To prepare her we read the gospel passage of St Luke about the Annunciation and the prologue of St John's Gospel about the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us. We talked at length about what mood we were trying to engender in the worshippers present at our greatest Jubilee feast, and about the theme of light which would be streaming through the newly blessed stained glass window. From one of my

hymnals we chose a majestic melody called "Perfect Love" because it met all the requirements outlined above and because it has long lines of 10 and 11 syllables which would better accommodate the multi-syllabic Russian word structure. I gave her a crash course in how to correspond the syllabic feet of the words to the melodic stress of the melody. Five days later Svetlana brought me five perfectly rhyming, perfectly stressed, perfect sounding, meaningful verses about the Annunciation and Incarnation. Even she does not know how she did it. One of her non-believing roommates in their college dormitory room asked in awe, "Where did all this come from? Who is your muse?" We believers have our own answer to those questions.

Working in the field of liturgical music in the Catholic Church in Russia is a great adventure. We are not always as successful as we were on this occasion. Over the course of many years, however, it has consistently provided this author with some of the greatest joys and rewards of his pastoral service. To hear beautiful sacred music, perfectly expressive of the liturgical moment, raised by a well trained choir or, even better, by a large congregation of worshippers, one can think one must be experiencing a foretaste of the great celestial choirs of angels singing before the throne of God who loved us enough to become one of us, *et incarnatus est* for our salvation