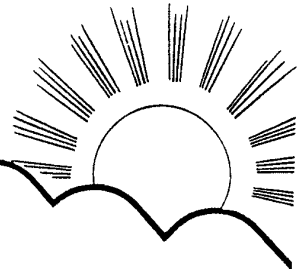


Vladivostok Sunrise

Mary Mother of God Mission Society Vladivostok Russia St Paul Minnesota

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Historic moment of the Ordination Prayer for Fr Evgeny Peregodov—June 10, 2001

First Russian Ordained in Siberia Since the Fall of Communism

by Rev Daniel Maurer, C.J.D.

It took exactly ten years for the Roman Catholic Church in the Asian part of Russia to produce a native, Russian priest. The Catholic Church was reestablished in Russia by decree of Pope John Paul II in April of 1991. Ten years and a few days later, In June 2001, Vladivostok native and member of the parish of the Most Holy Mother of God, Yevgeny Peregodov, age 28, was ordained to the priesthood for the diocese of Eastern Siberia in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the city of Irkutsk. As a sign of just how important this ordination was to the Vatican, the ordaining prelate was Cardinal Dario Castrillon Hoyos, the prefect of the Vatican Sacred Congregation for the Clergy. In his homily during the Mass of Ordination Cardinal Castrillon emphasized the significance of this milestone in Siberia where so many

thousands of Catholics had suffered for their faith under 71 years of militant, communist repression of religion.

There have been other priestly ordinations in the vast territory of Asian Russia, but this was the first for a Russian native. Fr Joseph Messmer, S.J., a citizen of soviet Kazakhstan of German extraction, was ordained in the central Siberian city of Novosibirsk on December 8, 1991. He was the first priest ordained in Russia since the return of religious freedom for Catholics. This author, an American citizen, was ordained in Vladivostok, also by Bishop Werth, on September 20, 1992. Since then there have been other ordinations in Siberia, of Lithuanians and Volga Germans, but Fr Yevgeny holds the distinction of being the first known Russian to be ordained in Asian Russia in the post-communist period.

In addition to being the first ordination in Asian Russia of a native Russian since the return of religious freedom, it was the first priestly ordination ever in the three-year-old Apostolic Administration (diocese) of Eastern Siberia.



Bishop Mazur, Cardinal Castrillon, and Fr Myron Effing

Father Yevgeny ("Eugene" in English) was born in Vladivostok on April 7, 1972, the son of Yuri and Valentina Peregudov. He was raised on Russian Island, a military enclave just off the coast of the city center. Although his father was a military officer, his mother and grandmother were believing Christians. In those days, however, there were no churches in this Russian Far Eastern city of almost one million inhabitants, so there was no possibility of practicing one's faith. After the advent of "perestroika" (restructuring) in the late 1980's, and the opening of a church in Vladivostok, Yevgeny (Zhenya for short) was baptized. He became a member of the newly reborn Catholic parish in 1993. After more than a year of participating in the life of our parish he was accepted into the minor seminary in Novosibirsk by Bishop Joseph Werth, S.J. in 1994. The minor seminary program was designed to last two years, but because he would have been the only member of his class in the second year, and because he was recognized to be a well-prepared and mature candidate, he was allowed to enroll in the major seminary



Deacon Peregudov in prostration during the Litany of Saints

after completing only one year of minor seminary studies.

The only major seminary in Russia, Mary Queen of Apostles, had opened in temporarily quarters in the capital, Moscow, just one year earlier, so in September 1995 the priests and people of the Vladivostok parish staged a formal send-off of Zhenya to Moscow, a 10 hour flight from Vladivostok, to become a major seminarian. A month later we received a phone call from him in St Petersburg (a 12-hour train ride away from Moscow). Surprised, we asked him what he was doing there. In an unexpected move, the government had returned to the Catholic Church the second floor of the pre-Revolutionary seminary building in St Petersburg, so the government had evicted all faculty and seminarians from their temporary quarters in Moscow. Living conditions in the returned building were primitive but not as primitive as in Moscow, where for a few weeks Zhenya had lived in what he described as a dog house, actually a small, wooden utility trailer designed for use as a meal wagon on a construction site. Over the course of his six years in the seminary in St Petersburg Zhenya saw many changes and improvements, including the gift from the U.S. Bishops Conference of modern, institutional kitchen facilities made possible by the yearly collection for aid to the Church in Eastern Europe and Russia, and the complete restoration of the large and beautiful Gothic chapel in the seminary building, which is now used as one of only three Catholic parish church buildings in the city of 4 million people.

The ordination of Fr Yevgeny in Irkutsk on Trinity Sunday, June 10, 2001, was a huge ecclesial event for the people of the three-year-old diocese of Eastern Siberia. Assisting Cardinal Castrillon, was diocesan bishop Jerzy Mazur, S.V.D. Since the ordination came at the end of the annual conference for all members of the clergy and religious life in the diocese, virtually all the priests and religious of the diocese were present. With priest and religious representatives from the two Russian seminaries (minor and major) and other guests and friends of the ordinand from Poland and other countries, the total attending the solemn and lengthy ceremony was over



Vladivostok parishioners present at the ordination ceremony.

45 priests and 35 sisters and brothers, plus hundreds of the faithful from many parishes of the diocese and from other countries.



Father Yevgeny beginning his First Mass on June 17 in Vladivostok's Cathedral of the Most Holy Mother of God

The Sunday following his historic priestly ordination in Irkutsk, Fr Yevgeny Peregudov celebrated his first Sunday Mass in his home parish of the Most Holy Mother of God in Vladivostok for family, friends, benefactors and fellow parishioners. Very fittingly it was the parish celebration of the Feast of Corpus Christi, which can be considered one of the greatest feasts of the priesthood. At the festive and solemn mass Fr Yevgeny preached the homily, administered First Communion to a young member of the parish, and presided at the Eucharist procession around the church yard with the traditional four benedictions of the Blessed Sacrament at three stational altars outside and finally at the main altar. Pastor Fr Myron Effing, CJD and associate pastor Fr Daniel Maurer, CJD proudly concelebrated Fr Yevgeny's first mass, as did two priests from Poland, Fr Christopher who has been Fr Yevgeny's spiritual director at the major seminary in St Petersburg, and Fr Leshek, ordained in Poland two weeks earlier. Even the usually rainy Vladivostok spring weather cooperated by confining itself to slightly overcast skies, but not actually letting loose any raindrops during the time of the outdoor procession.



Benediction on the street at the Corpus Christi procession.

The parish choir prepared a number of special songs, including a repeat performance of the beautiful arrangement of Fr Yevgeny's favorite hymn, *Amazing Grace*, which they had

sung a year earlier at his diaconate ordination, and a beautiful new arrangement of *Psalm 34 (O taste and see the goodness of the Lord)* by Sr Valentina Novokovska, the director of liturgical music for the Russian Bishops Conference in Moscow.

Father Yevgeny's mother, Valentina Peregudova, who has not been in good health, was feeling well enough to attend the mass from Russian Island, located off the coast of Vladivostok, and accessible by ferry boat. Mrs Dee Baltes of Dayton, Ohio, our dear friend and mission benefactor, who began sponsoring Fr Yevgeny's seminary expenses three years ago, was also present for the joyous occasion. Also present for the mass were members of our parishes in Arsenyev, Romanovka and Ussurisk.



Fr Peregudov's mother, Valentina Peregudova taking applause at the banquet.

First Blessings by Fr Peregudov after mass.



After the Eucharist procession and final benediction, Fr Yevgeny remained in the sanctuary to give his first priestly blessing individually to all present, and to present them with a holy card commemorating the occasion. During the long time that the blessings continued, the choir sang hymns to the Most Holy Mother of God, the patroness of the parish.

After the mass and blessings all guests and many parishioners (180 people in all) gathered in a local cafeteria about three blocks from the church for an elegant and delicious banquet. The delightful Russian tradition of many formal toasts to the guest of honor was initiated by parish pastor, Fr Myron, who said that since Fr Yevgeny's father is deceased, he feels even more like a proud father to Yevgeny than if he were only his pastor and spiritual father. Dee Baltes gave a wonderful toast and ended with the perfectly pronounced Russian words, "Na zdoroviye!" ("To your health!").

We prayed that the occasion of the First Mass of Fr Yevgeny may have sowed the seeds of more priestly vocations from our parishes in the Russian Far East.

Interview with Father Yevgeny Peregudov

*by Natalya Galetkina, correspondent for Svet Evangelia
tr V Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.*

Q. Father Yevgeny, Do you remember the first moment when you thought to become a priest?

A. The idea come to me when I was 12 or 13 years old. I simply began to dream about becoming a priest—it is the absolute truth! At the time I didn't think that I'd be exactly a Catholic pastor, but I dreamed about the priesthood. I even spoke to my mom and dad about it. I don't know exactly why, because even at that time such a question was "nonsense".

Q. That must have been in the 1980's when there were no churches around, and certainly no priests?

A. Yes, it was Soviet times. The faith and the very desire to be a priest seem like miracles even to me.

Q. Were your parents believers?

A. Not my father—he was a Communist—but mom was a believer; she was Orthodox. My grandmother was also a believer, who prayed a lot.

Q. Did she teach you to pray?

A. Yes. Both grandmother and mom. I knew prayers from childhood, and we had icons at home.

Q. How was your faith received at school?

A. No problem. At school I was a perfect pupil. I was a Pioneer, a member of the Communist Youth League, but all of that was like a mask, because we had the understanding: "If you have to, you have to." I wasn't in favor of it all in my heart, but to be otherwise was simply impossible. My relationship with God was my private business. In 1988 I was baptised in the Orthodox Church when grandmother took me there. I can't say that I was a practicing member. Sometimes I went to church, especially when there was some kind of big holy day, and sometimes I went with grandmother. But I have to say that I wasn't very "churched." That happened later when I began to regularly attend the Catholic parish.

Q. So you were baptised in the Orthodox Church, but you began to attend the Catholic Church. Why?

A. That was also a miracle like all of our lives. I was 19 or 20. I simply happened to turn on the TV and I saw a program about the Vladivostok Catholic parish. The young announcer invited people to attend a service. At the time the parish didn't have its own building but rented space. I don't know why, but I remembered the address which was in the city center. I remember very well the moment when I walked in: Everybody very kindly greeted me. I was amazed—I just walked off the street as an unknown figure. From the human standpoint it was very pleasant how they received me—with gentleness, with love. Fr Myron Effing had the mass. I went up to him and said right away, "I want to be a priest." Understand that I don't know myself how that suddenly came out! He said back to me, "Yes? Well why not?" I was amazed at the simplicity and spiritual warmth. I began to actively participate in the life of the parish and became an altar server. I began to get what had been missing in my life.

I have to say that I had a difficult childhood because we were very poor. I wasn't lonely because there were always many friends. But something was missing inside, something spiritual. To go once a month to the Orthodox church to pray, but not knowing what you were praying because the service was in Old Slavonic, an unknown language...Of course there was a lot of good there, but I didn't find there the fullness of what I needed. But in the Catholic parish I got acquainted with the Church like a community which was able to give me spiritual nourishment.

After I spoke to Fr Myron about my intention to be a priest, I repeated to him my request to enter the seminary. I graduated from the technical school and awaited the time when I might go away to study. That was my vocation. That was the miracle.

Q. You say that you began to dream about the priesthood when you were 12 or 13 years old. What did you really know about it at that time?

A. What did I know about priests?—That they had beautiful clothing, a father figure with a beard who sang beautiful music and who swung a censor! I liked it all! Of course it was a childish impression. But all the same, there was something mystical about it, something sacramental which appealed to

me. Something spiritually creative. I could feel the presence in my life of some greatness, and most importantly, something like the beginning of what could be. Maybe it was abstract and too big for me, like some cosmic mind—God—but exactly personal. Just as we are talking, two people, so God was present for me: He was "Somebody". At that age I turned to God when something happened. If I got sick, or if I got bad marks, I always prayed. Maybe my prayer to too informal. But there was that feeling of the personal presence of God in my life at that time.

Of course, it was God's grace. When something was going wrong I turned to prayer, and it helped me to overcome those difficulties. Maybe somebody will say it was simply delusion or fantasy. But I'm sure that it was contact with a personal God. And what is more important, it was a personal presence who loved and forgave me. Those two aspects are very important, the love and the forgiveness of God.

Q. So that that early age of 12 you understood it all just as you now describe it?

A. No. I understood as time went by. Then it was just spontaneous prayer in which I felt the presence of God. I felt the necessity of His presence in my life.

Q. It was some sort of program for your life and you felt it?

A. Maybe the word program is not exactly right in this case. One can always say yes or no. We are, after all, free. But I felt as though He was calling for me to go somewhere, that He wanted to lead me. How many times in life it happens that something doesn't turn out as we might like, maybe we get angry, but then in time we begin to understand that it was right, that it had to happen just that way, and, even, thanks be to God that it happened!

Q. How did your friends react to your decision to go to the seminary?

A. They simply said, "It's your personal decision." Besides, at that time a significant religious wave swept the country, do you remember? They were opening churches everywhere and young people began to go to church.

Q. And you went to the seminary in Novosibirsk?

A. Yes. I studied there a year and then went to Moscow. I was there two months after which the whole seminary moved to St Petersburg. So I lived through the whole process of the "Exodus" from Moscow to the "Holy Land" of St Petersburg with all the movement of baggage and properties.

Q. Where would you like to work after ordination?

A. That is difficult to say, but, for example, I don't want to work in the chancery. Of course, if it is necessary, I'll have to, but I'm not attracted to it. I'd prefer to work in some parish.

Q. Even in some backwoods village?

A. Well, of course, I'd not like that either. I'm a city person accustomed to city conveniences. It would be nice to work in Irkutsk, or in Bratsk, for example, or on Kamchatka or on Sakhalin Island. I'll go wherever they send me. If the bishop says, "Go", it's "I'm going."

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Please do **not** send any **donations** of any kind directly to Russia. For donation information, see below.

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Donations of money and **letters** should be sent to:

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Or you can donate from your credit card through our web site. Your donations are tax-deductible. You will receive any required receipt for IRS tax purposes by return mail.

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.

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News Notes

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

- We have just received copies of Father Christopher Zugger's book, *The Forgotten: Catholics of the Soviet Empire from Lenin through Salin* (Syracuse University Press, 2001). The book features some historic photos from our parish, and covers a lot of territory besides the Far East. Congratulations to Father Zugger who has been a long-standing and faithful benefactor of ours from Albuquerque, New Mexico. It is difficult to say that one would enjoy the book, but one could say that it is a necessary read for Catholics. Order it at your favorite bookstore or on the internet.



- One of our sisters from Spain, Sr Alicia Gonzalo Lopez, was elected one of the ten most popular teachers at the Far Eastern State University. She says she doesn't know how it could be, because she only teaches two small sections of Spanish! But surely the statistics don't lie.



Our fledgling scouts tour a battleship in Nakhodka bay.

- Our parish in Nakhodka, Our Lady of the Pacific, had only several children in the parish because most of the parishioners were elderly people whose children and grandchildren had moved to other parts of Russia. So we've had a campaign to attract more children to the parish. We are trying to form a

scout troop, but Russians feel they don't know how to do it. In Soviet times the Scouts became the "Pioneers", and raising and dealing with children became a special profession of teachers, kindergarteners, and children's home personnel. There was the attempt to remove children from the family and put them in more "communal" settings. Now children are more dependent upon the family, but still not to the extent that they are in America, for instance. Gradually the group of scouts and leaders is taking shape as experience is gained from various projects.

- Thanks to Catholic Charities USA and to their donors we have been able to do much for the women prisoners of the Women's Prison in Khabarovsk, which houses felons from throughout the Russian Far East. The work involves clothing and shoes, medicines for tuberculosis, tickets home for those released who must fly because of lack of road to their home cities, personal counselling, and many other projects. Our representative who works in the prison, Alexei Hartman, has made good impact on the prison as a whole. He is currently serving on the Prison Honorary Council, which studies prison problems, makes suggestions for improvements, and serves as watchdog for violations of rights. Now he has been invited to serve on the All-Russia Prisons Honorary Council of the Russian Department of Justice, which works under Senator Reznik in Moscow. As was explained to Alexei by Khabarovsk Prison Warden Govzman, "Most people just give humanitarian aid and leave. You have shown your interest and dedication by continuing to work with the prison and with prisoners."

- We were saddened by the unexpected death of one of our workers. Peter Nicolaevich Belikov, 63, died in the hospital of a heart attack on Sunday, June 10. An Orthodox believer, he was among our longest employees, working with us since the time we first received the church building, taking care of the boilers and water and sanitation systems. Fr Myron and Fr Dan presided at his funeral on June 14, with burial in the Sea Cemetery on Churkin. He always had a smile and such fatherly advice and helpful attitude that his fellow employees referred to him as "The Father".



Peter Nicolaevich Belikov (center) with fellow workers.

- Thanks to American Rose Bucher of Seattle Washington and Kristina Pavlovna of Vladivostok, the first Women's Support Center is about to open in Siberia. Rose and Kristina were instrumental in opening our first five centers in the Russian Far East, but in mid-June they trained a staff in Irkutsk near Lake Baikal. The first task of a WSC is to serve as a crisis pregnancy center, and then as an extension also to work with new moms and moms with many children. We'd like to expand to work to help dads, too. Kristina is the editor of our publication "*To Receive Life*", which shares experiences, plans, ideas, and thinking between all the Women's Support Centers. Support for each center costs about \$5000 per year. Benefactors can be of direct benefit to young moms also through the "Adopt-a-Birth" program, where \$20 pays for the medicine that a new mom needs to give birth to her child.

- Our website was broken into by a hacker who placed anti religious and pornographic materials on our site (sorry if you saw it!) My helper in Khabarovsk, Alexei Hartman, says that hackers also broke into the Catholic.RU site in Blagoveschensk, and Alexei began to suspect that the hacker was an acquaintance of his when some of the messages carried information that only an acquaintance would know. Included were death threats against his wife and child, as well as the usual pornography. There were also materials sent to him from our American site. So he called the special police (like the Russian FBI) and they identified the hacker--a neighbor who lives in the same building as Alexei. He is now being charged with criminal activity and threat to life. The sentence, if he is found guilty, is one year in jail.



Mr Andre Popok, our parishioner who now lives in Kiev and Brother Oleg. In the background the famous Kiev monastery.

- I made a trip to the Ukraine in mid-May, not only to renew my visa which has to be done every three months, to also in order to check out institutions to which we might send people for theological training, especially Brother Oleg who will hopefully be able to study in the Fall. He nearly has a degree in history from Moscow State University, but those courses were in atheist times, and he wants to study the History of the Church and the History of the Liturgy. Later he can become a

teacher in his own right in those subjects here in the Far East. So far the best options seem to be the Eastern Catholic Theological Academy in Lvov or the Dominican Roman Rite Theological Academy in Kiev. There is a possibility to consider some schools in Slovakia, too. It is a big decision on which hangs much of the development of theology in these parts of Russia. There doesn't yet seem to be any reasonable theology program in Russia for those who are not priesthood candidates as yet. We are looking for a program in a language that is similar to Russian.

- On June 21 I had the first mass in our new parish in the City of Pokrovka here in Primorsky Krai. We haven't decided on a name yet, but it will probably be "Presentation of the Child Jesus". Perhaps a parish named Presentation in America would like to be a sister parish? The new parish already has 50 baptised Catholics, and they are very anxious to begin good parish life. For a while we will have the monthly mass in a cafe owned by one of the parishioners. The area is agricultural, but many of the parishioners have only recently immigrated from Georgia and they are mostly businessmen.

- Hopefully we will be able to start a student parish at the University this coming year. We've asked for some grants from foundations to help, but so far no funds. There are over 30,000 students in the universities in Vladivostok. The Mormons and the Protestants already have huge student services programs. We will again probably be the last house on the block--Catholic programs are very underfunded. The Protestants in Nakhodka had several resident pastors already nine years ago, and they have already built new churches. We Catholics still limp along there with no resident priest and only one mass per month. And no church!

From the Development Desk (con't from Pg 8.)

- We have moved the mission office to St Agnes Convent in St Paul. The telephone is 651-227-0208, but you can still use the old number--651-690-5139.
- There have been many visitors to the mission in Vladivostok this summer. Korean Air has had some wonderful deals on air fare. Call the mission office to chat if you might be interested in going. There is a lady who would like to visit if she can find a fellow traveller.
- You can now make your donation on line using your **credit card**. See our web site: <http://www.vladmission.org> For those who live outside the United States, this is the best way to make a donation.

God love you and your family,
Sandra and Dave Sonnen
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From the development desk...

Dear Mission friends,

- Fr Dan is in the States. Pray for his safety and strength. We wrote a post cards to every donor in the twelve cities he will be visiting.
- Please consider hosting Fr Myron in November when he travels to the States, even for a 1 day visit. It has been our experience that if a Pastor meets Fr Dan or Fr Myron they are enthusiastic to have them return as mission speakers.
- We are starting to attend conferences around the country as an exhibitor with a mission table. We were at the American Life League/ Population Research Institute conference in Minneapolis in June. We are scheduled in Long Beach, CA on July 28-29 and Wichita KA in Aug 10-12. If you hear of one in your area that we might attend, please call the mission office at 651-227-0208.
- Adoptions are starting, please consider calling Catholic Charities in your area and asking for the Ashville, NC Catholic Charities - Vladivostok program.

- We need monthly donations!! And support us in spreading the mission around the country. We could send you extra newsletters, brochures, and business cards to place in the rack at church or at a prayer group, etc. Please obtain permission from your pastor.
- We have lovely Mass cards to send to your loved ones. Mass stipends are \$10.00. Send your donation to the St Paul office with the address of the person to whom you wish us to send the card. *(Con't on Page 7)*



First Communion from newly consecrated hands.