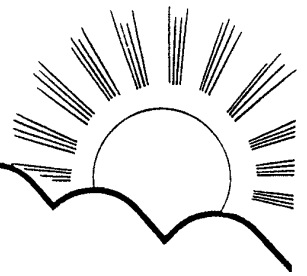


Vladivostok Sunrise

Mary Mother of God Mission Society Vladivostok Russia St Paul Minnesota

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Our Lady's Organ Concert Series 2000-2001

Rev Daniel L. Maurer, C.J.D.

The 2000-2001 Organ Concert Series in Vladivostok ended with two sold-out performances of a special *Ave Maria* concert in homage to the patroness of the parish, the Most Holy Mother God, during her special month of May. These annual *Ave Maria* concerts, begun just a year ago with only one performance, have in a very short time become a city tradition and the most highly praised concerts in the entire series. Originally the inspiration of our parish organist Marina Omelchenko for the Jubilee Year 2000, the concerts were so well received last year that she suggested that we should do something similar this year. The new and revised program, performed twice, drew rave reviews not only from the public but also from performing art critics of the local news media and from influential members of the Russian Far East classical music community. They were widely recognized as the most spiritual and inspirational musical program ever performed in Vladivostok.

Unlike our large-cast Christmas and Easter Concerts which usually include one or more choirs and a chamber orchestra, the *Ave Maria* concert program consisted of only three performing artists: Mrs Omelchenko at the *Epiphany Organ*; operatic soprano Veronica Kasyanova of the Khabarovsk Philharmonic Society, who has sung at our concerts many times; and for the first time in our church, local mezzo-soprano Oksana Karnyevskaya, last year's winner of the coveted Tchaikovsky Prize for opera singers in Moscow.

The concerts began with a lively and complex organ solo by Mrs Omelchenko of an arrangement by Franz Liszt of a medieval *Ave Maria*. The piece lasted just a little over three minutes, but during that brief period her helper Andre Mirgorodski changed the organ registration more than 25 times. The concert progressed through a variety of sacred instrumental compositions and songs, all related to the Blessed Mother. The songs included a Byzantine chant version of the *Magnificat*, sung by both vocalists; two very different solo renditions of the *Salve Regina*; and numerous *Ave Maria*'s by Mozart, Saint-Saens, Concini, Bach and Schubert. The would-be finale was a duet of the Bach-Gounod *Ave Maria*. As it turned out, however, that was not the end of the concerts, because on both evenings the concert goes, with energetic and prolonged applause, insisted that the performers continue, and were rewarded on both occasions with a very moving duet of the traditional *O Sanctissima* sung in both Latin and Russian.

Russian concerts, generally speaking, do not have printed programs. For the very warm-hearted Russians, print seems a method too cold and too impersonal to inform the audience about the beautiful music that they will be hearing. Instead, every concert has a live announcer who steps out onto the stage before each number to announce the next piece and occasionally to give some brief information about its composition or history that will help the people to appreciate it. Between the musical and vocal performances of the *Ave Maria* concerts, parish Director of Evangelization, Mr Yuri Belozorov, acting as concert announcer, wove in a beautiful fabric of short texts from the Bible and the documents of Vatican II about the Blessed Mother's role in the salvation of the world by her Son Jesus Christ. These short narrations helped the people in the audience not only to hear classic pieces of sacred music, but also to situate them in the context of God's love for them. To help accomplish this goal, Yuri was coached for a number of hours on his delivery of the text by parishioner Ludmila Rakhmanova, who is a member of the faculty and former dean of the

Posters advertising the concerts were placed all over the city.

department of drama and opera at the Russian Far East Institute of Art.

This year's *Ave Maria* concerts ended the most successful concert season that the parish has hosted in its six-years of concerts since we received the *Epiphany Organ* as a gift from the parish of the Epiphany of the Lord in Coon Rapids, MN in 1995. The concert series was originally planned as a series of four one-performance-only concerts a year. Since then the demand has grown so much that the initial concert of the school year, usually in October, is performed three times; the Christmas and Easter Concerts four times each; and the final *Ave Maria* concert, which

comes only a month after Easter, is performed twice. This makes a total of 13 regular concerts a year, which are always sold out before every concert date, for a total, yearly audience of 2,600 people. This does not include concerts, festivals and evenings of musical reflections organized for special occasions. Because of the increased demand we have been able to raise the price of the tickets to 100 rubles (\$3.48). This is a very reasonable price. It is somewhat higher than for concerts of classical music performed by the government subsidized musical establishment, but it is much lower than for concerts of nationally famous pop and rock music acts. The proceeds from ticket sales go toward the restoration of our historic church building.

The Far Eastern Catholic Youth Conference for 2001

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

The Far Eastern Catholic Youth Conference was held this year on Sakhalin Island at the request of our bishop from August 14 to 19. There the youth participated in the dedication of the new Catholic church in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk which was built by Maryknoll who staff the parish. The youth even helped to clean the church in preparation for the event. One difficulty was the 18 hour boat trip to the island, and then 18 hours return! At the conference I was able to give some lectures about alcoholism and drug addiction—two of the scourges of Russia. Mr George Riess from Dayton, Ohio was a major speaker on the theme of the Conference this year: The Family. It was the biggest Conference in its history—66 attendees from the southern Far East, from Yakutia, and from Eastern Siberia.



2001 Far Eastern Catholic Youth Conference attendees.



The ship which brought the participants to Sakhalin Island.

Sakhalin's Parish of the Assumption Trustee Valerie Yi confers with Youth Conference Director Nicolai Dorodnov.





The marble altar was installed, but other aspects of the new church were not yet completed.

Parish children bring up the gifts.



**Remember
“Mary Mother of God Mission Society”
in your will.**



Archbishop Sweitz of Anchorage attended the ceremony. Our Bishop Jersy Mazur blessed parishioners after mass.

News Notes

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

- Our Youth Pilgrimage was held the week of July 2. The group of 15 parishioners from different parishes walked from the City of Ussurisk to the City of Arsenyev--a nine day trip. This activity is especially good for the teenagers who are too old for the children's camp, but not old enough to attend the Far Eastern Catholic Youth Conference. The theme that they considered and prayed about each day of the trip is "The Family". Each day they read some particular text of the Bible and talked about some aspect of family life. I hear it was very interesting. When they returned home they were all very enthusiastic about their experience, even though they walked in the rain for three of the days! Of course blisters were a problem, too--wet shoes are especially bad news.

- Our "Oasis" Catechetical Camp for the Catholic children of our state was held from July 18-25. 46 kids from our seven parishes took part and the theme was again "The Family". I'm too old to run with the kids, so I went to the camp for confessions and mass, but the camp was run by our Russian catechists with Sister Rosario in charge of the teaching at the camp. My secretary Nicolai Dorodnov was in charge of activities and discipline.

The camp was held this year at an old pioneer camp on Amursky Bay, so the kids were able to swim in the salty sea water. We had to share the camp with other children who had been flown in from the far North of Russia for some summer sun while their homes were being repaired in Yakutia after bad flooding there. Honestly, I was dismayed by the all-night dancing, carousing, and bad behavior of those children. It confirmed my opinion that we just have to find a place for our summer activities where our children will not be scandalized by the activities of others. And where they won't be scandalized by American music like

Emiemi. If we had a better place, we could also use it for other purposes, like an alcohol rehabilitation program, adult training programs, and retreats for adults. Where to get the funds?



Alexei (far left) at the baptism of his nephew, Cyril.

- On July 17 I had the sad experience of burying the body of one of our young parishioners, Alexei Usoltsev--16 years old. He had gone on a picnic with friends to a lake outside the city. He dived into the water, and the other young people playing in the same pond didn't notice that he didn't come back to the surface. They found him hours later under water. Of course the family was very much in shock, and there were many young people at the funeral. He and his sister were the only Catholics in the family, so the funeral was an opportunity for all the friends and relatives to think about God and the "last things." Many of his teenage friends attended.

- Then on July 18, another funeral. A Russian-Korean family came to me Sunday night to say that their 87 year old grandmother was dying. She had never been baptised although she read the Bible very often and expressed her interest in the Christianity. The family asked if I would baptise her. When I arrived at the hospital, she was barely conscious and probably on medication, so we proceeded with the baptism on the expressed faith and desire of her relatives who at that point had to answer for her--they had told her earlier that a priest was coming to baptise her. So I was happy to baptise her, to confirm her, give her First Communion and the Anointing of the Sick. Six hours later she died. Her daughter-in-law and two granddaughters were already Catholics, so they were very happy. The funeral was another chance to evangelize the rest of the relatives. Her son already expressed a desire to begin instructions in September.

- Sorrow eventually turns into joy. With the new school year we sent three parishioners off to the seminary! Evgenie Balanyov left for the diocesan seminary in St Petersburg, Brother Oleg Yelchaninov left for the theological institute in

Slovakia where he will be able to get acquainted with other orders of Canons Regular, and Alexander Laposhenko left for the theological institute in Lvov, the Ukraine, which is associated with the Ukrainian rite Catholic church. I'm grateful to benefactors who have specifically earmarked their donations for seminarians. My nerves are shot after all the negotiations and problems of finding appropriate seminaries for our students. The internet was a great help.



Our three seminarians for 2001-2002 (l to r) Alexander Laposhenko, Brother Oleg Yelchaninov, and Evgenie Balanov.

Please continue to pray for these vocations. Several other young men have already expressed interest, so we will see what next year brings.

- Hopefully we will be able to start a student parish at the University this coming year--it should be a source of future vocations. 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 probably again be the last house on the block--It amazes me how Catholic programs are always late and 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 only two priests in the whole state. And no church in the whole state except in Vladivostok! Two new Orthodox churches are being built here. A new Armenian Gregorian church is about to be completed. We Catholics are still a long way from that. All of our parishes except Vladivostok already need a church building, but we haven't even dreamed about how we can build churches--all the funds we raise already go into evangelization, and into taking care of the parishes even if they don't have buildings! Even the Vladivostok church is in urgent need of repair. All of our charitable work is funded by benefactors who have specified how their donation is to be spent, so those funds cannot help with church building projects, nor do they detract from them.

- Three more stained glass windows have arrived from Brest and have been installed in the church. The windows are "The Visitation", "The Nativity", and "The Presentation". Someone said we should stop showing the windows in the *Sunrise* because people might think we are rich! That

reminds of the line from *Fiddler on the Roof*—"Even a poor tailor is entitled to some happiness!"



The Nativity Window. Thank you to our benefactors from our sister parish, The Nativity of our Lord of St Paul, Minnesota.

- On September 1 we opened our second "St Vincent de Paul Store"--in the City of Chernigovka. The first has been operating in Vladivostok for some time. After I blessed the store, there was a rush of customers to buy second hand American clothing. Thanks to our American helpers and friends in St Paul, Minnesota and in Evansville, Indiana, we

have the used clothing. Our stores are also selling custom furniture which are made in our shop in Vladivostok. The furniture includes students' homework desks, bookcases, and storage cabinets made to order to expand the storage area in small Russian apartments. Regular production of these wood products is now underway, including the glued panels which we can sell or use ourselves to build the furniture. Our stores provide employment for Russian who need jobs, give temporary work and training to those released from prisons, and any profit must be used for charitable work. Our "St Vincent de Paul Stores" are incorporated as non-profits under the Russian name of "FOMIP"—Foundation for the Poorest.



Standing in front of the new store after its blessing, FOMIP President Andre Udovichenko, Viktor Zimin, Fr Myron, and Store Manager Sergei Semenishen.

Inside the store, customers look at clothing from Minnesota and Indiana.



- This is the "Year of the Family" in our diocese, so we too will be doing a major study about how we can support family life in Russia. In Russia 75% of marriages end in divorce during the first four years! The main reason it seems to me is promiscuity before marriage--which also means

promiscuity after marriage! The second reason, it seems to me, is the poor situation of men in a society where "white slavery" existed for so long, only to be replaced by Communism and socialism, and all of that linked to alcoholism. Our American inner city families have a lot in common with Russian families. You will find women in almost all positions of authority and work in Russia--bricklayers, plasterers, teachers, doctors--but you will find very few men as teachers or doctors. The task before us is difficult, but God works through His Church! In July we sponsored the first 12 step AA rehabilitation program in Vladivostok. We have to take a lot of other initiatives, too.

- Our mission was praised in our absence at a meeting in the city of Nakhodka where the State Department of Religion was speaking about the work of religions in schools. It was said that only the Catholic Church keeps the law about not trying to attract children to religions when we work in the schools, and that if the other religions don't shape up they will be excluded from the schools. While I'm bragging I might as well brag about our work in the prisons, too. The prison authorities say that many religious groups bring humanitarian aid to the prisons, but only the Catholics have real on-going aid for the prisoners--not even the Orthodox do that!

- When I went to one school in Arsenyev last spring to give a talk, it happened to be graduation day for the senior class. When the seniors saw me they came running to have me be photographed with them on their graduation day. It seems that my talks about alcoholism and drug abuse had a real impact on them that they wanted to remember! Of course it is God's grace that they were impressed. I remember telling them that if just one student is saved from alcoholism or death by drug overdose, my time and efforts were worthwhile. We can hope that with time they will remember a Catholic priest who tried to help them, and maybe the gift of faith has already been planted and will bloom with time.



Arsenyev parish kids gathering for an Easter picture.



Easter baptisms in Arsenyev in an old classroom—we have no church.

- We continue to work in the archives in Vladivostok looking for information about our parish and about Catholics before the Russian Revolution. This work is a preparation for the canonization of members of our parish who heroically suffered for their faith. A recent find is the complete approved articles of incorporation for the parish charitable organization which was called "Blagochinost", or "Decency". This forerunner of our present charitable organization "CARITAS" was founded on February 4, 1904. Its activities were widespread in service of the poor, of those who fled the Revolution, and of the elderly of our parish. The founders include the then pastor, Father Bulevich, the assistant pastor Father Silovich, and parishioners including an engineer, a bank president, a judge, the Ussurisk Railway bookkeeper, and others.

- We have begun renovation of the barber shop in Lesozovodsk so that it can serve as the parish center for our Parish of the Visitation. Our trustee in Lesozovodsk, Vladimir Pisarenko, was a bit afraid to approach the new mayor about the projects (not wanting hear a "no"), but he accidentally ran into the new mayor in the hallway of city hall, and the mayor cajoled him for not coming to see him sooner. He said that the Catholic Parish has an excellent reputation (and so does Vladimir), has already helped many thousands of people through the CARITAS charitable projects for kids, for the Women's Support Center, and for the spring flood which was a big project sponsored by CRS, that he is anxious to continue to collaborate with the Catholic parish. He even suggested some projects for future work. The parish center will be a storefront operation, with a chapel large enough for the parish masses, a small priest's quarters, an office space for CARITAS, a room to receive guests for charitable activities, a kitchen, and a small place for socializing. It will probably not be big enough for long, but it is all we can afford at the present time. (Actually we can't afford this either—We are still hoping that one of the foundations to which we sent grant requests will provide the funding.) The building has other tenants, so that in the

future we can imagine expanding the parish space as necessary. There is a full basement below us, which is also for sale. We can't afford it now.

- St Joseph's Parish in Modesto, California has agreed to be a sister parish to our newly being formed St Joseph's Parish in Second River, the northern part of the city of Vladivostok. The sister parishes decided to exchange banners so that we will remember each other at prayer. Our parishioner Lydia Han has painted the St Joseph icon for the banner we will send to California. Lilia Shefchenko is sewing the rest of the banner.

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

Letters without donations can be sent to:
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Donations of money and **letters** should be sent to:
Mary Mother of God Mission Society
1854 Jefferson Ave
St Paul MN 55105-1662

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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Lydia Han with the St Joseph icon.

The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple. Simeon and Anna welcome the Christ Child. The window is the gift of Mrs Mary McDonald of San Francisco, California.



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From the development desk...

Dear Mission friends,

- In the immediate future we have several friends of the mission who will soon be traveling to Vladivostok. We are starting adoptions through Catholic Charities U.S.A. We are developing an idea to start a bed and breakfast/guest house for friends of the mission who travel to Vladivostok to visit. Anyone interested in investing in some property?
- We are grateful that we have had a tremendous response to our parish speaking engagements through our new speakers bureau. All assignments for the summer have been completed and a letter has been sent to each diocese for the upcoming year. Please consider inviting your pastor to invite one of our mission representatives to speak at your parish for its annual missionary visit. Please contact our office so that we might forward to him our bona fide credentials (references and intro. info.). Please call our office at 651-227-0208.
- If your parish has already heard one of our mission speakers, consider approaching your pastor with the idea

of us mailing some number of our newsletters to your parish each edition for interested parishioners.

- Our son has just returned from a summer visit to our mission in Vladivostok. He reports that there are many other foreign (mostly American funded) non-Catholic religious missionaries in Russia. Please consider regular monthly donations. We are eager to start our Newman Center at one of Vladivostok's many universities.
- Our priests are still living in the actual church building. Fr Myron remains in the old sacristy and Fr Dan remains living in the choir loft. We still need another one hundred thousand dollars to complete our new rectory project. Give our priests and seminarians a home.
- Please refer to our new photos on our web page under the title "pictures."
- Thank you all and God love you and your families. We are all called to be lay missionaries.

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